TOPIC - An analysis of the benefits of employee engagement on organisational performance. A case for companies in the Commercial Sector in Harare.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate the entire effort to the grace of God that sustained me throughout the study.

To my dear wife, thank you for your support and encouragement. Thank you for your prayers and understanding. You made the journey easier.

To my lovely princess, Maitaishe who missed the fatherly love during my period of pressure, I say thank you my darling for giving me inspiration.
DECLARATION

I, WALTERGAMBA, do hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation and research, except to the extent indicated in the Acknowledgements, References and by comments included in the body of the report, and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree to any other university.

_________________________  ______________________
Student signature                  Date

_________________________  ______________________
Supervisor signature              Date
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would like to express my appreciation to my supervisor, Professor C. Manyeruke for her guidance, advice and encouragement in the completion of this study. Thank you for your insight in the fulfilment of this research.

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Lastly, I would like to express my thanks to all the participants who took part in this study without whom this would have been an exercise in futility.
ABSTRACT

In a challenging economic environment coupled with globalisation and increasing competitive market forces, organisations are looking for critical strategies to get ahead. The challenge for managers is offering something different that is not only geared for sustaining operations but also for growing businesses and challenging for market domination. Resources, technology, off-the-shelf programmes and models have all been explored but successful companies have realised that the greatest benefit to business success is having engaged employees. The purpose of the study was to analyse the benefits of employee engagement on company performance in the commercial sector in Harare.

This study adopted the qualitative approach and twelve participants were purposively selected from various institutions and different capacities in the commercial sector from HR consultancy, human resources practitioners, business owners, worker representatives, supervisors to shop floor workers. A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect rich data from participants and the interview sessions were recorded and transcribed. Data collected was analysed through content and thematic analysis to address the objectives of the study.

The research findings indicated that employee engagement mainly contributes to company success through customer satisfaction, profitability, reduced labour turnover, productivity and cost reduction. The study indicated that the key drivers of employee engagement in the commercial sector were effective communication, relationship with immediate superior, employee development, fair remuneration and leadership involvement. The main barriers to engagement were identified as poor communication, unsupportive organisational structure and poor leadership, lack of policy on engagement, lack of adequate financial resources and poor industrial relations climate. These barriers can be countered by managing resistance, developing an engagement policy, training, effective recruitment, leadership involvement and gathering engagement data in the organisation.

It was recommended that companies in the commercial sector should develop an Engagement Policies coordinated by engagement committees and guided by a proposed engagement model adapted from the Aon Hewitt model. The recruitment policy, performance management system, organisational matrices must incorporate engagement
issues. Compensation should be based on salary surveys and recognised job grading systems.

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<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPC</td>
<td>Industrial Psychology Consultants</td>
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<td>CIPD</td>
<td>Chartered Institute of Personnel Development</td>
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<td>IR</td>
<td>Industrial Relations</td>
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<td>AWOL</td>
<td>Absence Without Official Leave</td>
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<td>GSM</td>
<td>Graduate School of Management</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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<td>NCEAZ</td>
<td>National Commercial Employers Association of Zimbabwe</td>
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<td>SAP</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.0. Introduction
In an environment of economic decline, lack of competitiveness and dwindling customer base, organisations are looking for strategies to enhance organisational performance through human capital. The Zimbabwean environment, with high formal unemployment levels, has produced a large pool of qualified, if not overqualified, workforce. But is that enough? The country is experiencing company closures and high levels of retrenchments due to poor financial performance. The industry is in dire need of capital injection to refurbish ageing equipment and kick start turnaround strategies. To ensure business survival and growth, successful companies have turned to human capital to leverage on productivity, innovation, competitiveness and overall company performance. Markos & Sridevi, (2010) contends that there is a general appreciation amongst employers that by focusing on employee engagement, they can create a more efficient and productive workforce. It is difficult for management to carry out any programmes successfully without the voluntary participation and engagement of employees. This research is inspired by the same thinking and moving a step further from just focusing on having organisations adequately manned, to analysing and exploiting the benefits of having engaged employees on the performance of companies in the Commercial Sector in Harare.

Studies show that the concept of engagement first entered the academic scene in the social psychological work of Kahn (1990:702), who proposed that personal engagement occurs when “people bring in or leave out their personal selves during work-role performances”. The concept of employee engagement has garnered world-wide interest from various business strategists that include the Aon Hewit Consulting Group that did a research from 2008 to 2010 representing 6.7 million employees working in over 2,900 organizations, the Gallup Organisation, which in 2006 examined 23,910 business units and the Tower Perrins-ISR 2006 that undertook a survey of 664,000 employees from over 50 companies around the
world. Research studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between employee engagement and company performance. HR Consulting firm Hewitt Associates LLC (as cited by Marcey and Shneider 2008:3) stated that “they have established a conclusive, compelling relationship between engagement and profitability through higher productivity, sales, customer satisfaction and employee retention”. This study sought to analyse the benefits of employee engagement on the performance of commercial sector companies in Harare.

Aon Hewitt (2014) studies show that many business leaders will need to revisit and set new strategies but they cannot effectively execute on what is required for future growth without people. Not just any people, but engaged employees. It is imperative that companies take a strategic view of employee engagement and analyse its contribution towards the bottom line.

The Industrial Psychology Consultants (Pvt) Ltd (IPC) conducted a National Employee Engagement Survey in 2014 on 4,761 employees drawn from 35 organisations and reported that a higher proportion of employees were engaged than not engaged. This study was carried out at a time when most of the employee engagement drivers were facing major pressures, for example, job security was severely curtailed, salary reductions were on the rise and the intensified electricity load shedding was threatening the viability of businesses. This study sought to benefit companies in the commercial industry by providing measures to improve employee engagement and how this in turn lead to increased performance for the individual companies, the commercial industry and the economy at large.

1.1. Definition of employee engagement
Kahn cited in Ncube and Jerie (2012:381) defines employee engagement as, “the harnessing of organisation members themselves to their work roles; in engagement people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during their role performances.” Employee engagement therefore results in emotional attachment to work evidenced by employees’ commitment to their work and going an extra mile to ensure that company goals are achieved.
According to Anderton and Bevan (2014) the drivers of employee engagement include strong working relationships, employee voice, learning, development and skill use, effort-reward balance, a fair workplace, autonomy, control, ownership and task discretion, varied and interesting work and secure employment. A consistent focus on these will result in an engaged workforce that is willing to go the extra mile to enhance company performance.

This study was theoretically guided by the Aon Hewitt Engagement Model which was developed in 2014. The model measures employee engagement based on six major drivers that are interrelated. These include company practices, quality of life, work, people, opportunities and total rewards. These drivers are broken down into 23 subsections which provides comprehensive knowledge on the facets of the engagement drivers.

According to the Aon Hewitt model, engagement drivers provide the conditions necessary to bring about employee engagement. This will lead to positive outcomes in employee behaviour and ultimately business success in the form of talent retention, productivity, customer satisfaction and financial growth. The model provides a comprehensive and holistic approach to employee engagement. Aon Hewitt provides a model that can be adapted to the complex business environment that Zimbabwe finds itself in.

1.2. Definition of company performance

Company performance includes financial and non-financial measures. Financial measures relate to return on investment whilst Hyvönen (2007) defines non-financial performance as measured by operational key performance indicators which include market share, innovation rate or customer satisfaction. Positive company performance also includes retaining high fliers who add value to the business and increase productivity as outlined in Aon Hewitt model. The main emphasis of the study is on the benefits of employee engagement on non-financial performance indicators.

The study sought to harness the benefits of employee engagement and leverage on company performance. Strategies were recommended to improve employee engagement with a view to derive maximum contribution of the benefits of employee engagement towards company performance. In other words, the study sought to provide justification for increased
investment in employee engagement initiatives for companies in the commercial sector in Harare with the ultimate goal of achieving enhanced company performance.

1.3. Background to the study
The commercial industry is the hub of an economy providing essential services to various other industries through services like advertising, consulting, employment agencies, insurance, importation and exportation of goods, scientific research, travel and tourist agencies and wholesale and retail trade. It includes all companies in commercial trade as set out in the Collective Bargaining Agreement for the Commercial sectors of Zimbabwe First schedule.

The Commercial sector industry in Zimbabwe showed performance improvements after dollarization in 2009. There was notable growth up to around 2011 and 2012 when growth stagnated. From 2013 to 2015 commercial sector companies experienced steady business decline with some serious consequences, which included liquidation. In 2015 the country experienced severe job cuts whereby around 25000 employees lost their jobs within a period of two months. This was coupled by salary reductions and delays in payment of salaries. Job security was at its lowest with most employers preferring to employ staff on contract basis rather than permanent employment to avert the high costs of retrenchments, when need to streamline labour arises. The Zimbabwean labour market has been dubbed the ‘employer’s market’ as unemployment levels continue to soar at a time when companies are adopting lean structures to adapt to the prevailing economic landscape. Employee engagement is on the back burner but do companies not need to critically engage their employees now more than ever? The study sought to answer that question.

Ncube and Jerie (2012) in their study in the hospitality industry in Zimbabwe concluded that employee engagement in the hospitality industry plays a critical role in determining the competitiveness of a company. Whilst previous studies were conducted on the levels of employee engagement, the benefits of employee engagement on company performance in Harare’s commercial sector have not been explored.
Research indicates that low employee engagement impacts negatively on company performance by increasing employee turnover, reducing customer service gratification and raising absenteeism rate Cataldo (2011). This study explored ways of averting the negative consequences of having disengaged workforce as this category of staff is a liability to the business. It uncovered the barriers to engagement in the commercial sector in Harare so that companies fully benefit on the positive impacts of engagement.

1.4. Statement of the Problem

According to Nguwi (2014:1) companies have failed to take advantage of the benefits of employee engagement often stating that “now is not the time to deal with those things, we must focus on more pertinent operations issues.” This is an ill-advised decision as research has shown that employee engagement is at the heart of business recovery and growth. Nguwi (2014) further posits that companies will be left vulnerable if they do not keep track of employee engagement. Clearly, in the past few years, the connection between employees and organizations has been strained. Employees are showing fatigue in response to the lengthy period of stress, uncertainty, job insecurity and confusion. Organizations on the other hand are also struggling to find ways to improve or stabilize their future.

Companies have not taken advantage of the benefits of employee engagement and as a result some employees were conducting private businesses during working hours, there was lack of innovation, increased brain drain, low profitability, stunted growth, shrinking markets and low job security. In the study by IPC the benefits of employee engagement on company performance were not explored. The Human Resources departments which are normally tasked with driving employee engagement programmes are struggling to keep both management and employees motivated to maintain interest in the engagement programmes and justify the resources and time spent on increasing employee engagement levels. An analysis of the benefits of employee engagement on company performance would guide the commercial sector companies towards the path to increased productivity, customer satisfaction, talent retention and financial growth. The knowledge gained would also be imparted to the rest of the sectors in the country and the economy would benefit through increased tax revenue and employment creation.

1.5. Research Objectives and Questions
1.5.1. **Overall Research Objective**
The purpose of this study was to analyse the benefits of employee engagement on the performance of companies in the commercial sector in Harare.

1.5.2. **Specific Objectives**
1. To establish the key employee engagement drivers that will lead to positive company performance in the commercial sector in Harare.
2. To assess the relationship between employee engagement and company performance.
3. To evaluate the barriers to employee engagement.
4. To assess the applicability of the Aon Hewitt Model of Employee Engagement on commercial sector companies in Harare.
5. To provide recommendations on how companies in the commercial sector in Harare can increase company performance through employee engagement.

1.5.3. **Overall Research Question**
How does employee engagement benefit the performance of companies in the commercial sector in Harare?

1.5.4. **Specific Research Questions**
1. What are the key employee engagement drivers that will lead to positive company performance?
2. How is employee engagement related to company performance?
3. What are the major barriers to employee engagement in the commercial sector in Harare and how can they be managed?
4. Can the Aon Hewitt Model of Employee Engagement be applicable in companies in the commercial sector in Harare?
5. What can be recommended to companies in the commercial sector in Harare in order to increase company performance through employee engagement?

1.6. **Research Proposition**
The independent variable is employee engagement and the dependent variable is company performance. The proposition is that employee engagement leads to positive company
performance by employing engagement drivers and strategies to counter engagement barriers.

1.7. Significance of the study
Aon Hewitt (2014) conducted a survey on employee engagement in Africa and the Middle East and concluded that employee engagement has emerged as a core priority for business strategists and senior leaders in a bid to improve organisational performance. Company performance in the commercial sector has been severely curtailed with most companies shrinking rather than expanding. The benefits of employee engagement in the commercial sector need to be explored in order to provide hope for companies, industry and the nation at large. This study was an addition to literature on how companies in the commercial sector in Harare can fully utilise the benefits of employee engagement to unlock employee value and grow their businesses.

Literature informs us on the various ways to drive employee engagement. The Aon Hewitt Engagement model provides twenty-three engagement drivers. Zimbabwean companies are facing serious cost pressures and cost cutting is a common topic in strategic planning sessions. It is a challenge and in some cases impossible to focus on all available engagement drivers therefore there is need to establish which drivers are most important in the context of companies in the commercial sector of Harare. This will help companies to more economically focus their resources on elements of engagement that provides the optimum return and thus efficiently increase organisational performance.

The study benefits the commercial industry by identifying the major barriers to engagement. This provides valuable insights into finding solutions to the engagement barriers and thus maximise on the benefits of having engaged staff on company performance. The study builds momentum for the engagement efforts currently being spearheaded by human resources departments in this sector and entrenches the engagement culture in line management. This is supported by Kaufman et al(2013) who advised that for engagement to work line supervisors, not HR, should lead the charge.

The study provides clarity on the engagement benefits on company performance and give renewed impetus to companies in the commercial sector to invest more in raising employee
engagement levels. This is a benefit to employees as they get improved working conditions and ultimately benefit to companies in the form of increased performance. Hunt et al. (2014) found out from their study that achieving the goal of a more engaged, productive workforce doesn’t just make employees happier, it also produces better business results.

The study benefits customers through improved service delivery from the commercial sector employees. A study conducted by 4-Consulting (2007) on Scottish Executive indicated that the importance of employee engagement is shown through the potential business benefits in terms of staff attraction, retention and performance, improved communication and service delivery to customers. This shows that even the recruitment process is enhanced as skilled people are attracted to a company with a good reputation.

This study adds valuable insights to theory on the benefits of employee engagement on company performance and to practice by enlightening managers to fully leverage on the benefits of employee engagement to increase profitability. Schaufeli cited in Trussa et al. (2013:2) put it more succinctly by stating that employee engagement “is a fruitful avenue for future research endeavour, particularly since there is evidence that engagement may be associated not only with raised levels of performance but also with enhanced well-being.” This highlights the point that the benefits of employee engagement are immense.

