ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON EMPLOYEE

MORALE AT THE NATIONAL HERITAGE COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA

by

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APPROVAL PAGE

This research project has been examined, and is approved as meeting the required standards of scholarship for potential fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

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External examiner   Date

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I, Matanato Hartlina Ngwaila, herewith declare that this **MINI-DISSERTATION** for the Regenesys Business School Master of Business Administration degree has not been submitted for degree purposes at this or any other institution previously. This dissertation is my original work in design and execution, and contributions from other sources have been duly acknowledged.

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Student's signature   Date
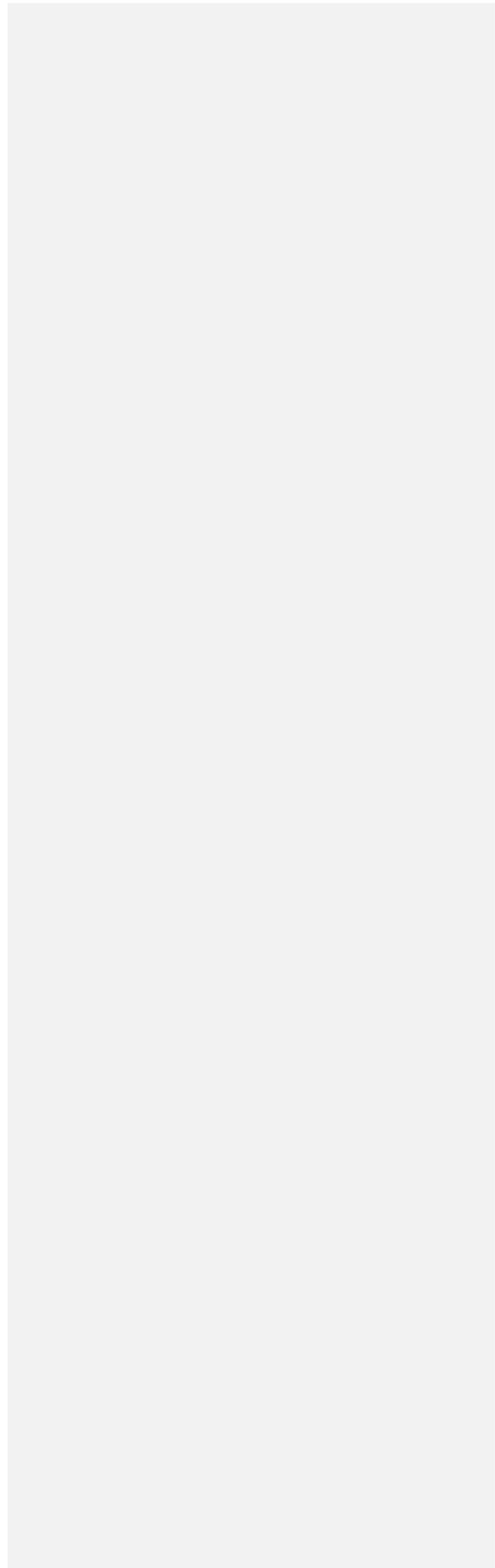
ABSTRACT

The National Heritage Council of South Africa recently embarked on restructuring the organisation; however, employees were dissatisfied and some highly skilled employees resigned. The exit interviews by human resources indicated that employees are not content with the leadership and organisational culture. This study explores the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at the National Heritage Council (NHC) of South Africa. The research objectives are to identify the factors influencing employee morale, to determine the influence of leadership styles on employee morale, and to determine how employee morale can be improved at the National Heritage Council.

The study was underpinned by Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, with an interpretivist paradigm and an exploratory design to collect data through interviews and a self-administered questionnaire. Purposive sampling was used to select 13 of the 39 non-managerial participants for this study. Thematic analysis was used to identify themes and sub-themes.

The findings from the data analysis indicated that the employees would prefer a transactional leadership style rather than the current autocratic leadership style. Employees have a need to be included in decision-making, with open communication channels between management and employees, and where fairness is practiced in receiving recognition and rewards. The study recommends that management develop an intervention to change the work experience for the employees to improve employee morale. This intervention should include leadership development. The final recommendation is for a thorough and effective onboarding process for new employees, where new employees are placed under the control of managers who are

able to give them the needed guidance and support. These employees need to be closely monitored to ensure issues are identified promptly and addressed effectively.

Employee morale is critical for the success of any organisation, and the leadership style and characteristics of the leaders should be a good fit for the organisation. Although remuneration plays an important part for employees, non-monetary rewards and recognition is just as important to motivate employees and to increase overall morale.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thought it overwhelmingly prudent and compelling that I preface my acknowledgments with the old adage: "a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step" as the first thing that came to mind when I reflect back on this journey in completing this dissertation. Equally fitting is the second one that goes: "if you want to go far, travel alone but if you want to go the furthest, travel with others". My dissertation was enabled by a number of selfless souls and truly gracious human beings without whom I cannot with confidence proclaim sole effort in completing my work.

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DEDICATION

To my lovely kids, Vukona, Muhluleri, Tendani. and my cute granddaughter, Vukulu. I owe you an incredible debt of gratitude for allowing me time and space to toil day and night, devoting all my energy to this study and neglecting quality family time in pursuit of what has now become a glorious and momentous achievement in my life. For all your sacrifices and selfless support in my journey, I dedicate this dissertation to you.

It would be amiss of me if I do not pay respects and equally give a special dedication, in memorium, to Mr Mac Makwarela who regrettably never lived to see the fruits of my intellectual labour and academic prowess.

My beloved parents, Gilbert and Nditsheni, yes I made it! This incredible achievement represents the most invaluable gift I could ever present to you in your lifetime to cherish and behold for your raising a persevering, conquering, and shining star in me to be proud of.

To God Almighty above, all be the glory, for whom I give thanks and praise for seeing me through despite the many life challenges and personal tragedies I suffered during the year 2022 while working towards conceptualising and finalising my research proposal and last modules.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CEO   Chief Executive Officer

EA   Executive Authority

NHC   National Heritage Council

SA   South Africa

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

South Africa has been through major change in the last three years since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact it had on the economy, unemployment, and employees working from home. Organisations cannot go back to the traditional way of operating, managing employees, and leading the organisation; there is a need to adapt to the new way of work. Organisations need leaders who can inspire and motivate employees to perform at increasing productivity levels and satisfy customer and stakeholder expectations. This study explores the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at the National Heritage Council (NHC) of South Africa.

The human factor in any organisation is critical, as employees contribute to most aspects of operations in the organisation (Tanchaisak, 2019). An organisation requires skilled and knowledgeable employees who are capable of implementing operational plans effectively to meet the vision and strategic goals set out. Organisations invest time, money, and resources to promote the capabilities and competencies of the employees. However, it happens that some organisations ignore or forget the human element that drives the successes in the organisation. Employees are not only looking for fair remuneration and benefits; they need to feel valued and included.

1.2 Background to the study

The NHC of South Africa has been in existence for more than 15 years who are responsible for the preservation and promotion of South Africa's Heritage (National Heritage Council, 2022). The organisations human resource department is primary

responsible to ensure that NHC have the right people, with the right skills in-service to ensure the NHC delivers on its strategic objectives and its mandate (National Heritage Council, 2022). The organisation has attracted great talent capable of serving the company and the community with diligence. Morale can impact positively or negatively on the employees and the organisation at large. Low productivity, a sense of chaos, and uncertainties are inclined to cause low staff morale; whereas higher productivity is linked to high staff morale (Kurebwa, 2011). Although there is no scale to measure morale (Kurebwa, 2011), the other symptoms that resemble elements of low staff morale have to be managed properly if the organisation wishes to remain competitive.

A poor leadership style can have a direct impact on staff morale (Lee et al., 2012). The leadership style could influence morale in the organisation and equally impact it positively or negatively; therefore, employing a good leadership style is critical to embrace the changes and the new way of work.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Due to different challenges the organisation experienced over the last few years, the NHC is busy with a restructuring programme. Job evaluation was conducted on all job positions, with the aim to migrate personnel to the new organisational structure. This process led to disgruntlement from some employees who appealed this decision. A service provider was appointed to facilities the process of change management within the organisation (National Heritage Council, 2022). The majority of the people that left the organisation were employees that specialised in certain heritage fields with years of experience. There are currently 59 employees, with 39 on the non-management level. Exit interviews conducted by the human resource division revealed that those

who left are in general not happy with the leadership and organisational culture. The legislative mandate of the NHC is to ensure the protection and promotion of the nation's heritage for current and future generations. To meet stakeholder needs and the legislative mandate, the NHC requires employees in the work environment with high morale.