This study not only benefits companies in the commercial sector in Harare but companies in Zimbabwe and the national economy at large through knowledge and relevant insights into the concept of employee engagement and its associated benefits and tax revenues through increased profitability, respectively. Employers across the country should harness the benefits of engagement to bring about employee retention, increased productivity, customer satisfaction and financial growth that will catapult the nation into rebuilding lost glory. Our cultural work ethic as Zimbabweans coupled with employee engagement should set us up for economic recovery and this study is well placed to provide a positive contribution in all economic spheres. Anderton and Bevan (2014:16) stated that in response to the decrease in productivity caused by the recession “… the UK Government has backed the ‘Engage for Success’ movement, bringing employee engagement centre stage as a political priority to stimulate improved UK productivity and embark on full economic recovery.” Zimbabwe can emulate this move to stimulate the much needed economic recovery through exploiting the benefits of employee engagement.
1.8. **Scope/Delimitation of the study**
This study was limited to the commercial sector companies in Harare. A sample was be drawn from commercial sector companies in Harare as guided by Statutory Instrument 45 of 1993 - National Employment Council for the Commercial Sectors of Zimbabwe Collective Bargaining Agreement.

1.9. **Chapter summary**
This chapter provides a synopsis of the essence of the research. It provides the context of the research and the key areas that the research addresses. This chapter indicates the scope of the research and the rationale for conducting this study. The chapter also informs us on how the study will contribute to the body of knowledge and practice.
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK/MODEL

2.1. Introduction
Chapter one presented an introduction to the study. It highlighted and offered an overview of the problem under study including the research objectives and questions that the study sought to answer. This chapter provides a critical analysis of literature on the topic under study. The chapter will provide a summary of what is known about the subject matter and the researcher will provide a synthetic view of the literature propositions and findings.

Several authors underscore the importance and relevance of employee engagement. Anderton and Bevan (2014:3) reports that “Employment engagement has emerged as a core priority for business strategists and senior leaders in the bid to improve organisational performance.” This is supported by Macey and Schneider (2008) who views employee engagement as a source of competitive advantage and explains that it is easy to change price and product; it is another thing to create a state and behaviourally engaged workforce. This shows that employee engagement has emerged as a critical component in strategic business management and a useful tool for business success especially in this challenging Zimbabwean business environment. In support of this view Aon Hewitt Consulting firm (2010:4) suggests that “In uncertain times, organisations need to focus on harnessing the discretionary effort that engaged employees deliver.”

2.2. Evolution of Employee Engagement
Existing literature suggests that employee engagement is a concept that was built from existing constructs such as commitment, organisation behaviour and motivation. Woodruffe as cited in CIPD (2006a) points out that employee engagement builds upon and goes further than ‘commitment’ and ‘motivation’ in the management literature. In relation to this notion 4-Consulting firm (2007:9) notes that “it appears that engagement, although sharing strong
characteristics with each of these two concepts, is about more than commitment and/or organisational citizenship behaviour on their own.” This view is supported by Markos and Sridevi (2010) who states that there is a strong relationship between employee engagement company performance clearly highlighting the two-way relationship between employer and employee which is not the case in other earlier constructs like job satisfaction, employee commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour.”

A desk review undertaken by Rafferty et al. (2005) indicated that employee engagement originated from consultancies and survey houses rather than academia. Prominent consulting firms in literature include Gallup Consulting, Aon Hewitt Consultants, Towers Perrin and 4-Consulting firm. Rafferty et al. (2005) further points out that the level of interest the subject of employee engagement has generated indicates that it is more than a passing management fad and a considerable amount of research and analysis has already been conducted in the last 10 years or so building up people’s understanding of the term.

2.3. Theories underpinning the study

2.3.1. Motivation Theories
Theories of motivation heavily influence the study of employee engagement namely Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory and McGregor’s Theory Y. Armstrong (2009) describes Herzberg’s Two Factor theory as involving motivators which are job content factors which result in higher performance and hygiene factors which consist of job context factors which prevent dissatisfaction on the job. The hygiene factors are consistent with factors provided in the Aon Hewit (2014) engagement model as drivers of employee engagement which include company practices, the basics, leadership and communication. The motivators are consistent with Aon Hewitt’s drivers such as the work and performance management. Mullins (2006) describes Theory Y employees as, if given the right conditions, employees who are self-directed, self-controlled, self-motivated, accept and seek responsibility. This is also consistent with the Aon Hewitt 2014 employee engagement model that includes empowerment, autonomy and challenging work tasks as the drivers of employee engagement that lead to superior performance.
2.4. Engagement Categories
The Gallup Consulting Group cited in Sibanda et al (2014) proposes that “there are three different categories of employees; that is, those that are engaged, not engaged and actively disengaged.” This view is supported by Meere (2005) who describes three levels of engagement:

A. Engaged - employees who work with passion and feel a profound connection to their organisation. They drive innovation and move the organisation forward;
B. Not engaged – employees who attend and participate at work but are timeserving and put no passion or energy into their work; and
C. Disengaged – employees who are unhappy at work and who act out their unhappiness at work. According to Meere (2005), these employees undermine the work of their engaged colleagues on a daily basis.

Truss et al (2013:2659) add that “engaged employees express their authentic selves through physical involvement, cognitive awareness and emotional connections.” Employees who are not engaged are described by Cataldo (2011) as employees who view their jobs as an exchange of time for a paycheck. They arrive and leave on time, take their breaks, never volunteer for extra work or projects, and do little else in between beyond the minimal effort. They show little passion or creativity for their jobs and go through the motions. This shows that an organisation is better off with engaged employees than having disengaged employees.

2.5. Variables in the Study

2.5.1. Employee Engagement
Evidence from literature show that there is no universally accepted definition of employee engagement. Macey and Schneider (2008) argue that whilst employee engagement is an increasingly familiar idea in the academic literature, and a frequently used HR ‘buzz word’, there is still an on-going debate over what the term actually means. This assertion is supported by Markos and Sridevi (2010) who found that currently there is no single unitary definition of the term employee engagement. However there are common elements in the definition of engagement as 4-Consulting (2007:1) noted that “A recurring theme in the literature is the idea that engagement involves workers ‘going the extra mile’, and exerting
discretionary effort over and above what is normally expected.” This shows that although there are differences in the meaning of engagement there is some convergence of what it represents.

Employee engagement as a construct is still in its early stages of development and Shuck and Wollard (2010) point out that it still lacks a level of consistency in definition and application across fields. In agreement with this argument Shuck and Reio (2011) reviewed several studies by many scholars and noted that some scholars suggest that employee engagement is simply a re-conceptualisation of other well researched variables (meaning old wine in a new bottle). This shows that there is still room for more exploration on the construct of employee engagement.

Albrecht (2010) asserts that engagement is viewed as a positive work-related psychological state and reflects a genuine willingness to invest focussed effort towards attainment of organisational goals. Little and Little 2006 cited in Armstrong (2012) agree with this assertion and defines employee engagement as the employees’ eagerness and proficiency to help the company succeed which is witnessed through employees’ discretionary effort on a sustained basis. In other words authors agree that employee engagement is a deliberate and positive action exhibited by employees at work.

Several authors define employee engagement as a voluntary inner drive that results in higher performance. Wellins and Concelman (2005a:1) suggest that engagement is “the illusive force that motivates employees to higher levels of performance.” Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt and Barrick (2004:603) defines engagement in terms of a “high internal motivational state.” PricewaterhouseCoopers (2014:4) defines employee engagement as “the extent to which employees are motivated to contribute to business success, and are willing to apply discretionary effort to accomplishing tasks important to the achievement of stated business goals.” This highlights the major element of employee engagement whereby employees exert voluntary effort above the standard required.

Various authors agree that employee engagement is a strategic business tool that can have an impact on business results. Zinger D. (2015:1) defines employee engagement as “the art and science of engaging people in authentic and recognized connections to strategy, roles,
performance, organization, community, relationship, customers, development, energy, and happiness to leverage, sustain, and transform work into results.” This is supported by David Guest cited in MacLeod and Clarke (2009:9) who defines employee engagement as “A workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organisation’s goals and values, motivated to contribute to organisational success, and are able at the same time to enhance their own sense of well-being.” This shows that there is an association between employee engagement and business results.

Several authors agree that at its best employee engagement provides for a win-win situation between employers and the engaged employees. Havard Business School (2013:3) quotes Mike Rickheim vice president of Talent Management at Newell Rubbermaid stating that “…when people have the tools they need to succeed, feel good about their personal growth opportunities, and receive the appropriate rewards and recognition for their contributions, it’s a win-win proposition.” This shows that employee engagement satisfies both the expectations of the employee and the organisation.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) summarises the various definitions posited by different authors by establishing that the majority of HR professionals and management consultancies define employee engagement in terms of organisational commitment (a desire to stay with the organisation in the future) and employees’ willingness to ‘go the extra mile’, which includes extra-role behaviour and discretionary effort that promotes the effective functioning of an organisation. There is a general agreement by authors on the importance of having engaged employees in an organisation as shown by the positive characteristics of an engaged employee suggested by the authors.

2.5.1.1. How does employee engagement differ?
Sharpley as cited in Harrad (2006) points out that it is important to distinguish between motivation and engagement, as it is possible to be motivated in one’s job without necessarily feeling an attachment to the organisation. Sharphey as cited in Harrad (2006) proposes that in engagement there must be a mutual feeling of support between the employee and the organisation. Zinger (2015) provides another clear distinction by stating that employee engagement is a richer and more complex concept than motivation and includes bidirectional engagement from managers, leaders, and organizational communities.
Robinson et al. (2004) added that employee engagement differs from commitment and organisation citizen behaviour because neither of the two concepts adequately show the two-way nature of engagement and that employees who are engaged are expected to be aware of the business, however to some extent engagement intersects with the two concepts. This shows that although engagement is similar to other concepts in terms of the positive mental disposition shown by employees it is different in the sense that it is a higher level construct that describes the deep connection of an employee to the success of an organisation.

2.5.2. Employee Engagement drivers
Several engagement drivers have been proposed by researchers. Markos and Sridevi (2010) highlights that several studies have sought to point out factors that result in employee engagement and came up with models to highlight implications for managers. This view is supported by Heikkeri (2010) who shows that since there is no agreement among researchers in defining the term employee engagement, all undertaken studies came up with key drivers and propositions. Aon Hewitt (2014) divides drivers of employee engagement into 6 categories namely brand, leadership, the basics, performance, the work and company practices. There is general agreement amongst scholars that drivers of employee engagement fall in these six categories.

2.5.2.1. Brand
Various authors agree that an organisation’s brand image is an important factor in driving engagement as employees feel a sense of pride in being associated with a reputable organisation. Molinaro and Weisse (2005:2) states that “employees want to know they are part of a winning organization. This could mean that the organization is financially successful, or that it is recognized as a thought leader among customers, or that the organization has an ambitious vision, core purpose, and well-articulated business strategy in place.” Vazirani(2007) supports the impact of company reputation on engagement by highlighting that how much employees are prepared to endorse the products and services which their company provides its customers depends largely on their perceptions of the quality of those goods and services. This shows that the more attractive the company brand is the more employees are engaged. Nguwi (2010) in his national survey on employee engagement, where results show Econet as the most admired company in Zimbabwe,
concluded that it is important for Human Resources Managers to build a strong employer brand that will assist in attracting and retaining the best talent.

2.5.2.2. Leadership

Various authors highlight the importance of leadership as a driver for employee engagement. Cataldo (2011:10) states that “There is a strong link between leadership and employee engagement.” This view is supported by Wellins R, Bernthal and Phelps (2005) who propose that leaders have the influence and power to serve as catalysts for higher levels of engagement, not only in one or two areas, but in all aspects of leadership. The CIPD (2012) report show that evidence from both academic and practitioner literature points to the idea that line manager behaviour has a significant effect on the engagement of employees. They highlight the work of Tims et al (2011) who provided the link between employee engagement and transformational leadership, Walumbwa et al (2010) who link employee engagement to authentic leadership and Thomas and Xu (2011) who link employee engagement to supportive leadership.

2.5.2.3. The Basics

Aon Hewitt model (2014) describes the basics as involving benefits, job security, safety, work environment and work/life balance. Spam (2010) recommends that in seeking to engage today’s employees companies must not shy away from new technologies that enable telecommuting or virtual work environments, or that help contribute to work life balance. He went further to suggest that today’s employees want something beyond an all-consuming career. Markos and Sridevi (2010) suggested that incentives have an important part to play in employee engagement and proposed that managers should work out both financial and non-financial benefits for employees who show more engagement in their jobs. This shows that financial rewards are an important feature in employee engagement.

2.5.2.4. Performance

The Aon Hewitt (2014) employee engagement model describes performance as a driver of engagement and involving career opportunities, learning and development, performance management, people management and rewards and recognition. Jenny Dearborn, Senior Vice President and Chief Learning Officer at SAP was quoted in Hunt et al (2014:7) stating that “making learning central to an organization’s culture is a proven path to giving
employees the opportunity to pursue the careers they are most passionate about and that passion leads to commitment.” Employees need to be given the platform to exhibit outstanding performance and be rewarded for the experience. They need to see that the organisation is concerned about their career progress.

2.5.2.5. The Work
Various authors agree that employees are more engaged when they find meaning in their work and when there exists a balance between them and the work environment. In a report by Penna (2007) it was established there is a high possibility that meaning of work creates stronger relationships between which is beneficial to both where employees have autonomy and a platform to contribute towards the business as well as feeling a sense of community. Christian et al. (2011) suggested that employee engagement levels can be influenced by the fit that exists between employees and their work environment. In agreement with the suggestion, Molinaro and Weiss (2005:2) added that “Organizations that create cultures that value balance, and assist employees to achieve life balance will be rewarded with highly engaged employees.” This shows that the work environment needs to be conducive to drive employee engagement.

2.5.2.6. Company practices
Aon Hewitt model (2014) describes company practices as involving communication, customer focus, diversification and inclusion, enabling infrastructure, talent and staffing. Several authors highlight that communication is key in driving employee engagement. Heikkeri (2010) highlighted that two way communication was identified as a driver of employee engagement by Robinson et al. (2004) and Mercer LLC (2007). College of Management Studies (2007) shows that if the employee is given a say in the decision making and has the right to be heard by his boss then the engagement levels are likely to be high. This view is supported by MacLeod & Clarke (2009) who believes that employee voice is critical in employee engagement whereby employees’ views are sought out; they are listened to and see that their opinions count and make a difference. This shows that company practices which are shown in the company culture has a bearing on employee engagement.
2.5.2.7. Most important employee engagement drivers

Authors have different views with regards to the most important drivers of employee engagement. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2012) concluded that the two factors of meaningfulness of work and employee voice are more important than other factors in driving up levels of engagement. CIPD also considered leadership communication and vision as the next most important factors. Towers Perrin – ISR (2003) through employee-opinion research shows that of seventy five possible drivers of engagement the one that was rated as the most important was the extent to which employees believed that their senior management had a sincere interest in their well-being and the second driver was the extent to which employees believed that they had improved their skills and capabilities over the previous year. Macleod and Clarke (2009) shows that the most important drivers of employee engagement were leadership, engaging managers, voice and integrity respectively. Parkes (2011) proposes another view by citing that the most important drivers were purpose of the job, participation of employees and progress shown by employee development. This shows that there is no universal list of key engagement drivers for all situations. In other words key drivers of engagement are contextual.

2.5.3. Employee engagement levels

According to Macey and Schneider (2008), measuring engagement is difficult as it involves assessing complex feelings and emotions. Engagement has been referred to as a psychological state (e.g., involvement, commitment, attachment, mood), performance construct (e.g. either effort or observable behaviour, including pro-social and organisational citizenship behaviour), disposition (e.g. positive affect), or some combination of the above. Macey and Schneider, (2008). According to Macey and Schneider (2008), surveys that ask employees to describe their work conditions may be relevant for assessing the conditions that provide for engagement but do not directly tap engagement. They further argue that such measures require an inferential leap to engagement rather than assessing engagement itself. There is no universal way of measuring engagement levels and researchers use different models.

As Knight (2011) points out that “Employee engagement levels are a strong determinant of whether employees are productive and remain with the organisation or are actively disengaged and may move out of the organisation.” However researchers provide various
measures of employee engagement depending on the model that one would be using. Anderton and Bevan (2014:9) highlights this view by stating that “For researchers, organisations and HR consultancies striving to investigate, measure and benchmark employee engagement levels, the sometimes vague and inconsistent definitions certainly pose a problem – leading to poor construct and content validity of some engagement measures – thus, making comparisons and generalisations problematic and having negative implications for the credibility and replicability of research conclusions.” Though there are different ways to measure engagement an organisation should select the most appropriate method according to established models.

2.5.3.1. Actively Engaged
Cataldo (2011) provides a detailed profile of engaged employee based on the G12 employee engagement survey developed by the Gallup Organisation. Engaged workers according to Gallup Organisation exhibit:

- Consistently high levels of performance
- Regular innovation and initiative for efficiency
- Planned building of supportive efficiency
- Clear understanding about the expected outcomes for their roles
- Emotional commitment to their roles
- High energy zeal
- Commitment to their work group, roles and organization

Koerner (2006) states that actively engaged employees are the stars in a company. They are passionate about what they do; they feel a strong connection to their company and perform at high levels every day while looking for ways to improve themselves and the company as a whole.

2.5.3.2. Disengaged workers
Cataldo (2011) describe disengaged employees as that category of workers that view their jobs as an exchange for a pay check. They arrive and leave work on time, take their breaks, never or rarely volunteer for extra work or projects and do little else in between beyond the minimal effort. Koerner (2006) relate disengaged staff to the zombies who come to work
everyday and put in just enough effort to meet the basic requirements of their jobs. Without passion or innovation, these employees neither oblige to the company’s direction, nor do they just work against it. Such workers may have been actively engaged workers at one time, somewhere along the way though, they became disengaged because of some issues like a lack of career growth or promotion, a perception of salary inequality, job dislike, or distrust in their immediate supervisors and senior management Saks (2011). This means that disengaged employees do not add value to the organization and they are not concerned of its success.

2.5.3.3. Actively disengaged Workers
Actively disengaged workers are the most damaging employees in the workplace. They are unhappy and let the discontent show in words, attitudes and actions. They undermine the performance of other workers by continually voicing their displeasure and listing the many reasons why they are so dejected in their roles. Koerner (2006) describe such employees as the proverbial bad apples that revel in their discontent while undermining the accomplishment of others. As a result disengaged employees do not only achieve little themselves but also prevent others from being productive too. They are negative by nature, not happy in their work and they compound their lack of productivity by sharing this unhappiness with those around them. Letting workers know that senior leaders are aware of employee engagement levels and are committed to taking positive action to address it is a key step Cataldo (2011). Actively disengaged employees are therefore a liability to the business. It is like having an enemy from within the organisation.

2.5.4. Outcomes of employee engagement
Aon Hewitt (2014) engagement model provides that the outcomes for employee engagement are talent retention, customer satisfaction, productivity and financial growth. This is supported by Harter et al (2009) who propose that employee engagement is inextricably tied to customer satisfaction, low employee turnover, loyalty, profitability, productivity and safety criteria. Markos and Sridevi (2010) are more elaborate in supporting this view by showing that studies have found positive association between employee engagement and company performance outcomes: employee retention, productivity, profitability, customer loyalty and safety. Although different authors come up with different lists of engagement
outcomes there is convergence on some common outcomes such as productivity, employee retention and customer satisfaction.

2.5.5. Barriers to employee engagement

Despite the desirable benefits of employee engagement identified in literature, various authors agree on some barriers to engagement in workplaces. CIPD (2009) highlighted that engagement is hindered by reactive rather than proactive decision-making, inconsistent management style which leads to perceptions of unfairness, poor communication and knowledge sharing and poor work-life balance due to long hours of work culture. MacLeod & Clarke (2009) believe that some leaders are not aware of employee engagement. Others do not believe that it is worth considering, or do not fully understand the concept and the benefits it could have for their organisation. Others who are interested in the topic do not know how to address the issue. Even when leaders place great emphasis on the idea of employee engagement, managers may not share the belief, or may be ill-equipped to implement engagement strategies. As a result the organisational culture is unable to deliver engagement. Among those leaders who are concerned with employee engagement, there is great variability in their views and commitment to it. Often the potential of employee engagement is underestimated. Colin Dicke, Jake Holwerda, & Anne-Marie Kontakos (2007) suggested that the largest barrier to employee engagement seems to be an organizational culture lacking experience with or support for the primary functions required for engagement, that is, strong communication, collaboration, information flow, trust, and effective problem solving.

2.6. Relationship between variables

2.6.1. Employee engagement and Company Performance

(Kelleher 2015) summarises his study by proposing that it is vital to link employee engagement to high performance not simply to make your employees happy but as an initiative to engage your employees in your business to help drive business success. This shows that the ultimate goal of employee engagement should be to achieve strategic business goals.
2.6.2. Employee engagement and Financial growth and profitability

Various scholars and researchers have highlighted the strong relationship between employee engagement and performance. Lockwood (2007) cited in Chalofsky (2009:199) asserts that “employee engagement has emerged as the most recent ‘business driver’ of organizational success”. This is supported by evidence from various researchers who have conducted engagement studies and concluded that high levels of engagement are associated with high levels of performance, citizenship behaviour and individual wellbeing. Christian, Garza and Slaughter (2011); Hakanen and Schaufeli (2012); Soane (2013). To strengthen this perspective, the Hay Group (2010) added that with high levels of engagement, firms can see revenue growth more than companies with low engagement and a significant reduction in expensive staff turnover.”

Rayton, Dodge & D’Analeze (2012) established the Employee Engagement Task Force which “outlines the evidence for promoting the engagement movement across the UK, finding positive influences of employee engagement on multiple individual and business outcomes.” This research showed that employee engagement can benefit an organisation by contributing to the overall business performance. Ralph (2009) states that organisational performance data across the world shows that engaged employees make large positive difference to financial results.

Right Management (2006) put it more succinctly by suggesting that your organisation’s success depends on people’s true engagement. Research has shown that engaged employees make for a stronger organisation and better business results.” CIPD (2007a) supports this view by adding that employers want engaged employees because they deliver improved business performance.” An HR Consulting firm Hewitt Associates LLC(2005:1) adds more voice to the relationship by stating that they “have established a conclusive, compelling relationship between engagement and profitability through higher productivity, sales, customer satisfaction and employee retention.”

2.6.3. Employee engagement and Customer Satisfaction

Research indicates that there is a positive relationship between engagement and customer satisfaction Coffman, (2000). Lawson (2009) postulates that engaged employees “…are more likely to disseminate their positive mind-set and enthusiastic views of their
organisation both internally and externally.” Researchers are in agreement that engaged employees are brand ambassadors for the organisation and they are effective in delivering excellent customer service. Bain et al (2013:1) added that “For many clients we’ve worked with, higher employee engagement translates to stronger customer relationships and, in turn, better financial performance.” In that same view Right Management cited in Scottish Executive Social Research (2007) concluded that “…engaged employees were found to have a better understanding of how their actions contributed to the organisation’s overall customer focus.”

2.6.4. Employee engagement and Employee retention and loyalty
A report by Havard Business Review Analytic Services (2013) explains that a growing body of research has demonstrated that having a highly engaged workforce not only maximizes a company’s investment in human capital and improves productivity, but also significantly reduces costs, such as turnover that directly impact the bottom line. Researchers generally agree that engaged employees are more likely to stay with the employer than disengaged employees. This is shown in Bain et al (2013:1) who stated that “Besides improving revenue performance, engagement also affects the bottom line. More engaged employees are less likely to quit, which reduces hiring and training costs.” A study by Anderton and Bevan (2014) revealed that engaged employees report fewer days of sickness absence, are less likely to leave an organisation voluntarily and foster increased productivity and performance.

2.6.5. Employee engagement and Productivity
Anderton and Bevan (2014:7) states that “…there is a general acceptance that a culture of engagement contributes towards sustaining a happy, healthy and productive workforce.” Kular S. et al (2008) supports the link between engagement by pointing out that human resource practices that have a strong focus on people have demonstrated a significant impact on improvements in productivity. In support of this link Macleod and Clarke (2009:3) in their report to the UK government proposes that “Engagement, going to the heart of the workplace relationship between employee and employer, can be a key to unlocking productivity…”
2.7. The impact of disengagement

Researchers agree that as employee engagement contributes towards positive company performance, disengagement on the other hand has the opposite effect. Meere (2005) cited in 4-Consulting (2007) discusses a survey carried out by ISR and finds that in companies with low engagement both operating margin and net profit margins reduced over a three year period, whilst in companies with high levels of engagement both these measures increased over the same time period. Aon Hewit (2014) echoes the same sentiments by showing that companies with low engagement perform worse than average on all financial indicators—particularly operating margin and total sales revenue. Companies with high engagement levels outperform the average company on sales growth, operating margin and total sales revenue. Esty and Gewirtz (2008) supports this view by reporting that studies have repeatedly shown that fully engaged employees perform better than those who are disengaged. Specifically, these employees exhibit heightened organizational performance, elevated productivity, increased financial success, and are retained at a higher level than their disengaged peers.

2.8. Models of Engagement

Various models of employee engagement are provided in literature. CIPD cited in a report by 4-Consulting Group (2007) proposes the model below for employee engagement.

Figure 2.1: The CIPD (2006c) Model of Employee Engagement

Source: CIPD (2006c)
In the model in figure 2.1 above CIPD suggests that the individual employee is influenced by quality of the working life for example, occupation, hours of work and pay on one hand and management practices, leadership and communication on the other hand. According to the CIPD model this leads to a two-way interaction between attitudes to work and engagement which ultimately results in outcomes for the organization.

Penna (2007) proposes a model that depicts employee engagement from a hierarchy perspective as shown in figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2: Penna (2007) model of hierarchy of engagement**

(SOURCE Penne 2007)

The model presents ‘hygiene’ factors at the bottom which must be present to avoid disengagement but which on their own might not lead to engagement. Penna proposes that an organization seeking to achieve high levels of engagement must satisfy each level in the hierarchy up to the meaning of work which is described by Penna as the situation where a job brings fulfilment for the employee, through the employee being valued, appreciated, having a sense of belonging and congruence with the organisation and feel like they are making a contribution.
The Gallup Engagement Model
Ralph (2009) postulated that the Gallup GWA model was designed to assess a workplace with twelve self-report questions. These twelve questions sought to understand what is important to high performers (who are loyal and productive) in an organization. The Gallup GWA model was mainly influenced by Maslow’s hierarchy of needs cited in Freeney and Tieran cited by Ralph(2009). Maslow established that employee needs can be placed in a hierarchy and lower order needs must be satisfied before higher order needs are satisfied.

The Gallup GWA model of engagement proposes that an employee’s most basic need is to be provided with materials or resources to do his/her job. Once this is met, they want to feel that they are contributing to the organization and that they get something in return, that is, they have an opportunity to use their talents and skills and they receive recognition and feedback. The third level of Gallup GWA Model states that workers want to experience a sense of belonging. This can be achieved through involvement of employees in decision-making and having positive relationships with co-workers and supervisors Ralph (2009). At the top of the pyramid is self actualization or opportunity for personal development within the organization.

The Aon Hewit EE model
The Aon Hewitt Engagement Model “examines engagement outcomes as Say, Stay and Strive. Engaged employees:
Say—speak positively about the organization to co-workers, potential employees and customers;
Stay—have an intense sense of belonging and desire to be a part of the organization; and
Strive—are motivated and exert effort toward success in one’s job and for the company”.
The Aon Hewitt study “found that companies with higher engagement levels also have better talent, operational, customer and financial outcomes.”

Figure 2.3: Aon Hewitt Engagement Model
The model was suitable for this research as it provided a comprehensive list of employee engagement drivers namely; company practices, the work, the basics, performance, leadership and brand. It has qualities of an all-encompassing nature as the Aon Hewitt Consulting managed to use the model to conduct a global engagement survey covering Africa/Middle East, Europe, Asia Pacific, North America and Latin America.

2.9. Research gap identified
Most of the literature studies are awash with quantitative studies on employee engagement and answering the questions involving what, where and when of the subject, for example Nguwi (2014) study and Ncube (2014). However there has been few qualitative studies done on employee engagement which focus on the how and why part of the subject matter. This has left a gap in literature on employee engagement.

Literature has provided various models and measures for employee engagement and some researchers have adapted these without due consideration of their applicability. In other words there is no standard measure of employee engagement or a one size fits all measure. Looking at the available literature on measuring employee engagement, one would find
several measurement items to the extent that it seems different constructs are being measured Robinson et al, 2004; Cohen and Higgins, (2007); Perrin, (2003); Ellis and Sorenson, (2007); Dernovsek, (2008). The applicability of models on the Zimbabwean commercial industry has not been explored.

Various authors have provided different engagement drivers and suggested their most important drivers. In this Zimbabwean challenging economy it is difficult for companies to focus on all the suggested engagement drivers thus there is need to understand which engagement drivers are the most important for the commercial sector so that companies can maximise returns on investment in employee engagement by focusing resources on few engagement drivers.

Literature has elaborated on the generic benefits of employee engagement. But is this the recipe for all companies in the world? There is little knowledge on how companies in the commercial sector in Zimbabwe can unlock the benefits of employee engagement and turn it into organisational success. If employee engagement is so desirable why are companies in the commercial sector not taking advantage of it? There is little research on the barriers to employee engagement in the commercial sector in Harare. A study on the barriers to engagement helps towards finding solutions to overcoming them and thus fully benefit from having engaged employees.

2.10. **Conceptual framework**

Companies must ensure that they provide structures that will support drivers for engagement. Leadership has to be committed to drive the process and set up company
practices that promote engagement for example, effective communication, employee participation, performance management and effective recruitment and selection. It is important for an organization to have positive reputation to attract and retain talent and keeping employees engaged. The work environment has to be conducive for engagement by ensuring that there is proper work-life balance. It is imperative that employees are given a platform to voice their concerns. These engagement drivers will lead to engaged employees who are committed, motivated and willing to go the extra mile. Having engaged employees will lead to organizational success through increased productivity, growth, profitability and low staff turnover.