1.4 Research Aim

The aim of this study is to investigate what factors influence employee morale at NHC, especially on what the influence of leadership styles are on employee morale at NHC, using a qualitative research method.

1.6 Research questions

The research questions for this study are:

- What are the factors that influence employee morale in the National Heritage Council?

- How do leadership styles influence employee morale at the National Heritage Council?

- How can employee morale be improved at the National Heritage Council?

1.5 Research objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- To identify the factors influencing employee morale at the National Heritage Council.

- To determine the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at the National Heritage Council.

- To determine how employee morale can be improved at the National Heritage Council.

1.7 Rationale/motivation/justification for the study

Human assets (employees) are an integral part of the organisation that contribute meaningfully to the organisation to ensure the objectives are achieved. Effective leadership styles should be implemented to ensure that employees are provided with the necessary support and develop a positive culture that can help improve staff morale.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the NHC appreciates that for the organisation to remain competitive, it requires employees with high morale who trust their leadership team. It is important to encourage employees to trust the leaders to guide them towards the goals, and to communicate, via the right reporting channels, any information relevant to achieving these objectives.

This study could assist and guide leaders to understand the key leadership styles to motivate employees to meet and exceed objectives. Having employees that are inspired and motivated will contribute to the organisation's overall performance (Pintaric & Hunjet, 2016).

This study could contribute to the existing body of knowledge on employee morale, leadership, and leadership styles, and how this could be addressed. The findings of this study will recommend how the organisation could develop strategies to identify factors influencing employee morale, how to improve employee morale, and the best leadership style to maintain high employee morale and decrease employee turnover. Furthermore, the study will devise recommendations on how the Human Resource (HR) department could provide the necessary support to all employees, irrespective of their positions to ensure that they deliver effectively to their contractual obligations.

1.8 Significance of the study

The study will contribute practical solutions to the current body of knowledge on leadership and leadership styles to address the high employee turnover which could be contributed to low employee morale.

The results of the study could assist the management of NHC of SA to devise interventions to address the high employee turnover experiences in the last three years. This study is relevant to the NHC recognising how leadership and leadership styles could impact employee morale and motivation, and recommending strategies to be implemented to improve employee morale.

The study will contribute to the body of knowledge by providing practical solutions to improve employee job satisfaction, which could be used in the logistics solutions sector as well as private sector organisations to improve organisational performance.

This study is greatly significant, as it could show if leadership style has an impact on employee morale. Employees who are motivated, with a high level of morale, tend to

contribute to organisational performance with increased productivity and commitment. The results of this study could assist management at NHC to gain more insight into employee morale, as it will also offer alternatives to other organisations experiencing similar challenges. This study could serve as a source of reference for future studies on leadership, leadership styles, and employee morale.

1.9 Research Design

According to Creswell & Creswell (2017), a research design is a plan or blue-print on how the study will be conducted. The different research designs include descriptive, correlation, causal, explanatory, and exploratory.

For this study, an exploratory design was used, as the study aimed to explore what factors influence employee morale at NHC, especially on what the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at NHC is.

1.10 Assumptions of the study

According to Watkins (2016) an assumption is out of the control of the researcher, and can be viewed as a condition that is taken for granted, but renders the study pointless without it. Assumptions with bearing on the research problem should be highlighted and brought forward without condition.

The following assumptions are relevant to this study:

- It is accepted that all participants possess the required knowledge on the concepts of the study to make a meaningful contribution.

- That there is an effective communication process between the researcher and the participants.

- The answers to the interview questions are open, truthful and given in good faith.

- Participation is voluntary and participants are aware of their right to withdraw at any time without any adverse consequences.

1.11 Limitations of the study

However, there are limitations that could be encountered during the study, such as participants showing bias in responding to questions or answering what they believe the researcher wants to hear. The researcher will make every effort to ensure that limitations are managed extensively. Only non-managers within the organisation will be engaged to the absolute exclusion of Senior Managers.

1.12 Delimitations of the study

The study will be feasible and achievable as the researcher will have access to the population. However, the participant might be reluctant to participate for the fear of being victimised. Due to nature of work of the organisation, access to earmarked participants will not be a problem. Existing data such as exit interviews and grievances to support the problems will be accessed at the HR department with the approval of the Executive Authority (EA). This information would back up the assumption that there is a real problem happening within the NHC.