2.11. Chapter Summary
This chapter highlighted the major elements of employee engagement and its benefits as provided in literature. The main purpose was to identify what is known in literature concerning the subject and highlight gaps which will be addressed by the study. The chapter also highlighted areas of agreement and disagreement in literature on the subject.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction
The previous chapter presented a summary and analysis of empirical studies on employee engagement. The chapter also highlighted the theoretical framework that guided the study. Chapter two highlighted the gaps in literature which would be addressed by the study. This chapter presents the research methodologies that were utilized in fulfillment of the research.

Kazdin (1992, 2003a), a recognized leader in the field of research, proposes that methodology refers to the principles, procedures, and practices that govern research. Methodology shows the road map of generating the required information in a study. It provides the means of acquiring knowledge to fulfil the objectives of the study. Henning (2004:36) describes methodology as coherent group of methods that complement one another and that has the ability to fit to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the researcher purpose. Research methodology is therefore critical to the
success of research, wrong choice of methods can lead to wrong interpretations and conclusions on the study.

**Objectives**
The purpose of the study was to analyse the benefits of employee engagement on the performance of companies in the commercial sector in Harare. Specifically, the study sought to;
1. establish the key employee engagement drivers that will lead to positive company performance,
2. assess the relationship between employee engagement and company performance,
3. evaluate the barriers to employee engagement,
4. assess the applicability of the Aon Hewitt Model of Employee Engagement on commercial sector companies in Harare and
5. provide recommendations on how companies in the commercial sector in Harare can increase company performance through employee engagement.

3.1. **Research Design**
Nachmias & Nachmias cited in (Yin 2003:19) defines a research design as a plan that guides the investigator in the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting observations. It is a logical model of proof that allows the researcher to draw inferences concerning causal relations among the variables under investigation (Nachmias & Nachmias (1992:77-78). In other words research design relates to the research purpose and the classification commonly found in literature is a threefold one, that is, descriptive, exploratory and explanatory.

Robson (2002:59) defines an exploratory study as a valuable means of finding out ‘what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light’. It is contextual as it seeks to find out the precise nature of a problem. Explanatory design seeks to establish causal relationships between variables. The object of descriptive research is ‘to portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations’ Robson (2002:59).

A descriptive study describes data and characteristics about the population or phenomenon being studied, the researcher knows what has to be studied and where to look for the solution, for example, variables to be studied are known beforehand and the research is conducted to have a clear picture about people, events or situations.
The purpose of this study is exploratory. This is selected as it is the most suitable research purpose to provide answers to the research question of what the benefits of employee engagement on the performance of companies in the commercial sector in Harare are. Van Wyk (2012) considers that exploratory study is appropriate where there are high levels of uncertainty and ignorance about the subject, and when the problem is not very well understood. In other words, exploratory design is adopted where there is very little existing research on the subject matter. In this case, as was acknowledged in the literature review, little is known about the benefits of employee engagement on company performance in the commercial sector in Harare as well as factors hindering employee engagement in that sector.

3.2. Research Philosophy

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009:108) view research philosophy as an over-arching term that relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge. Research philosophy is a collection of beliefs and assumptions about the way in which people view the world. Literature provides three common philosophies used in research which are positivist, interpretivist and realist.

Remenyi et al. (1998:32) considers that a researcher who adopts a positivist philosophy takes the stance of a natural scientist and will prefer “working with an observablesocial reality and that the end product of such research can be law-like generalisationssimilar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists”. Positivist places more emphasis on objectivity, reliability and replication of findings. Gray (2009) states that “interpretivism asserts that natural reality (and the laws of science) and social reality are different and therefore require different kinds of methods.” Interpretivists believe that reality is contextual or relative and that meaning of phenomena is a result of experience that results in many different interpretations. Realists consider aspects from both positivist and interpretivist positions. It disagrees with positivists’ over-deterministic view or structured view and with interpretivists’ totally relativist view (highly contextual). It is associated with mixed methods or triangulation.
Saunders et al (2009:116) stated that not only are business situations complex, they are also unique. They are a function of a particular set of circumstances and individuals coming together at a specific time. They contend that the interpretivist paradigm is highly suitable in such circumstances. This research was conducted in a specific setting, that is, Zimbabwe, Harare and in particular the commercial sector. The researcher’s aim was to get deeper perspectives on the benefits of employee engagement in this unique sector of the economy which is different, say with a mining setting. It was therefore imperative that the research adopted an interpretive research philosophy to uncover the underlying perspectives of employee engagement in the commercial sector in Harare.

3.3. Research Approaches
In literature two major approaches are found, that is, qualitative and quantitative approach or a combination of the two. Ackroyd and Hughes cited in Kumar (2011) suggested that as both qualitative and quantitative approaches have their strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages, neither one is markedly superior than the other in all respects. Kielmann, Cataldo and Seeley (2011) suggest that the important difference lies in how questions are asked and what kind of responses we encourage from informants, how we record responses, and what we do with this data. Qualitative and quantitative approaches are often located at extreme ends of a continuum with the mixed method being a combination of the two.

Kielmann et al (2011) distinguished the two approaches by pointing out that quantitative approach tends to use structured methods that anticipate a limited set of responses and generate data that are already in the form of counts or measurements, or can be readily quantified and qualitative approach on the other hand, tends to use less structured and non-structured methods that address the questions of ‘why’ and ‘how’ rather than ‘what’ and ‘how much. This shows that in quantitative study researcher directs, controls, manipulates data whilst in qualitative study the researcher participates more in the research and engages with research participants.

The research approach chosen for this study was the qualitative approach. This is a more suitable approach to answer the research questions dominated by why and how rather than what and how much. Qualitative approach is a systematic, subjective approach used to
describe life experiences and give them meaning (Burns & Grove 2003:356; Morse & Field 1996:1999). This study sought to explore subjective work experiences of various actors in the commercial sector and giving them meaning with regards to the benefits of employee engagement in company performance.

Most of the studies conducted on the subject of employee engagement were quantitative studies, basically focusing on the measurement of engagement levels. This study followed the qualitative route to explore the different perspectives that will give explanations of the current engagement levels and barriers to engagement. Qualitative approach will give employers a valuable insight into the key areas of focus in order to maximize the benefits of employee engagement.

3.4. Research Strategies
Saunders et al (2009) provides research strategies which are common in literature as follows;

- experiment
- survey
- case study
- action research
- grounded theory
- ethnography
- archival research.

The purpose of an experiment is to study causal links; whether a change in one independent variable produces a change in another dependent variable Hakim (2000). Experiments produce credible results and allow for statistical manipulation. Surveys involve the collection of the same information from all sample subjects. Surveys are generally a quick and low cost strategy of collecting data. Case study is defined by Robson (2002:178) as “a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence.” It is contextual and allows generalisations from specific situations.
Saunders et al (2009) concludes that action research strategy combines both data gathering and facilitation of change. It is a participatory strategy whereby the researcher is involved in analysing data and taking action to transform situations. Grounded theory involves the collection of data without the establishment of initial theoretical framework. Data is then tested to develop theory. Ethnography involves the study of a particular culture and its subjects. It uses the socially acquired and shared knowledge available to participants in the research to account for observed patterns of human activity. Archival research is whereby the researcher collects administrative records as the principal source of data.

Morris and Wood (1991) contends that the case study strategy will be of particular interest to a researcher if they wish to gain a rich understanding of the context of the research and the processes being enacted. This study was conducted within the scope of the commercial sector in Harare. The advantage of using the case study strategy was that it allowed the researcher to probe deeply into the engagement issues in the commercial sector in Harare. The case study strategy was also useful in drawing out personal experiences of people in the commercial sector. This provided rich data which was relevant in developing theory and adding to the body of knowledge.

Case study as a strategy is considered by Benbasat et al. (1987:370) to be viable and advantageous strategy where research is being conducted in an area where few, if any, previous studies have been undertaken and if there is a need to focus on contemporary events or phenomena in a natural setting. Few studies have been conducted focusing on the qualitative aspect of employee engagement in the commercial sector. By conducting interviews with, for example, Human Resources Managers in the commercial sector, the researcher benefited from uncovering rich data in a natural setting. It also meant that the ideas that came out through interviews were practical and in some cases tried and tested. This also enhanced the solutions and recommendations that were developed through the study.

3.5. **Data collection instrument/s**

There are several data collection instruments which include interviews, observations, questionnaires, documents and research time horizons. Where you are undertaking an exploratory study, or a study that includes an exploratory element, it is likely that you will
include non-standardised (qualitative) research interviews in your design (Cooper and Schindler 2008). The suitable instrument which was used in the study was semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews were based on an interview guide augmented by follow up and probing questions.

Kahn and Cannell (1957) describe an interview as a purposeful discussion between two or more people. The aim of an interview is to gather meaningful rich data that will help in answering research objectives. Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger (2005) reported that an interview can cover any number of content areas and is a relatively inexpensive and efficient way to collect a wide variety of data that does not require formal testing. Semi-structured interviews were appropriate for this study as there was need to collect a variety of data which was not going to be tested but instead useful in developing theory.

The other advantage of using interview as a data collection instrument was that it offered flexibility, for example questions could be varied, omitted or new questions added depending on the organisational context to ensure that relevant data was collected. This study was conducted over a wide spectrum of individuals working in different companies and with different academic and professional background. There was therefore need for flexibility in ensuring that interviewees understood the questions and that data collected met the research objectives.

Another advantage of using semi-structured interviews cited by Saunders et al (2009) was that it gives the researcher an opportunity to ‘probe’ answers, where you want your interviewees to explain, or build on their responses. This was useful in the study as the researcher managed to collect rich information as the interviewees opened up about their feelings, opinions and perspectives. It also provided an avenue to explore new information that was not on the interview guide which was insightful for the study.

Some interviewees, especially senior employees generally prefer to be interviewed rather than fill in a questionnaire North et al. 1983, cited in Healey (1991). As such the researcher managed to purposively select sample members who could offer the best value to the study without the limitation of the preference of senior employees. The researcher was able to provide the assurance that the information needed was for a study in fulfilment of academic
course and confidentiality was to be respected. Such assurances and confidence given to interviewees was effective in acquiring rich data.

Healey (1991:206) also makes the point that ‘the interviewer . . . has more control over who answers the questions’ in comparison with a questionnaire, which may be passed from one person to another. Semi-structured face to face interviews gave the researcher control over who participated in the study. There was need to get a different mix of participants that were at different levels and in different organisations. This allowed the researcher to collect quality data that was relevant for the study.

Disadvantages
In relation to qualitative research, reliability is concerned with whether alternative researchers would reveal similar findings Easterby-Smith et al. (2008); Silverman (2007). In the interview instrument it is difficult to replicate the same study and obtain similar findings. This is mostly as a result of interviewer bias whereby the interviewer’s beliefs, frame of reference and tone of voice may influence the answers through the manner in which questions are asked. Another related aspect that affects replicability is interviewee bias, for example, some may not be comfortable to reveal certain relevant details and that people tend to put their best foot forward when asked about their personal experiences. This was overcome by the researcher being trained on interviewing by an expert and also reading interviewing guides and tips from other seasoned researchers.

Interviews are generally time consuming relative to other data collection instruments such as questionnaires. Saunders et al (2009) highlights that the time-consuming requirements of the interview process may result in a reduction in willingness to take part on behalf of some of those to whom you would like to interview. This limits the quality of findings as the sample participants will be constrained in terms of numbers and quality. To overcome this, the interview guide was given to interviewees two days prior to the interview as well as necessary clarifications on questions to allow them to prepare for the interview and avoid unnecessary delays.
3.6. Population and sampling

3.6.1. Population

The population includes all elements that meet certain criteria for inclusion in a study (Burns & Grove, 2003:43). This study focused on stakeholders in the commercial sector companies in Harare which included employees, senior management, National Employment Council representatives and Commercial Workers Union representatives. The Commercial sector is defined by the National Employment Council for the Commercial Sectors in Zimbabwe Collective Bargaining Agreement Fifth Schedule as companies in the following category:

1. Advertising services
2. Analytical chemistry and laboratory work not elsewhere classified
3. Art galleries, exhibitions, museums and libraries
4. Auctioneers, assessors of property
5. Bookmakers
6. Building caretaking
7. Building societies
8. Business and professional associations clerical services not elsewhere classified
9. Commercial art
10. Commercial college
11. Computer services
12. Consulting and advisory services
13. Debt collection
14. Dirt track racing
15. Dog racing
16. Employment agencies
17. Estate agencies
18. Film studios, film making, motion picture distribution and projection at cinemas and other places
19. Financial institutions excluding banks and discount houses and their subsidiaries
20. Gemstone, jewellery and manufacturing sales and repairs
21. Gymnasiums, physical culture centres, dancing schools and studios
22. Industrial and technical consulting
23. Market research agencies
24. Medical aid and mutual benefit societies
25. Motor, motor cycle and cycle racing
26. Oil and petrol products – importation and the bulk distribution thereof
27. Outdoor commercial entertainment
28. Professional services not covered by an employers association
29. Professional sport
30. Repair and business services
31. Riding schools, horse racing
32. Scientific research
33. Secretarial services
34. Social clubs which do not provide catering facilities
35. Sports grounds, recreation grounds, parks and gardens
36. Typing and duplicating services
37. Veterinary services
38. Wholesale and retail trade

3.6.2. Sampling

Sampling techniques are divided into two categories, that is, probability and non-probability sampling. Saunders et al (2009) states that with probability samples the chance, or probability, of each case being selected from the population is known and is usually equal for all cases. Probability sampling is normally associated with quantitative approaches. Non-probability sampling, on the other hand, is a sampling approach where subjects being selected from the population do not have an equal chance of being selected.

The study benefited from using the purposive sampling technique. Patton (1990:169), “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth.” Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. It is useful especially in collecting specific data from a unique situation. Purposive or judgemental sampling enables you to use your judgement to select cases that will best enable you to answer your research question(s) and to meet your objectives Saunders et al (2009). The study in particular utilised the heterogeneous purposive sampling where subjects interviewed were selected from different levels of responsibility.
The advantage of using purposive sampling technique was that the researcher used his knowledge and experience about the subject matter to select a sample of people who could provide rich and diversified data that was relevant in adding value to the study. There was therefore adequate control of who participated in the research which enhanced the quality and variability of the responses. The researcher, being an employee in the commercial sector, was able to utilize personal networks to gain access to valuable people who were included in the sample.

The researcher had limited time to conduct the research and one of the important ingredients was therefore time. Purposive sampling is suitable in cases where time is a constraint and also when dealing with a small sample. Time to select participants and getting feedback from them was efficiently allocated as a result of using the purposive sampling technique. Fischer (2010) states that the researcher puts into their sample whoever they can obtain access to or whoever they think may be appropriate respondents for the questions they want to ask. Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to select candidates who were accessible and at the same time those who could answer the research questions.