1.13 The theoretical foundation

The available theory treats morale as part of motivation; therefor, this section explores the theory underpinning employee morale. This study uses the theory developed by Herzberg (2019), more commonly known as the Herzberg Motivation-Hygiene Theory, as a foundation for this study to discuss the influence leadership style has on employee motivation and morale (Yusoff & Kian, 2013).

1.14 Theoretical/conceptual framework

Although employee morale and employee motivation are often used interchangeably, there are some distinct differences (Kappel, 2018). Çoruk and Lüleci (2018:66) distinguished between the two by stating that, "*Job satisfaction is present-orientated, while morale is future-orientated. Both are states of mind, but satisfaction is a response to a situation whereas morale is anticipatory. It is dependent upon, and guided by, past events which provide a basis for anticipation of the future".* Motivation is an internal psychological driver that encourages the employee to perform and behave in a certain way, morale is more related to a group. High motivation could lead to high morale, but the inverse is not true; an employee who shows high morale does not necessarily perform better. Issues connected with morale are often part of the work environment, while motivation is more relevant to the employee's individual performance.

Figure 1.1 below shows the Herzberg Motivation-Hygiene Theory, where the hygiene factors are listed that cause dissatisfaction and low morale at the workplace, and the motivators that makes employees more motivated and thus leading to increased

employee morale. Most of the hygiene factors can be influenced by the organisation and the leadership, which would lead to the employee displaying motivational factors.

Figure 1.1: Herzberg Motivation-Hygiene Theory
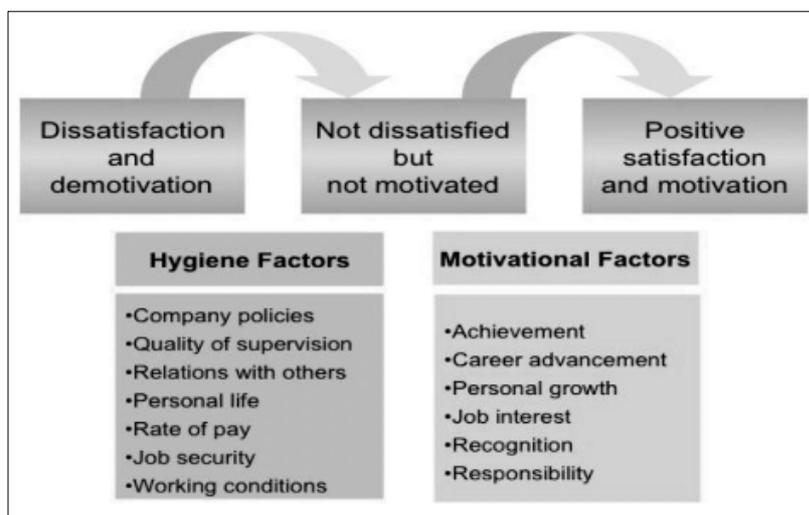
Source: Ilić et al. (2018:114)

Fredrick Herzberg suggested in the late 1950s that job satisfaction is influenced by both internal and external factors. He attempted to identify the factors that made people happy, and the factors that did not. This theory posits that job satisfaction can be separated into two distinct spectrums namely high and low factors. Beardwell and Thompson (2017) state that the individual, thus employees, require goals and need to be inspired. A range of elements, according to this idea, contribute to sentiments of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (motivation and hygiene factors). The Herzberg Motivation-Hygiene Theory posits that to motivate employees is a two-step process

which are job content and job context (Kinicki, 2020). When additional needs or motivators are met, the employee will be satisfied.

1. 15 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 of this study introduced the background and problem statement, as well as the aim, research questions, and research objectives. The rationale and significance of undertaking this study was provided, followed by the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. The theory underpinning this study was introduced, as well as the conceptual framework.

Chapter 2 provided a review of current literature on the main concepts of this study, namely, leadership, leadership styles, and employee morale.

Chapter 3 provided justification for the research methodology, instrument, data collection and analysis of the study.

Chapter 4 provided the themes from the thematic analysis, as well as the biographical information of the participants.

Chapter 5 provided a discussion on the findings from the data analysis per research objective, supported by literature.