3.7. Data analysis techniques

Data analysis is a mechanism for reducing and organising data to produce findings that require interpretation by the researcher Burns & Grove (2003:479). Data analysis allows for the researcher to create meaning from the data collected. There are two types of data analysis techniques in qualitative research, that is, content and thematic analysis. The researcher used content analysis to get intimate with the data collected and thematic analysis to organise the data into themes obtained from the research objectives.

Data was collected through interviews and recorded using a tape recorder. The recordings were transcribed into a computer document. After coding of the data it was possible to organise the data into the established themes. It is critical to identify how statements or central themes emerge and connect to one another if the final description is to be comprehensive and exhaustive Streubert, Speziale & Carpenter (2003:70). There was need to connect with the data meticulously analysing it from the transcripts, hence the use of content and thematic data analysis.
There was value in utilising content analysis as this uncovered hidden ideas in data. This means that there was a sense of thoroughness in analysing data using content analysis. Hidden meanings were explored fully and implicit ideas were investigated. This provided a good platform to uncover the unique situation that Zimbabwe’s commercial sector companies are faced with. These ‘untold stories’ were then used to develop recommendations that contribute to the body of knowledge.

Alhojailan (2012) states that “By using thematic analysis there is the possibility to link the various concepts and opinions of the learners and compare with the data that has been gathered in different situation at different times during the project.” The researcher had prior knowledge from literature review about the relationship between employee engagement and company performance. This information was then compared to the raw data collected in the research to verify theory and also discovering new avenues.

Content analysis ensures that the majority of the data that is collected starts with a precise content then moves to broader generalisations and then finally to theories Patton (1990). There is therefore a clear line of sight from data collection to developed theories which legitimises the research. It provides a systematic approach to data analysis. Blacker (2009:83) argues that a rich thematic description of the entire data would assist the readers to get a sense of ‘the predominant and important themes’ from the data.

3.8. Validity and reliability
3.8.1. Validity
Saunders et al (2009) defines validity as concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about. Validity determines whether a study is going to add to the body of knowledge concerning the subject matter or not. A study with low validity means that the research objectives might not have been met whilst on the other hand a study with high validity means that research objectives have been met.

To counter the threats of validity, the researcher consulted experts in the subject of employee engagement who are Human Resources Consultants. The consultants had experience in conducting employee engagement surveys and years of research on the
subject. The experts quality checked the interview guide and suggested some improvements which were considered by the researcher to enhance the richness of the data collected.

The researcher conducted a pilot study as a measure to increase validity of the research instruments. The researcher carried out pilot interviews on two interviewees and noted the need for some improvements on the questions. Some questions were modified after noticing that they required interviewees to provide the same answers. After the pilot study a final updated questionnaire was then developed.

3.8.2. Reliability
Saunders et al (2009) states that reliability refers to the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings. This means that if a different researcher carries out another study on the particular sample they must get the same findings if the data collection techniques or analysis procedures were reliable. Easterby-Smith et al. (2008:109) also adds that reliability refers to transparency in how sense was made from the raw data and measures yielding the same results on other occasions. The key feature of reliability is therefore consistency of findings.

To counter the threats to reliability the researcher ensured that interviewee error and bias were eliminated or minimised. These may be caused by the timing of the interviews, for example, when employees give positive feedback because they are in a jovial mood soon after receiving bonuses. Bias may be caused by the interviewee giving answers that they think the interviewer wants to hear. Other threats to reliability are found in interpreting the interview data. Wrong interpretation may result in wrong conclusions.

To counter the threats to reliability the researcher first analysed possible areas of potential error or bias. Measures were then put in place to address those areas, for example, scheduling of interviews when there are no prior events or known preceding events that might affect the interviewee, clearly explaining the purpose of the research to the interviewees and instituting some degree of structure in asking and interpreting questions. The effect of these measures was that reliability of data collection instruments and analysis procedures was strengthened.
3.9. Limitations
The greatest limitation of the research was that it was difficult to generalize findings based on the design of the research. The research was focusing on the commercial sector in Harare which is different from factors that arise in the mining or agricultural environment. To illustrate this point it can be noted that whilst agriculture and mining workers might be provided with basic needs like housing, water and electricity this is not the same with most commercial sector companies therefore it is difficult to generalize, for example, the key engagement drivers for these different sector employees.

The research design and time constraints also limited the number of participants to twelve. This limited the data that could be collected as well as generalizations that could be made. The effects of this limitation though were lessened by the in-depth interviews which cultivated rich information and the selection of key informants from different sections of the population under study.

3.10. Ethical considerations
Ethical factors were seriously considered in this study. Of particular note was voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, potential for harm, audio taping, and communicating the results.

3.10.1. Voluntary Participation
After purposively selecting the participants the researcher informed the participants that their involvement was voluntary. The researcher explained that the research was for academic purposes only. In addition the interviewees were informed that they had a right to discontinue the interview if they were no longer comfortable with the questions or interview situation. All candidates completed their interviews without any premature terminations.

3.10.2. Informed Consent
This is whereby a participant in a study is fully aware of what they are involving themselves into, the extent of their participation and what the results were going to be used for. The researcher requested for permission to conduct the study from the participants and the organization they were representing through a written permission seeking letter from the
Graduate School of Management. The extent of the interviewees’ participation was clarified before each interview.

3.10.3. Confidentiality
Confidentiality is whereby participants of the study are known but their identity is not publicised. In the tape recorded interviews the interviewees were not asked to state their names. The participants were also informed that their identity was not going to be revealed.

3.10.4. Potential Harm
The researcher first studied the interview guide to ensure that there was no potential harm. Participants were informed that they would need to recall situations where they were not engaged in their job. Participants were further informed that they had a right to discontinue the interview if they were no longer comfortable to continue with the interview due to emotional harm or any harm whatsoever as a result of the research.

3.10.5. Audio Taping
Permission to record the interviews was sought first before the interviews began. This was done at the time of making an appointment of the interview to allow for planning purposes, that is, in the event that an interviewee declined to be recorded the researcher had prepared a scribe to collect data. All the participants accepted to be recorded.

3.10.6. Communicating the results
The researcher ensured that plagiarism was not committed in communicating the results of the research. Plagiarism occurs when another person’s ideas, opinions, words are used without giving credit to the owners of the same. The researcher ensured that the results of the study were properly referenced. Referencing was also checked by the supervisor and areas that needed attention were corrected.

The researcher also ensured that academic fraud was not committed. This is whereby the researcher misrepresents what has been done and the results of a study. The researcher was in constant check with the supervisor to ensure the work produced was above board. The results and conclusions drawn were taken purely from the data collected and integrated with referenced literature findings.
3.11. Chapter summary
The chapter described the range of methods and techniques which are available for research. The chapter further highlighted the particular methods and techniques that the researcher used in conducting the research and the benefits of using such methods and techniques. The chapter highlighted that the research was a qualitative study and the related strategies, instruments, data collection and data analysis procedures were employed in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction
The previous chapter presented an analysis and justification of the methods used in the collection and analysis of data. This chapter presents the findings from data collection and an analysis of the data. Relationships between the findings and existing literature will be explored. The major objective was to analyse the benefits of employee engagement on
company performance in the commercial sector in Harare. This chapter will reveal how the objectives of the research were achieved.

**Objectives Revisited**

The specific objectives for the research were;

- To establish the key employee engagement drivers that will lead to positive company performance in the commercial sector in Harare.
- To assess the relationship between employee engagement and company performance.
- To evaluate the barriers to employee engagement.
- To assess the applicability of the Aon Hewitt Model of Employee Engagement on commercial sector companies in Harare.

**4.1. Presentation of Findings**

The presentation of findings will follow a deductive approach. Yin (2003) suggests that, where you have made use of existing theory to formulate your research question and objectives, you may also use the theoretical propositions that helped you do this as a means to devise a framework to help you to organise and direct your data analysis. The objectives identified in Chapter One will be used as the framework for categories for the research. The objectives were also used to develop interview questions for data collection. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis.

**4.1.1. Demographics**

Twelve participants were selected for the research covering Human Resources Consultancy organizations (two), the National Employment Council for the Commercial Sector (one), Human Resources Managers and Directors from commercial sector (four), Commercial Workers Union representative (one), commercial staff and supervisors (three) and commercial business owner (one). The ages of participants ranged from thirty to fifty-five years comprising of six males and six females.
4.1.2. Key employee engagement drivers

4.1.2.1. The concept of employee engagement
All participants showed that they had a good grasp of the concept of employee engagement from a practical point of view.
Participant P1 responded that;
“My understanding of employee engagement is when an employee is fully committed to an organisation’s objectives, the direction it is going and this will be seen in terms of commitment and performance.”

Participant P4 stated that;
“Employee engagement is the extent to which employees feel passionate about their jobs and commitment to the organisation.”

Participant 8 added that;
“This is a workplace approach resulting from right conditions in an organisation for all employees to perform at their best. Due to the availability of these conditions employees are committed to the organisation’s values and goals, they are motivated to the organisation’s success which also in turn result in their personal success.”

4.1.2.2. Importance of employee engagement
All participants showed that employee engagement is not only important but that it is desirable for the success of organisations.

Participant 2 states that;
“I think it is crucial to have engaged employees in an organisation because an engaged employee makes for a happy customer. Engaged employees are likely to be aware of the organisation’s vision hence they work towards attaining the desired goals which in turn leads to profitability, productivity and minimum supervision.”

Participant 9 responded that;
“It is an approach that increases the chances of business success, contributing to organisational and individual performance, productivity and well-being.”

Participant 12 stated that;
“Employee engagement enables the organisation to have a better chance of achieving its set objectives.”

4.1.2.3. Key factors that drive employee engagement
Participants provided varied responses to key engagement drivers depending upon their levels in the organisation.

Staff and supervisors considered that it was key to provide the basics.
Participant 3, an employee, stated that;
“The key engagement drivers are
- Conducive work environment,
- Learning and development,
- Competitive remuneration.”

Participant 1, an HR Consultant, stated that;
“In a nutshell, the key factors that drive engagement include sharing of direction, involvement, creativity, employee development and performance and rewards.”

Participant 6, business owner, noted that;
“Employee engaged is largely premised on the leadership and leadership style, how decisions are being made, the culture being driven by the leadership and resourcing – when you work in a company where there are no resources you cannot expect employees to be productive even if the leadership is good they are likely to be disengaged due to lack or absence of resources to produce.”

4.1.2.4. Putting employee engagement drivers into practice
Participants offered varying solutions on how employee engagement drivers can be instituted.
Participant 3 noted that;
“The engagement drivers need to be effected for them to have an impact in the organization by things like proper communication in the organisation, wellness programmes at workplace, recognise educational qualifications by either promotions or salary notching, proper job grading and salary surveys.”

Participant 10 noted that;
“To put the engagement drivers into practice an organisation needs to provide such things as;
Appreciation - not in terms of remuneration only but even non financial rewards,
Honest and frank communication – even communicating that the company is not able to pay on the set pay date is very important and,
Compliance to statutory requirements – avoid issues to do with unfair labour practices and also the fundamental rights of employees that are provided in the Labour Act need to be respected.”

4.1.3. Employee engagement and company performance

4.1.3.1. Indicators of good company performance
Participants provided both financial and non-financial indicators of good company performance which include return on capital employed, profitability and productivity

Participant 11 stated that;
“I would categorise company performance into three sections, that is;
People – this involves proper safety measures and high employee engagement,
Customer – whereby an organization offers first class quality service and,
Financial – which relates to growing revenues, profit and productivity”

Participant 6 stated that;
“Company performance is measured from various perspectives. There is the financial perspective where company makes profits and issues like safety perspective where employees are safe and they can work and go home in one peace, productivity – where
employees meet their targets and there is the general employee motivation where you have a very good IR climate.

Participant 3 stated that;
“Obviously we have to look at the shareholders perspectives and say that good performance would include;
Good management of company resources,
Low labour turnover,
Healthy financial balance sheet,
Dividends to shareholders,
Increased productivity.”

4.1.3.2. Key ingredients for a successful organization
The majority of participants agreed that at the centre of successful organizations are the effective management of people issues.

Participant 1 stated that;
“You need a very good team in terms of your employees. We are talking of the right number, right skills, right jobs and right attitudes.You also need to have the right culture-when we talk of culture we talk about our values, the value system that we operate in. The culture should allow for innovation and adaptability to change because the environment is changing everyday.”

Participant 6 stated that;
“From experience, to drive organisational success a company needs robust training and development programmes, high employee productivity, always thriving for profit and the company culture should be very positive, maintaining cordialindustrial relations climate – human capital should be first priority in terms of motivation, engagement and meeting the employees’ key needs.”
4.1.3.3. Do people issues matter that much or just a good vision is sufficient for success?
All participants agree that an organisation needs engaged employees to carry the vision of the company from generation to generation. Eight participants pointed out the importance of continuity in ensuring organisational success.

Participant 6 stated that;
“Vision is not something that you can come today and you buy into it and you run with it, it has to be entrenched in you, you have to be indoctrinated, be schooled into it because vision is not the words that you just read on the wall, its closing your eyes and seeing 20-30 years on. A company should get people, impart the vision and retain them then they will run with vision of the company.”

Participant 2 stated that;
“In my opinion for an organisation to achieve or realise their dream, they owe it to the employees hence employees are the greatest assets for an organisation. It becomes very expensive to let go and train new staff depending on the turnover.”

Participant 5 stated that;
“A good vision without buy in from employees will not result in the success of the organisation as these two will not be pulling in one direction which is one condition that has to be present for the organisation to be successful.”

4.1.4. Engagement Barriers
4.1.4.1. Experience in working with engaged employees
All participants agreed that an organization with highly engaged employees is a pleasant place to work. They highlighted that employees not only give commitment but also go an extra mile.
Participant 1 described the experience in an organization with engaged staff by stating that;
“Working environment was a very friendly and at times you wouldn’t know who was the manager or the supervisor and so on. People would manage themselves in terms of their daily targets, weekly targets and monthly targets. The company would help people to get residential stands and facilitate that with the city council.”
Participant 9 commented that;
“The experience was beautiful. An employee would work up each day looking forward to going to work.”

Participant 12 on her experience with engaged employees commented that;
“the experience was very good and the level of engagement challenged every employee to be committed and work hard. There was a general culture of high commitment levels”

Participant 11 commented that;
“Engaged employees are self-driven. You just give them the vision then they run with it then as the leader you just guide them. Because they identify with the company, they have organisation citizenship and they feel they belong to the company and the company belongs to them”

4.1.4.2. Experience in working with disengaged employees
There was agreement that employees who are not engaged are a liability to the company’s success.

Participant 9 stated that;
“My experience with disengaged employees was disastrous. You could witness fights and counter fights, absenteeism, high number of sick leave, loss of good employees, poor customer care and very low profit or even losses.”

Participant 6 commented that;
“There was high absenteeism rate in form of sickness absence and AWOL until the industrial relations climate became volatile, high disciplinary cases and grievances, there was sabotage and people would give excuses for not producing. You find cases where employees come late to work and generally there was wastage and underutilisation of resources, resources might be there but they would not be efficiently utilised operating at below standard.”
Participant 5 stated that;
“Working with disengaged employees is the worst experience that one can ever be in as most of the time too much time is spent dealing with very petty issues like absenteeism. Disengaged employees create customers who spread negative word of mouth and these emotions will rub onto other customers and potential customers and in the end it affects the profitability of the organisation.”

4.1.5. Obstacles to achieve engagement

Various obstacles to engagement in the commercial sector were presented ranging from micro to macro levels. Both management and employees were considered responsible for causing these barriers.

Participant 4 stated that;
“Some of the obstacles of employee engagement are lack of trust, lack of buy in from employees and lack of affordability of some of the parameters that are needed to change the environment, for example fair rewards.”

Participant 2 stated that;
“Engaging employees is not an easy task. You face resistance from staff to carry out some programmes, sometimes it is caused by inadequate communication to staff, insufficient resources or poorly communicated vision.”

Participant 9 stated that;
“In companies with high turnover, employees will come and go and new employees will take a while to buy into the companies’ vision.

- There is mistrust - companies that have not lived up to previous engagements will find it hard to convince employees to be engaged.
- It is expensive - Basic needs of employees must be met – such as a good wage. If the economic environment is down, it may be difficult to meet up with employee wage expectations.
- Lack of wisdom - The driver of employee engagement must have wisdom and high skill to manage this. It is not easy.”
4.1.5.1. Countering obstacles to engagement

The need to counter barriers to engagement was emphasised by the participants. Ten out of twelve participants agreed that organisations should look for immediate solutions to engage employees despite the prevailing macroeconomic challenges.

Participant 2 mentioned that;
“Barriers to engagement can be dealt with by encouraging staff to participate in decision making, delegating, putting in place incentive structures, putting in place a performance management system, dedicating resources to facilitate employee engagement and improving communication channels.”

Participant 5 provided five possible ways of averting barriers to employee engagement by stating that;
“To avoid barriers to engagement organisations;
A clear vision and goals should be outlined
Expectations should be clear
Survey employees about motivators, recognition, performance rewards, empowerment and a visible career path
Provide regular feedback
Use exit interviews to improve on problem areas.”

Participant 7 explained that;
“Engagement requires intentional effort by the employer and starts from the top. Companies should select the right people for the right jobs. Companies should not neglect employee well-being and they should also develop employees’ strengths.”

4.1.6. Applicability of the Aon Hewitt Model of Employee Engagement

There were mixed perspectives on the applicability of the Aon Hewitt Model on employee engagement in the commercial sector. Two participants agree that the model is applicable and should be adopted as it is.
Participant 4 stated that;
“Definitely the model is applicable in the commercial sector. It highlights the important drivers to get employees engaged.”
Three participants agreed that the model is applicable but the engagement drivers need to be rolled out in phases.

Participant 12 state that;
“In my opinion, I think the model addresses the key elements that are necessary for employee engagement. Since engagement is not an event it’s a process so it is applicable in phases.”

Four participants stated that the model does not work in the commercial sector in Harare. They cited the economic challenges as a major hindrance for a company to focus on all the employee engagement drivers suggested by the model.

Participant 11 states that;
“Firstly I don’t think I can go to my CEO with this model and get a positive response on the budget. There are obviously a lot of things that are of higher priority, for example sourcing finance, and so for a company to go through all these drivers just to get employees happy and committed, in the current economic environment, is not wise.”

Participant 6 stated that;
“To attempt to adopt this model in Zimbabwe is a fallacy. Companies should leverage on their strengths and not chase all the possible drivers. Brand, for example, employees can be engaged even if the company is virtually unknown.

4.1.7. Importance of Employee Engagement - Recommendations
The participants provided very interesting and practical recommendations for employee engagement which are very useful in assisting companies in the commercial sector.

Participant 1 – “Your employees are the advantage over your competitors so it’s important for them to feel engaged for the organisation and you can only do so by having a deliberate policy that address the key drivers and in so doing you address their concerns and their welfare.”
Participant 2 – “Yes, employee engagement is crucial in driving company success. Employees are an organisation’s internal customers and these can cause external customers or stakeholders to have different perceptions of the company. Engaged employees are likely to contribute positively while disengaged employees can lead to the demise of a company.”

Participant 3 – “Employee engagement can only be used to achieve organisational success if the engagement drivers are present at workplace.”

Participant 4 – “Employee engagement can be used as a weapon to achieve company success. Engaged employees perform better and are loyal to the company.”

Participant 5 – “Employee engagement is critical for any business. Companies should; Improve the relationships with senior management Provide frequent feedback to employees Share the company’s vision and goals with employees Improve on key employee motivators Use exit interviews to find out problem areas and work on them Evaluate your managers.”

Participant 6 – “Employee engagement is a weapon for organisational success because it is the necessary condition for productivity; it is the fuel that drives the human vehicle at work. If you have employees who are not engaged it is like having a vehicle that is not fuelled, without fuelling it, it will not move.”

Participant 7 – “I think employee engagement should be used as a tool for success, though not in solo, other measures of success have to be used as well.”

Participant 8 – “An organisation can use employee engagement as a weapon by actively providing learning and development platforms for its employees for senior roles.”

Participant 9 – “Zimbabwean employees want a stable company – a good brand, where they are well looked after – good salary, employee participation, good leadership.”
Participant 10 – “An engaged employee is easier to allocate work – their smart goals are aligned to the corporate strategic goals.”

Participant 11 – “It’s just like an unwritten contract where an employer expects an employee to be engaged and an employee expects the employer to provide conditions for engagement. If these expectations are met it provides a good recipe for organisational success.”

Participant 12 – “Everyone needs to know how their activities actually contribute to company success. When this is clear to the employee, the employee ceases to just be engaged but rather they begin to consciously contribute to the company objectives.”

4.2. Analysis of Findings

4.2.1. Question 1 - What are the key employee engagement drivers that will lead to positive company performance?

A number of employee engagement drivers have been suggested by researchers, authors, consultants and practitioners. However, the current economic challenges in Zimbabwe require that companies are focussed on the key engagement drivers that will optimise employee engagement levels for the benefit of company performance. The researcher sought to find out these key engagement drivers and how they can be instituted in the commercial sector. The key drivers that came out from the study were communication, relationship with superiors, leadership, employee development and fair compensation.

Eight out of twelve participants suggested that communication is a key driver of employee engagement. Participant 2 proposed that “Communication is important in engaging employees - sharing the organisation’s vision and mission and making it clearer for everyone to understand and uphold.” Participant 10 supports the value of communication and stated that “communication and honest feedback is key even in the face of difficulty. Of course there is a level of confidentiality that needs to be observed for the good of the company but key issues on company performance need to be communicated to staff.” In support of the value of communication Heikkeri highlighted that two-way communication was identified as a key driver of employee engagement by Robinson et al (2004) and Mercer
LLC (2007). This view was also supported by the findings from CIPD (2006) survey which concluded that employees were more likely to be engaged if they feel well-informed about processes going on in the organisation and have the opportunity to feed their views upwards. This research has therefore confirmed literature and previous study findings on communication being an important driver for employee engagement.

Seven out twelve participants stated that leadership plays a crucial role in employee engagement in the commercial sector. Participant 6 stated that “Employee engagement is largely premised on the leadership and leadership style, how decisions are being made and the culture being driven by the leadership.” This view was also supported by Participant 7 who stated that “Employees will likely be more engaged if they have belief in the leadership, that he/she is in charge of the ship and knows where the company is going.” Cataldo (2011) reported that there is a strong link between leadership and employee engagement. He further mentions that the leaders have to be engaged themselves for them to engage employees. Heikkari (2010) suggested that employees are more likely to be engaged when the leader shows resilience, consistency, trust and competence. This shows that the research findings were consistent with literature on the crucial role of driving employee engagement.

Six out of twelve participants viewed compensation as another key driver of employee engagement. Participant 10 commented that “Engagement in Zimbabwe is linked to monetary rewards, it’s not a normal market. People leave organisations just to get an extra dollar on their table.” Most participants reiterated the importance of competitive remuneration as a strong driver of employee engagement. Participant 6 noted that “the reason why people come to work is to be compensated. If people’s compensation expectations are ignored or not met they are likely to be less engaged, for example, paying below NEC minimum salaries, not paying medical aid when the company can afford to pay medical aid and delay in salary payments.” This shows that compensation is a sensitive matter that needs serious attention to enhance employee engagement.

Literature provides mixed thoughts on the value of compensation as a driver of employee engagement. Sakovska (2012) proposes that following Kahn’s theory (1990), the level of an employees’ engagement depends on the level of returns on their investments of self into work. (Ologbo and Saudah, 2011) also points out that many employees like to be
distinctively rewarded and recognized for the outstanding work they do. Some literature findings however contradict this view for example a study by (Saks, 2006) found out that there was no significant connection between rewards and recognition. Robinson (2007) agrees with Saks, and states that other factors besides rewards are usually more important for engagement. This shows that importance of remuneration on employee engagement is inconclusive.

On the importance of remuneration as a driver of engagement, it can therefore be concluded that although remuneration might not rank very highly as an engagement driver in other settings, it is an important driver in the commercial sector companies in Harare. Companies should strive to pay competitive remuneration as well as fair compensation in relation to other employees in the company and the general labour market, which is linked to performance. Other forms of reward should also be considered as Participant 1 stated that “companies should be creative in coming up with rewards and recognition strategies.”

Six out of twelve participants presented that a good and supportive relationship with the immediate superior is a key driver of employee engagement. Participant 7 stated that “I have seen that supervisors and line managers have an important bearing on whether employees will be engaged or not.” There is therefore need to ensure that supervisors and managers have proper development and training to foster engagement at work. Participant 8 supports this view and stated that “One of the key engagement drivers is the relationship between an employee and his supervisor, most people leave supervisors not companies.” This shows that supervisor-subordinate relationship has a bearing on engagement and in turn staff turnover.

The importance of a good superior-subordinate relationship is reinforced by literature findings. After a study on employee engagement Carnegie (2012) states that a ‘caring’ manager is one of the key elements that drive employee engagement. He proposes that a manager’s ability to build strong relationships with employees, build strong team interaction and lead in a “person-centred” way creates an engaging environment in which employees can perform at the highest possible level. There is therefore need to capacitate managers and supervisors so that they are able to fully engage employees. Wellins et al (2005:7) proposes that “show us a highly engaged team, and there’s a strong likelihood we can show you a leader who is coaching for success, setting clear goals, empowering others, providing open
and honest feedback, and making the winners feel valued.” This shows that the research findings were supported by literature on the value of having a strong subordinate-superior relationships.

Another key engagement driver cited by five out of twelve participants was employee development. Participant 11 noted that “if you look at the economy and the business environment its changing everyday in terms of technology, innovation and ways of doing business so they is a constant need to upgrade employee skills. When an employee feels that they can contribute then they will be engaged.” Employees will also develop confidence in doing their jobs after being trained. Participant 3 stated that “learning and development is a key driver and companies should organise workshops and seminars for their employees to improve their skills and capabilities.” It is therefore important in the commercial sector to develop employees and afford them opportunities for growth.

The issue of employee development is supported by a study by Ologbo and Saudah (2011) who conclude that employee development opportunities were found to have a positive influence on engagement. These finding are consistent with Kahn’s (1990) viewpoint that the ability to learn and to apply new knowledge increases meaningfulness for employees, which in turn positively influences engagement. The research was therefore consistent with findings in literature on the value of employee development as a driver for employee engagement.

The research uncovered some of the employee engagement drivers that are not common in literature which included compliance to statutory requirements, respecting workers institutions, that is, Workers committees and Works Councils and offering employees a platform for creativity and innovation. Participant 10 suggested that “employees also look at the perception of the company towards workers committee or works council. If there is friction between management and worker representatives at works council this will also reflect in worker constituency showing disengagement.” On the issue of compliance to labour laws Participant 11 stated that “to show genuineness in upholding fairness, companies should comply with the provisions of the Labour Act and NEC Collective Bargaining Agreement as well as other relevant statutory provisions that pertain to employees.” This show of fairness will lead to engagement. Participant 1 stated that “all the
facets of an organisation should have a platform for creativity and innovation as this creates ownership in employees in whatever the organisation wants to achieve.” These drivers are an important contribution to the body of knowledge pertaining to engagement in the commercial sector.

4.2.2. Question 2 - How is employee engagement related to company performance?
The objective of the research was to explore the relationship between employee engagement and company performance highlighting the major benefits of employee engagement that will lead to company success. The research findings show that employee engagement contributes to company performance by increasing customer satisfaction, increasing productivity, reducing labour turnover, increasing revenue and profits and reducing in costs through low litigation costs.

Ten out twelve participants agreed that employee engagement benefits company performance through enhanced customer service that leads to increased market share. Participant 11 explained that “Engaged employees have zeal and passion for the company, they treat customers as if he/she is the only customer left out there.” This promotes repeat buyers for the business and as Participant 3 stated “it increase market share through word of mouth or referrals to other potential customers.” Participant 7 elaborated further by stating that “satisfied customers are an asset to the business, they give the company feedback either positive or negative which then helps the company to be even better and offer first class service.” It is therefore crucial in the commercial sector to have engaged employees as most of them have direct interface with customers. Participant 8 cautioned that “disengaged employees on the other hand exudes negative energy that affect the reputation of organisations.” There is need to avoid having disengaged employees to represent the organisation as the consequences can be disastrous.”

Harter et al (2002) states that employee engagement is inextricably tied to customer satisfaction. In such a case a company with high engagement will win more customers and gain competitive advantage. Bakker and Leiter (2010) reports that almost all major consultancy firms state that there is a connection between employee engagement and profitability increase through higher productivity, increased sales, customer satisfaction and
employee retention. This provides proof that the research findings in the commercial sector in Harare are consistent with literature to the fact that employee engagement lead to customer satisfaction.

Eight out of twelve participants emphasised the importance of employee engagement in increasing productivity. Participant 8 stated that “Employee engagement can lead to improved performance within the company, hence more productivity and profits to the organisation.” An engaged employee is efficient and effective hence productivity will increase. Participant 6 suggested that “when employees are engaged they are motivated to work hard to meet their set targets which increases productivity.” Participant 2 added that “engaged employees require minimum supervision and increases efficiency. It also motivates staff to put in more hours into their work”. Participant 12 however cautioned that “some companies will take advantage of engaged workers by making them to work for long hours.”

Various literature findings support the research findings. Khan (1990); Rich et al (2010); Christian et al (2011) argued that engagement, as a motivational variable, should lead to high levels of job performance. This underlines the importance of employee engagement as it develops a high performance culture in an organisation. Khan (1990) points out that engaged employees gain a sense of ownership of their work and an opportunity to do work without supervision. This shows trust in the engaged employees to perform tasks and meet production targets. There was therefore agreement between the research findings and literature on the influence of employee engagement in increasing productivity.