Chapter 6 gave an overview of the findings from the literature and the primary findings, as well as conclusions and recommendations to the NHC on possible strategies to increase employee morale. Further recommendations were made on possible future studies.

1.16 Summary

This chapter presented an introduction to the study, as well as the background to the problem which gave rise to the study. The aim of the study is to determine the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at the National Heritage Council of South Africa. Research questions and objectives were formulated for the study, and the assumptions, limitations and delimitations of the study were discussed. The study is underpinned by Herzberg Motivation-Hygiene Theory, to determine how employee morale is influenced by other factors, with specific focus on leadership.

The next chapter provides an overview of current literature on the concepts of this study, and includes employee motivation, leadership, and leadership styles.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The section focuses on reviewing current literature on employee morale, leadership, and leadership styles. Concepts are defined to explain the meaning of terms addressed in this study. There are many theories and definitions of morale and leadership styles.

The literature unpacks the impact of low staff morale in the organisation; what transformational leadership is; and what is construed to be the best leadership theory in motivating employees and inspiring morale to ensure that they perform better. This study seeks to solicit reliable indicators from employees on causes of staff morale to be low, with a view to assist the leadership to develop appropriate interventions to mitigate the problem.

2.2 Defining the concepts

Morale - Many authors have defined morale in many different ways. "Morale is an elusive quality which involves feelings, emotions, attitude and perception towards the organisation and its members" (Shaban et al., 2017). La Fata et al. (2021) agree but add that employee morale includes the general outlook an employee shows at the workplace. This research focuses on definitions provided by Shaban et al. (2017).

Leadership - Bagrain (2016:397) provides the definition of leadership as, "Leadership is generally defined as the social process of influencing people to work voluntarily, enthusiastically and persistently towards a purposeful organisational goal". Likewise,

Rawat (2015) also defines leadership as an ability to influence people to achieve the objectives of the organisation in the most effective and efficient manner.

2.3 Employee Morale

Newman et al. (2016) and Tanchaisak (2019) posit that employee morale is part of job satisfaction and could be affected by organisational behaviour. Chakroff and Young (2015) state that in simple terms, morale is the mental or psychological state of a person. The concepts of employee morale and motivation are closely linked and are described as a psychological process that directs and energises the employee's inner desire to take action, and as a set of process-orientated forces that drive an employee to apply resources that result in multi-dimensional streams of behaviour (Waseem, Biggemann & Garry, 2020). Cattell and Stice (1960) in Sania, Kalpina and Javed (2015) posit that employee morale has five dimensions, which are cohesion, tenacity, leadership synergy, adventurous striving, and personal reward.

Sania, Kalpina and Javed (2015) conducted extensive research on the dimensions of employee morale, and factored it into three independent dimensions namely Cohesive Pride, Leadership Synergy, and Personal Challenge.

- *Cohesive Pride* - refers to the employees' sense of cooperation in meeting the objectives and goals as set by the organisation.
- *Personal Challenge* - refers to the satisfaction experienced by employees when meeting and exceeding the objectives.
- *Leadership Synergy* - refers to the collaboration between the employees and the managers and/or leaders that promotes the passion and effort in improving output, and the sense of achievement when success is acknowledged.

2.3.1 Influence of employee morale in the workplace

When staff morale is low it creates an unfavourable environment in the workplace and negatively influences performance and directly impacts on productivity. There are many evident staff behaviours that could be linked to low staff morale, such as absenteeism, sickness, and lack of motivation (Lee et al., 2012), which has been the ongoing trend within the NHC, which ultimately leads to an urge towards exiting the organisation. Within a period of six years, NHC had employees from all levels exiting the institution. Reports of exit interviews conducted in the main indicate lack of leadership and a toxic working environment as factors leading to their exit.

The researcher agrees with Willis and Varner (2010) that staff morale is very important for the success of the organisation. When employees feel unappreciated, they tend to feel negative about their work, complain about their supervisor, call in sick, and arrive late at work, quality of work declines which impacts negatively on the organisation (White, 2014).

2.3.2 Leadership influence on employee morale in the workplace

A motivated competent workforce is critical in an increasingly competitive work environment to guarantee that the organisation's goals are realised, and that the organisation maintains its competitive advantage. The significance of leadership style in affecting employee motivation has been widely researched. In a study designed to provide insights into motivation and how transformational leadership influences various work habits in firms, two conclusions stood out (Herman & Chiu, 2014).

First, the need of appreciating the diversity of workers and teams, with a focus on the need for leaders to take a situational (contingency) approach to their leadership style.

The second was acknowledging the influence of both individually-based and group-based transformational leadership on organisational citizenship behaviour among employees (Herman & Chiu, 2014).

However, a number of the studies (Lee et al., 2012; Kumar, 2014) were constrained by the limitations imposed by more widely accepted leadership theories. As a result, the list was only able to include four leadership styles, namely, Autocratic, Bureaucratic, Transactional, and Transformational leadership.

Leadership or lack thereof could be one of the contributing factors. In their research, Lee et al. (2012) indicate that poor leadership is one of the top reasons for low staff morale. Willis and Varner (2010) point out to the leadership behaviour as one of significant determinants of an employee's morale.

Heffes (2009) points to communication as one, amongst others, of best models to remedy low staff morale and being the most important factor towards organisations' success. Leaders should acknowledge and appreciate work done to ensure that they remain focused. Managers who communicate using a top to bottom style may result in low morale and high turnover which is costly to the organisation (Shaban et al., 2017). It is submitted that other competencies that could result in low staff morale are lack of empowerment, lack of energising staff, distrust of management, poor interpersonal relations and inflexibility of working conditions (Fink, 2014). Xi (2019) alludes to ways in which managers can instil employee morale in the workplace. Managers should show respect to employees, establish expectations and avoid micromanaging.

Figure 1.2: Characteristics of Good Leadership

Source: Pritchard (2022:1)

Good leadership entails that the leader is knowledgeable, has interpersonal skills, is confident in what they are doing, and has sound judgment. Good leadership, on the other hand, comes from employing the right leadership style.

2.3.3 Importance of morale in the workplace

The importance of employee with high morale is high performance, low absenteeism, and better quality of work, good discipline sustainability and organisational growth. Organisations that ensure that their staff morale is high are likely to keep them longer within the organisation which reduces high staff turnover. Organisations that invest in their employees attract top talent and gain customer loyalty in their annual revenues.

Employees that are committed are more likely to meet customers' needs and demands (Picincu, 2019).

2.3.4 Increasing staff morale in the workplace

There are a number of strategies and approaches employers can take to increase employee morale (Ladson, 2019) as listed below:

Employee recognition - Employee recognition ranks the highest above all. A simple thank you to employee's positive contribution could go a long way. Employee recognition in a presence of their peers could also motivate others to achieve quality work which will contribute to organisational competitiveness.

Solving employees' grievances - Management should deal with employees' grievances without prejudice to ensure that morale of staff is not negatively affected.

Proper promotion of employees - Employees that are committed to the organisation would prefer to grow within the organisation. Promoting employees fairly will boost their morale and positively increases attitude and affinity to the organisation. Productivity is, therefore, thus increased.

Good working conditions - The provision of comprehensive programmes on employee's wellness and assistance; occupational safety; regulated conditions of services which include legislated hours of work and wage regime included in the policies with no discrepancies will help create job interest amongst employees.

2.4 Leadership Styles

Leadership styles have been identified and used for centuries, and have been the focus in organisations for many years (Kumar, 2014). According to Beeka (2006) in Scott (2016), leadership style can be described as the way a leader behaves and performs towards and with the team members. Schwella (2008) agrees with this, and further describes leadership style as the ability of the leader to be task or people orientated.

A leadership style can be described as the approach the leader uses to inspire and motivate followers, Lewin in 1939 conducted research and found that there are three dominant leadership styles namely autocratic or authoritarian, democratic or participative, and Laissez-Faire or delegative in nature (Wanza & Nkuraru, 2016). Weber (2009) identified an additional leadership style, which is bureaucratic (Cherry-Paul et al., 2020). Over the years, more leadership styles have been added, including autocratic, bureaucratic, transactional, and transformational leadership styles.

2.4.1 Autocratic Leadership

An autocratic leader acts in a self-centred way and relies on the power of the position to lead and manage (Canary & Mcphee, 2011). The autocratic leader believes in unilateral decision making, communication is a top-down approach with no prospect of input or feedback to the leader from subordinates, and the bureaucratic leaders spend a lot of time on supervising subordinates' work attitudes very closely (Naile & Selesho, 2014).