Seven out of twelve participants agreed that employees who are engaged stay with the organisation and are more loyal than disengaged employees. Participant 12 noted that “there is competition of skilled labour in the sector and employee engagement offers that edge in terms of retaining skilled labour as well as attracting the right talent from competitors.” This was supported by participant 5 who stated that “employee engagement results in low staff turnover which reduces costs of hiring.” This will improve profits as the total cost of the business will also be reduced. Participant 1 highlighted an important point by stating that employee engagement leads to employee loyalty which is a basic ingredient for succession planning and general continuity of the organisation.” This results in a stable organisation as the company vision is carried forward by engaged loyal employees. Participant 3 however
disagrees with this notion and argues that “there is nothing like complete loyalty, employees will leave as soon as they get a better opportunity with better perks.” It can be said that to a lesser extent the point is valid as employees are by law entitled to leave on giving three months’ notice. However engaged employees are freer to discuss and negotiate better conditions of service and to some it is not only about money but they are attached to the whole working environment and they contribute to make it better.

The issue of low turnover and loyalty as a result of employee engagement is supported by many authors. Harter et al.’s (2002) findings show that employee engagement could be a predictor of organizational success, as it seems to have the potential to affect employee retention, employee loyalty and productivity. Engaged employees desire to continue to be associated with the organisation and adding value. Markos and Sridevi (2012) propose that companies with engaged employees have higher employee retention as a result of reduced turnover and reduced intention to leave the company. This shows that the research findings agree with information found in literature to a greater extent.

An important point that came out from Participant 6 was that “employee engagement creates a good industrial relations climate in the organisation which reduces or eliminates costly labour battles as we have seen in many companies.” The Labour Court is overwhelmed with litigation issues and in some cases employers are ordered to pay large sums of money in damages when they lose cases. There is a gap in literature to validate the relationship between employee engagement and reduction in labour litigation.

Another important point to note from the study was from Participant 8 who stated that “employee engagement assists in attracting investors by increasing the goodwill of the company.” This is an avenue that researchers should explore further as most companies in the sector are looking for some form of capital injection and the study has shown that there is potential to leverage on employee engagement.
4.2.3. **Question 3** - *What are the major barriers to employee engagement in the commercial sector in Harare and how can they be managed?*

The participants noted that barriers to engagement commonly found in the commercial sector and suggested ways to counter these obstacles. The highlighted barriers and suggested solutions were as follows;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers suggested by Participants</th>
<th>Summary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resistance from staff</td>
<td>Poor communication and mistrust</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inadequate communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disruptive personalities from management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stakeholder disapproval</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mistrust and no buy in from staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political and social obstacles</td>
<td>Unsupportive organisational culture and leadership</td>
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<td>Organisational politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inconsistence with other company policies</td>
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<td>Different age groups and culture in the organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership failures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge of key engagement drivers</td>
<td>Lack of policy on engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wrong recruitment</td>
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<td>Lack of engagement plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taking engagement as an HR responsibility only</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disempowered employees</td>
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<td>No company vision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficient resources</td>
<td>Lack of adequate financial resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Size of the organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>No employee motivation</td>
<td>Poor industrial relations climate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unsolved grievances e.g. favouritism and sexual harassment</td>
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4.2.3.1. Poor communication and mistrust

Participant 2 stated that “one of the engagement barriers is management’s poor communication. At the end of the day uptake of engagement initiatives is not well received.” The same sentiment were echoed by the CIPD (2006) report which concluded that one of the hindrance to engagement is a lack of fluidity in communications and knowledge sharing due to rigid communication channels or cultural norms. Communication is the glue that holds organisations together without it chaos can reign. Participant 12 stated that “if a manager does not clearly communicate the benefits of engagement and sincerity then workers are bound to show some resistance to any initiatives by management including those meant for engagement.” Beech and Akerson (2003), cited in Pech and Slade, (2006) and White (2008) found that a lack of trust may be a precursor to disengagement in organisations, particularly a lack of trust in senior leadership. This shows that research findings and literature agree that poor communication and mistrust are barriers to employee engagement.

4.2.3.2. Unsupportive organisational culture and leadership

Participant 10 rightly points out that “you cannot engage workers if one day you give employees incentives then tomorrow you victimise workers committee members”. Organisational structures that do not support engagement will undermine all engagement work. Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey and Saks (2015) reported that research has also shown that organizational climate can influence job resources and job demands (e.g. Dollard and Bakker, 2010), that in turn influence personal resources such as the psychological experience of safety, meaningfulness, and availability, that in turn influence engagement (e.g. Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004). There is therefore a link between the organisational culture and engagement. Participant 11 commented that “some organisations have these long serving staff who are comfortable in maintaining the status core, if you then bring in new change they will resist which ultimately demotivate the youngsters.” This shows that companies to be aware of resistors and manage them.

4.2.3.3. Lack of policy on engagement

Participant 7 highlighted that “you will find that some companies do not empower line managers, employee engagement programmes are said to belong to HR department and
there is no structure on how engagement is cultivated.” This shows that having no engagement policy in place is a barrier to engagement. O’Malley (2000) cited in Robinson, Perryman and Hayday (2003) suggest that organisations need to pay more attention to addressing employees’ social need to affiliate and belong. He argues that employees want to be in an environment that makes them feel comfortable. This environment can only be created when the company agree on a policy to address employee engagement. Participant 10 stated that “I don’t know if its culture or what but most companies are not deliberate about engagement. They want the benefits of an engaged employee but there is no proper structures to drive engagement.” This shows that lack of a clear plan on engagement is a major barrier. Robinson, Perryman and Hayday (2003) noted that one thing that engagement has in common with the psychological contract is the ease and rapidity with which it can be shattered; a badly thought-out, ill-timed or merely clumsy action by the organisation can destroy years of patiently accumulated goodwill.” This shows that this research is consistent with literature findings on the lack of a policy on engagement as a barrier to engagement.

4.2.3.4. Poor industrial relations climate
Participant 8 stated that “even if a company conducts a survey to find out about engagement issues there are some grievances that do not come out, for example issues like favouritism and sexual harassment. These then poses as barriers to engagement if they remain not addressed.” In other words this means unresolved grievances undermine engagement efforts. Participant 5 stated that “in an organisation where workers committee members are at loggerheads with management engagement will not take off.” Poor industrial relations are therefore an important barrier for engagement that needs to be addressed.

4.2.3.5. Lack of adequate financial resources
Participant 7 stated that “engagement requires resources, for example, if you have a performance management system without incentives for the high performers then people will not be engaged to perform again.” This means that companies have to make a strategic decision to invest in engagement. Robinson et al (2003) suggest that organisations should not embark on an attempt to raise engagement levels unless they are prepared to invest sufficiently into it — time, effort and money. In the absence of financial resources it is therefore difficult to drive engagement. Participant 5 stated that “competitive salary is
important as an employee cannot be engaged if they cannot afford to send their children to school or to take their loved ones to proper hospitals.” Melcrum (2007) also cites the importance of compensation, benefits and formal recognition in instilling employee engagement. Financial benefits can provide quick wins for engagement and lack of financial resources can cripple an engagement programme.

### 4.2.4. Solutions to barriers of engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Solutions by participants</th>
<th>Summary statement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging participation</td>
<td>Secure buy-in from all stakeholders by effective communication and manage resistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delegating</td>
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<td>Manage resistance</td>
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<td>Secure buy-in</td>
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<td>Putting in place incentives</td>
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<td>Stakeholder engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve communication channels</td>
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<td>Team Building</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foster good industrial relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dedicating resources for employee engagement</td>
<td>Develop and communicate employee engagement policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Match revenue to targets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Balanced scorecard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exploring non–monetary or inexpensive engagement strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start small</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engage professionals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training on employee engagement</td>
<td>Offer training and build capacity on employee engagement initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empower line managers and supervisors</td>
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<td>Develop employee strengths</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruit right people for jobs</td>
<td>Have recruitment policy and proper induction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on the vision</td>
<td>Leadership should be involved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start from the top</td>
<td>Present clear vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct survey on motivators</td>
<td>Gather intelligence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exit interviews</td>
<td></td>
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4.2.4.1. Secure buy in from all stakeholders by effective communication and managing resistance

Participant 8 stated that “there is need for stockholder engagement. Interest from stockholders tends to boost confidence within the employees towards the organisation which leads to engagement.” Owners of the business are important stakeholders and if they give their blessing and commitment to engagement initiatives there is a high chance that engagement barriers will be removed. Schaufenbuel(2013) proposes that buy-in and alignment from senior leadership is essential to success. There is need to for all stakeholders to see the benefits of engagement. Participant 2 reiterated the point that “if you wake up and introduce a new idea to employees they might face resistance but if you sell the idea to them there is a high chance that it will be accepted.”

4.2.4.2. Develop and communicate engagement policy

Participant 1 stated that to counter the barrier of economic difficulty “companies should have a policy that matches performance incentives to revenue targets so that if employees reach their targets the company would have made enough money to pay incentives. Also non-monetary incentives should be looked into for example long service awards, braai, parties for employees.” This was augmented by a statement from Participant 11 that “companies should start small then progressively get to the bigger items of engagement through a coordinated approach.” There is need for ownership and effective communication of an engagement policy. Schaufenbuel(2013) stated that it is essential that HR and talent leaders partner with business leaders to create and communicate a culture of engagement. Participant 9 proposed that companies should “invest more in non-monetary engagement drivers for example, effective communication, good work ethic and fairness.”
4.2.4.3. **Offer training and build capacity on employee engagement initiatives**

Training was concluded as pertinent to employee engagement in the study. Participant 12 stated that training should be conducted on the importance of employee engagement and on how to engage employees for supervisors and managers. Hakanen et al. (2008:7) provides that “human resource training, learning and development practices that are strategically focused on engagement will directly influence organizational climate and will indirectly influence the demands and resources experienced by employees in their work roles, the psychological experience of meaningfulness, safety and availability, engagement and attitudinal, behavioural and performance related outcomes.” As a way to build capacities Participant 2 proposed that ‘companies should encourage their staff to participate in decision making, for example through joining workers committee.’” Managers and supervisors who have direct interaction with employees should also be capacitated. Tower Watson (2014) proposes that manager effectiveness should be increased so that managers are consistent in their words and employees can build trust in them.

4.2.4.4. **Have recruitment policy and proper induction**

It was established that employees must be properly recruited and inducted. Participant 3 stated that “employee engagement starts when an employee first walk into the door. Organisations should therefore recruit the right people for the right jobs and there is a high chance that they will be engaged in the job.” This highlights the importance of a recruitment policy that supports engagement. If organizations want employees who are energetic, dedicated, and focused on achieving organizational goals, Macey and Schneider (2008) then HR professionals should be able to apply evidence-based selection processes to predict from among a group of applicants those who are most likely to be engaged on the job Guest (2014). Participant 1 argued that “no doubt there has got to be a culture fit between the organisation and the selected employee otherwise you can forget about engagement.” This assertion was supported by Vance (2006) argued that organizations can increase employee engagement “by selecting the candidates who are best suited to the job and the organization’s culture.” This therefore highlights the importance of a recruitment policy that supports employee engagement.
4.2.4.5. Leadership should be involved
Participant 7 stated that “Engagement requires intentional effort by the employer and starts from the top.” When leaders are engaged it flows throughout the organisation. Brunone (2013) suggests that having leaders who can help cascade the vision and inspire others to exceptional performance is an equally important part of making engagement flourish in your team, your department, and your company. Participant 4 argued that “without leadership commitment and involvement the value of any engagement programme is weak and there tends to be general lack of seriousness.” To emphasise the importance of leadership in employee engagement Markos and Sridevi (2010) propose that without ownership at the apex and a sincere belief in engagement by leaders as they assert themselves which must rub off to managers, then employee engagement will just be a “corporate fad” or “another HR thing.” This shows that the research was consistent with literature on the importance of having involved leaders in engagement.

4.2.4.6. Gather intelligence
Data on the organisation regarding engagement was considered important in the study. Participant 9 stated passionately that “Instead of just shooting in the dark, companies need to do a thorough investigation into the factors hindering engagement. Only then can you find strategies to counter them and increase employee engagement.” There are many ways to gather data and one the most useful is conducting surveys. Schaufenbuel (2013) proposes that after HR and talent management professionals understand the levels of engagement, it is important to measure it. This is usually done through an employee engagement survey. Participant 5 stated that companies should survey employees about motivators, recognition methods, performance rewards, empowerment and visible career paths.” He further stated that “exit interviews provide important avenue for collecting data.” Collecting data is therefore an important precursor to solving engagement barriers.

4.2.5. Question 4 - Can the Aon Hewitt Model of Employee Engagement be applicable in companies in the commercial sector in Harare?
Generally there were mixed reactions concerning the applicability of the Aon Hewit Engagement model. Three out of twelve participants believed that the model would work perfectly in the commercial sector companies in Harare, Seven out of twelve participants
felt that the method could be modified before adaptation into the commercial sector environment and two out of twelve participants thought the model was not for the environment or sector.

Participant 8 stated that “definitely the model is applicable in the commercial sector. The engagement drivers are comprehensive and well articulated.” In agreement with this view Schaufenbuel (2013) proposes that with the drivers suggested by the Aon Hewitt in mind, HR and talent management professionals can design employee engagement initiatives that fit their organization’s culture, strategic goals, and multi-cultural, multi-generational, and global workforces. Participant 12 considered that “the model is applicable as it can fit in straight with the balanced scorecard method which is being commonly used by many companies in performance management, that is, if one looks closely at the business outcomes that the model proposes and the major tenets of the balanced scorecard which are customer, financial, growth and learning and development.” This was a good analysis as one of the barriers mentioned was that in most companies employee engagement was taken as a separate programme driven by the HR department instead of it being integrated with the company strategic objectives. The most effective approach when designing employee engagement initiatives is to tie them to the organization’s strategic priorities (Moreland, 2013; Gaskell, 2013). In the Aon Hewitt model engagement drivers are tied to strategic priorities of financial, customer, operational and talent.

Most of the participants who proposed an adaptation of the model after modifications considered that very few companies in the commercial sector at the time of the study had the capacity to utilise all the engagement drivers in the model to achieve all the business outcomes especially in terms of availability of financial resources. Participant 7 stated that “Given the current business conditions prevailing in Harare, it is difficult to apply the model as it is. The model should be used as a guide and adaptations have to be made according to priority so that it suits the organisation at hand. I recommend that adaptations to the model be implemented to suit economic conditions in Harare.” This idea was aimed at contextualising the model to suit the company situation as agreed by Participant 1 who stated that “A company should leverage on their strengths and try to do some drivers not necessarily all but those that they can bring optimum results to achieve high engagement.” There were some critical drivers suggested by the model that the participants agreed should
be present for a successful engagement initiative, for example communication, leadership, enabling infrastructure, talent and staffing, all elements under basics and the work.