The autocratic leader revels in the control the position provides, and believes that if employees behave well and are obedient subordinates who follow orders, the autocratic leader fulfils the function of good leader and good manager (Nwokocha & Iheriohanma, 2015). Gordon (2013) explains that employees under an autocratic leader are expected to follow order, even when they are not in agreement with it. Gordon (2013) further posits that to uplift the motivation and morale of employees, the autocratic leader often has a highly structured set of rewards for good performance and punishments for poor performance.

2.4.2 Bureaucratic Leadership

The bureaucratic leadership style relies heavily on rules, processes, and procedures, and is often found in the public sector (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2011). Weber (2009:12) posited that bureaucracy in government is essential, as "large-scale, complex organizations need formalized rules and procedures in order to run effectively". According to Theletsane (2014), research has shown that the bureaucratic leadership style is still associated with negative perceptions, namely, inefficiency, poor performance, government red tape and maladministration.

A study by Nwokocha and Iheriohanma (2015) in the Nigerian public service found that employee retention and performance could be enhanced through the adoption of suitable leadership styles that align the organisational strategy with employee motivation and morale. The study found that when the leadership style is not acceptable to employees, it negatively influences employee performance and increases turnover intention.

2.4.3 Transactional Leadership

This type of leadership is characterised by the role of management, with a motivational relationship between reward and punishment for the employees (Bro et al., 2014). This type of leadership uses conditional rewards and punishments to encourage employees to pursue their own self-interest, which is beneficial to the organisation's success. A transaction is when there is an exchange of one thing for another, thus a give and take relationship. According to DuBois et al. (2015), the transactional leadership style can be described as the relationship between the leader and subordinate, which is based on transactions. The focus of these transactions is on reward and punishment, which is the transaction.

When the employee achieves a set of objectives according to the agreed measure, there is a reward. If the employee does not achieve the set goals and objectives, there will be a punishment. Rewards could be money, benefits, promotion, praise, and positive feedback. Punishment could be in the form of withholding money or benefits such as a bonus or an increase, or even disciplinary action. This relationship between the leader and the employee is strictly managed by rules, policies, performance contracts, and reports.

Bro et al. (2014) further indicate that this leadership style is characterised by a number of aspects, including that workers are more productive when there is a clearly defined chain of command; they must follow orders of the leaders at all costs; employees must be closely monitored in order to achieve organisational goals; and that employees are motivated by rewards and punishments. A negative aspect drawback of the

transactional leadership style is that it does not encourage innovation and creative thinking.

Figure 1.3 below indicates a transactional leadership cycle, which is often more suitable for organisations with short term goals, as employees know what they are working towards, and that they will receive their reward shortly (Haq & Chandio, 2017). The style may not be suitable for the NHC. The NHC works on five-year term goals which are reviewed annually. This type of leadership may cause conflict between management and their subordinates.

Figure 1.3: Characteristics of Transactional Leadership
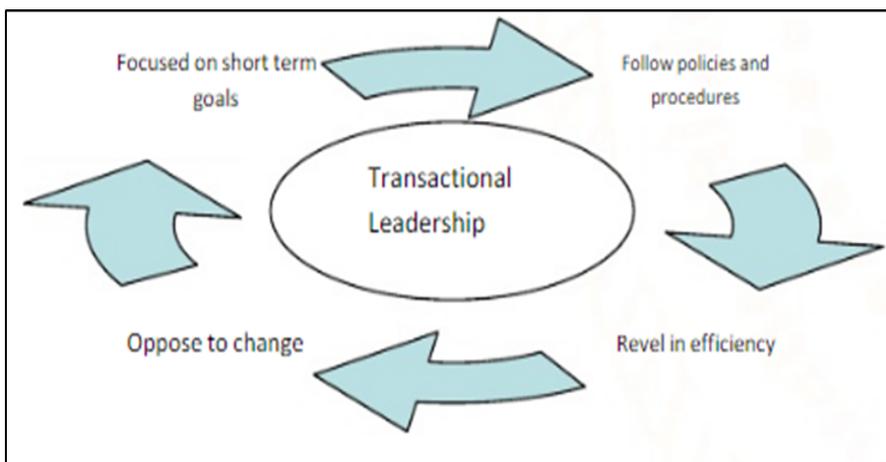
Source: Haq and Chandio (2017:34)

2.4.4 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership theory indicates that when a person interacts with others, they are able to create a solid relationship that results in the higher percentage of trust

that ultimately results in increased motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, in both leaders and followers. Furthermore, rules and regulations are flexible, guided by group norms and these attributes provide a sense of belonging for the followers who could then easily identify with the leader. Transformational leadership manifests when leaders positively recognise and change their followers in the following three ways (Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018):

- Employees are made aware of how important their jobs are and the necessity for them to ensure that the organisation attains its set strategic goals.