The notion of varying the Aon Hewitt engagement model to suit conditions as highlighted in the research was also proposed by Habraken (2013) who noted that the drivers of employee engagement are likely to vary across industry, organisation and even different employee groups within one organisation (e.g. function, job type, job tenure). Other participants proposed a phased approach to the implementation of the Aon Hewitt model in the commercial sector, for example Participant 2 stated that “In my opinion I think the model addresses the key elements that are necessary for employee engagement. Since engagement is not an event it’s a process so it is applicable in phases. I recommend to start with good leadership, followed by a good basic needs.” Other drivers would then follow depending on the set priorities of the organisation. Participant 1 stated that “Yes, the model is applicable but I would like to see employee creativity and innovation. Developments in the economy are shaping the way we do business so there should be a platform to allow for employee creativity. There is nothing that drives engagement than owning a product or saying I was part of a team that created this new product or improvements to existing products.” This assertion sums up the argument for the model to be customised as per situation.

Other participants who rejected the model advocated for a simpler method. They viewed the Aon Hewitt model as being too foreign, idealistic and out of sync with the commercial sector companies in Harare which are, in the majority of cases, medium to small companies or are in the process of streamlining operations to suit the challenging business environment. Participant 3 stated that “the model would apply all things being equal, but in Zimbabwe as it stands we know it is not the case. It will actually demotivate those who attempt to apply it when they fail.” From his view it shows that the model is not applicable to the Harare commercial sector. Participant 3 challenged that “employees can be engaged even if the company does not have the best brand for example there are some virtually unknown companies in Harare where employees are engaged.” The participant felt that the sector does not need an ‘exhaustive’ list of engagement drivers to engage employees. In light of this notion Participant 2 alleged that “this model lacks credibility in the sector because it assumes that company resources are limitless hence it doesn’t work.” In their view there is need to explore other applicable models.
4.3. Summary of Findings

The research was a successful experience which provided answers for the research questions posed. The majority of the findings from the study were consistent with literature and in addition participants were specific in offering relevant information for the commercial sector of Harare. A summary of the findings was presented in relation to the research questions posed in the beginning of the study.

4.3.1. What are the key employee engagement drivers that will lead to positive company performance?

The participants provided a long list of engagement drivers but there were five major drivers that were emphasised. The first driver was effective communication which made employees feel valued and involved in the success of the company. The second driver was the relationship with superiors and participants believed that as immediate superiors show empathy towards subordinates they would be more engaged. Participants felt that a company with involved and engaged leaders will bring confidence in employees which will drive employee engagement. The fourth driver was employee development and it was found that most employees leave organisations to avoid stagnation. They viewed employee development as the company’s way of showing care for them and concern for their future. Although the majority of the participants showed appreciation of the economic challenges facing companies, they believed that for employees to be engaged they needed their self-worth to be recognised through fair compensation, both internally and externally.

4.3.2. How is employee engagement related to company performance?

A lot of literature and research findings highlighted in Chapter two point to the importance of employee engagement to company performance. The study sought to find out how the companies in the commercial were benefiting from employee engagement. The research showed that employee engagement leads mainly to customer satisfaction and growth, increased productivity, reduced labour turnover increasing revenue and profits and reduction in costs. The participants noted that companies were failing to fully tap into these benefits as a result of engagement barriers that are found in the sector and individual companies.
4.3.3. What are the major barriers to employee engagement in the commercial sector in Harare and how can they be managed?

The study showed that engagement is hindered by a lot of factors from micro to macro level. The major categories for barriers to engagement identified were poor communication, unsupportive organisational culture and poor leadership, lack of policy on engagement, lack of adequate financial resources and poor industrial relations climate. In order for the investment in employee engagement to make sense these barriers need to be managed. The solutions included securing buy-in from all stakeholders, developing and communicating an engagement policy, offering training, instituting an effective recruitment policy, involvement of senior leadership and gathering information on engagement as well as levels of engagement. Securing buy-in was regarded as important as this includes buy-in from the owners who have the power over resources. This will then inspire the leadership team to lead engagement by establishing an engagement roadmap and its successful implementation will depend on effective communication, relevant data and training.

4.3.4. Can the Aon Hewitt Model of Employee Engagement be applicable in companies in the commercial sector in Harare?

The majority of the participants believed that the Aon Hewitt model needs to be modified in order to suit the requirements of the economy, the sector and individual companies. This was supported by Robinson (2007) who pointed out that it is unlikely that a “one-size fits all” approach will bring its benefits, as engagement and its drivers depend on the organization, employee group, the individual and job itself. The participants proposed that more emphasis should be put on non-monetary initiatives that drive engagement. They also proposed that it is difficult for a company in the sector to run with the model in all fronts but companies can apply a phased approach starting with the essential elements such as communication, leadership and an enabling infrastructure. This was consistent with Saks (2006) who recommended that managers should understand that employee engagement is a long-term and on-going process that requires continued interactions over time in order to generate obligations and a state of reciprocal interdependence.” A small section felt that on one extreme the policy was perfect and should be adopted as it is whilst on the other extreme some believed that the sector is best suited to adopt simpler models.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction
This study analysed the benefits of employee engagement in the commercial sector companies in Harare. To assist practitioners in the sector the study identified the key drivers as well as barriers to employee engagement so that the benefits of employee engagement can be fully exploited. To our knowledge, it is the first study that demonstrates how to cultivate, maintain and realise the benefits of employee engagement that has a significant bearing on company performance in the commercial sector in Harare. The essence of this study was to come up with recommendations that satisfy the psychological contract by meeting the employee’s expectations of being cared for, involved, given a voice and developed and matching that with the employer’s expectations of getting full value from employees that leads to profits, growth and good reputation.

5.1. Summary of findings
5.2. Objective 1 - To establish the key employee engagement drivers that will lead to positive company performance in the commercial sector in Harare.

For the benefits of employee engagement to be achieved, companies need to initiate strategies that drive engagement. The results of the study indicate that key engagement drivers in the commercial sector are effective communication, good relationships with immediate superior, leadership involvement, employee development and fair and competitive compensation. The key drivers of engagement are depended on the context of the study. A global survey report by Aon Hewitt (2015) showed that the top engagement drivers were career opportunities, reputation, and pay. Whilst the value of reputation of a company was downplayed as a driver of engagement in the study, pay was ranked among the top three drivers of employee engagement with communication and leadership being the other two. Bedarkar and Pandita (2013) reports that a study by IES in 2004 identified the following as predictors: leadership, relationships at work, total reward, recognition, work life balance and work itself. The last two were consistent with this study of the commercial sector in Harare.

The issue of competitive advantage has garnered considerable benefits in industry as HR practitioners attempt to balance between retaining talent to gain competitive advantage and increasing the labour costs that renders them uneconomical in the face of fierce competition from outside the borders. There is therefore need for companies to strategically maintain this delicate balance by being creative in crafting compensation policies.

In order to put these engagement drivers into practice managers have to incorporate them into established company initiatives, for example performance management will highlight employee development and fair compensation issues. Although the identified drivers of employee engagement are presented as key, management should not turn a blind eye to other engagement drivers for example company reputation, infrastructure and employee voice. The study is meant to provide engagement drivers where the main focus should lie in order to optimise the return of scarce resources in the sector.
5.2.1. Objective 2 - To assess the relationship between employee engagement and company performance.

The results of the study show that employee engagement leads to customer satisfaction, profitability, productivity, low labour turnover and cost reduction. As employees become more engaged the company has a good chance of attaining the stated business outcomes which inevitably leads to better company performance. This is consistent with literature that shows that employee engagement predicts employee outcomes, organizational success, and financial performance (Bates 2004; Baumruk 2004; Harter et al. 2002; Richman 2006). Thus it was seen that employee engagement was not only desirable but critical to business success.

The major highlight from the study was customer satisfaction as the commercial sector is mainly service-oriented. Companies realize that to get to a customer they have to go through an employee and a disengaged employee is not likely to provide excellent customer service. Employee engagement is therefore a key element of building excellent customer service.

On the issue of reduction of costs it was indicated in the study that by promoting a good industrial relations climate, employee engagement contributes to the reduction in litigation costs. This is especially important in the wake of inconsistent labour laws in Zimbabwe that have been modified, repealed or new ones backdated at any time, a case in point being the new Labour Amendment Act of 2015 which provided for the discharge of law in retrospect. Management therefore have to be vigilant in fostering employee engagement as a tool to manage industrial relations with the result of reducing costs associated with labour litigation in particular and overall company costs in general.

5.2.2. Objective 3 - To evaluate the barriers to employee engagement.

The study uncovered a number of engagement barriers which were narrowed to six broad barriers, that is, poor communication, unsupportive organisational culture and poor leadership, lack of policy on engagement, lack of adequate financial resources and poor industrial relations climate. It can be seen from the list that responsibility for causing these barriers rested on leaders’ shoulders. A report made by the Harvard Business School (2013) provides that in many firms senior managers may need to take off the rose-colored glasses and take a closer look at the barriers to engagement that may be present, and then find more
effective ways of overcoming them. Bhatla (2011) highlighted that most of the problems in traditional ways of operating businesses come from the increasingly growing gulf between superiors and their subordinates, the longer chain of communication coupled with a lack of sufficient chances to be taken on board in vital work processes and in decision making. This indicates that poor communication and unsupportive work culture act as barriers to engagement.

To counter the negative effects of employee engagement the study provided that companies should involve senior leadership in engagement, secure buy-in from all stakeholders, develop and communicate an engagement policy, offer training and have an effective recruitment policy. This is consistent Macleod and Clarke (2009) who points out that employees should be given relevant training and have systematic feedback sessions in order for them to be engaged.

Another finding that came from the study was that there is no company with completely disengaged employees to the ‘point of no return.’ One participant suggested that companies should “start small”. This is valuable as in most cases small steps make the greatest strides, for example small tokens of appreciating an employee go a long way in promoting loyalty to the company.

One barrier that was not prominent as expected from the study was job insecurity. The study was conducted after an estimated five thousand employees lost their jobs within a space of three months in the commercial sector after the Supreme Court ruled that an employer could terminate an employee on three months’ notice. As such it can be stated that jobs were not safe not only in the sector but the nation at large. A possible explanation for the barrier not being prevalent was the employees’ realisation that very few companies operating in the Zimbabwean economy can guarantee job security because of the prevailing macro-economic challenges that are beyond their control.

5.2.3. Objective 4 - To assess the applicability of the Aon Hewitt Model of Employee Engagement on commercial sector companies in Harare.

The study showed that the Aon Hewitt model, although it is relevant, it needs to be adapted after making some modifications to it for example streamlining the engagement drivers to
only the key drivers. The main reason for suggestions of modifying the model was that most companies in the commercial sector in Harare had no capacity to consistently allocate resources for the maintenance of all the proposed engagement drivers by the model.

One participant suggested that the Aon Hewitt engagement model was good but “it lacked emphasis on the issue of technology and creativity.” The commercial sector as well as the economy in general has evolved and becoming a fast-paced technology driven economy. In order to survive, creativity and the use of technology to respond to market needs is essential and according to the participant employees will feel engaged knowing that they have been part of building a new product or modifying an existing one to keep the business ahead of competition. It is therefore valid to include creativity and technology in the Aon Hewitt model as one of the drivers of engagement.

5.3. Main Limitations of the study
One of the main limitations of the study emanated from the sampling method used which was the non-probability purposive sampling approach. It therefore means that the results of the study cannot be generalised to a larger population on statistical grounds.

The other limitation was that the scope of the study was focused on one industry, that is, the commercial sector of companies in Harare. This limited the variability and richness of data collected as well as statistical generalisability of the results.

5.4. Opportunities for future research
One of the participants mentioned the issue of “maintaining a work-life balance” as a necessary ingredient for employee engagement. There is need for further research on the practicability of maintaining this work-life balance in the face of businesses streamlining labour and most companies operating with barely minimum staff numbers or lower than requirement. The challenging economic environment demands companies to achieve more with less under the guise of “asset sweating”. This exposes employees to long stressful working hours which affect engagement. There is need to explore more on how companies can effectively achieve employee engagement in such an environment.
A good number of organisations in Zimbabwe now have a multicultural orientation with foreign investors being encouraged to come in and boost the economy. There is need for further research on the practical applicability of a cafeteria approach to employee engagement that accommodates cultural diversity.

5.5. Conclusion
The overall objective of the study was to analyse the benefits of employee engagement to companies in the commercial sector in Harare. The findings indicate that there is a strong link between employee engagement and fundamental business outcomes, that is, customer satisfaction, profitability, productivity, labour turnover and cost reduction. To achieve these business outcomes companies in the commercial sector in Harare need to strategically deploy the key strategies that drive engagement which are effective communication, good relationships with immediate superiors, leadership involvement, employee development and fair and competitive compensation.

The main barriers to employee engagement in the sector are poor communication, unsupportive organisational culture and poor leadership, lack of policy on engagement, lack of adequate financial resources and poor industrial relations climate. These barriers could be countered by managing resistance, developing an engagement policy, training, effective recruitment policy, leadership involvement and managing and gathering information for engagement.

The Aon Hewitt model offers a basis to adapt in the commercial sector by developing a model that provides key engagement drivers that will lead to the desired business outcomes. In other words the model needs to be contextualised to suit the commercial sector relativities.

5.6. Recommendations

5.6.1. Policy Related
Engagement Policy - It is imperative that companies develop an Engagement Policy. This policy will be driven and coordinated by an engagement committee comprising of employees from different departments and level in the organisation including workers
committee representatives. The policy will include issues such as communication, training, leadership involvement and engagement surveys.

The policy must be guided by the proposed model in figure 5.1;

![Figure 5.1 Commercial Sector Engagement Model]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Drivers</th>
<th>Engagement Outcomes</th>
<th>Business Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication</td>
<td>Say</td>
<td>Customer satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with superiors</td>
<td>Stay</td>
<td>Profitability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership involvement</td>
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</table>
Recruitment policy linked to employee engagement - The company’s recruitment policy should take into account the engagement policy by ensuring that employees recruited into the organisation have the right motive, right skills for the job, right attitude, aligned personal objectives with the company and that there is a culture fit between the company and the identified candidate. The defining question for selection should be – will the candidate be engaged and add value to the business?

5.6.2. Managerial Related
Performance management system linked to employee engagement - Employee engagement should be included as one of the key performance indicators for managers and supervisors.

5.6.3. Decision Related
Organisational metrics linked to employee engagement - The major organisational metrics to assess company performance should be linked to employee engagement, that is,
i. Human resources – how much did employee engagement contribute to the reduction in labour turnover?

ii. Marketing – what was the contribution of employee engagement on sales growth?

iii. Financial – how much did employee engagement contribute to overall profitability through new business development, creativity and commitment?

iv. Production – what was the contribution of employee engagement on overall productivity?

**Compensation based on surveys and job grading** - Decisions on compensation should be based on salary surveys as well as the ability to pay and proper grading systems.

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APPENDICES