- The employees' need for personal career advancement, and accomplishment are recognised as a priority.

- Employees are motivated to place their work above personal interests for the greater good of the organisation.

Transformational leadership style can spark positive changes amongst the followers (Rawat, 2015) and managers who employ it are more likely to be trusted by their employees. "It was also proven that it also has positive impact over employees' morale and motivational" (Rawat, 2015). Although Long et al. (2012) in their study concluded that leadership style has no impact on turnover intention of the academic education industry.

Likewise, transformational leaders can influence staff by charismatic personalities, stimulating them intellectually, and engaging them on developmental considerations (Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018). However, it should also be taken into account that although transformational leadership has been linked to organisational positive outcomes, the study by Hassi (2019) has shown that not all characteristics

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are important for positive morale, employee job satisfaction, and effectiveness. The recognition and acknowledgement of employees were found to be the most important factor. In Figure 2.2 below, the four elements of transformational leadership are depicted.

Figure 1.4: Elements of Transformational Leadership

Source: Gupta (2022:1).

Individual Mentoring: Transformational leaders' mentors or coach other team members to expand their knowledge and upskill the employee. The leader looks at the

strengths and weaknesses and assists the employee by supporting the self-development.

Encourage Creativity: The transformational leader inspires team members to become innovative, creative, think critically, and be prepared to take risks.

Inspirational Motivation: Inspiration and motivation is critical to develop an employee and to increase employee morale. The transformational leader encourages employees to learn new skills and become stronger. Transformational leadership drives employees to understand future goals, set high standards, and complete tasks with purpose.

Influence by Leading: Transformational leaders should lead by example in setting high standards and display good personal ethics and values, as this creates trust.

According to DuBois et al. (2015), the transformational leader focuses on empowering the employees, creating opportunities for upskilling and development, personal orientation, and commitment. Transformational leaders aim to transform not only the employees, but also the organisation (Judge & Robbins, 2017). According to Ismail et al. (2009), transformational leadership had four distinct dimensions: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Transformational leaders are charismatic individuals who work better in a democratic environment where the leaders, managers and employees work towards participative engagement.

2.5 Herzberg Motivation-Hygiene Theory

The Two-Factor Theory was developed by Frederick Herzberg in 1959 based on a study on a group of engineers and accountants (Herzberg, 2017). Two factors were defined namely Motivational and Hygiene factors. Motivational factors are intrinsic and will increase for example job satisfaction, while Hygiene factors are extrinsic and are those factors that will prevent dissatisfaction. Applying these factors will not necessarily resulted in job satisfaction. To increase employee performance or job satisfaction, motivational factors need to be added to the equation (Wan, Tan, & Mohammad, 2013).

The Herzberg Two-Factor Theory is closely related to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, but it added more motivational factors. The theory stated that the satisfaction of individual lower-level needs (extrinsic or hygiene factors) will prevent dissatisfaction but will not motivate employees (Robbins, 2009). To motivate employees, organisations should focus on the higher-level needs (intrinsic or motivation factors) of employees (Herzberg, 2017).

Extrinsic Factors or job content factors include for example pay, benefits, status, and working conditions. Achievement of these factors will eliminate employees' work dissatisfaction but will not cause job satisfaction. Intrinsic Factors or job content factors are motivators and include for example recognition, achievements, opportunities for growth, and purposeful and challenging work. Presence of these factors will lead to higher performance and productivity. Absence "of this factor will only neutralize their feeling neither satisfy nor dissatisfy on their jobs" (Wan et al., 2013:19). Extrinsic

Factors on the one hand are about employee's willingness to work while Intrinsic Factors on the other, are about the quality of their work.

2.6 Improvement of employee morale

According to Nur, Harrison, Deb, Burch and Strawderman (2021), there is an array of factors causing poor employee morale as presented in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1: Cause of poor employee morale
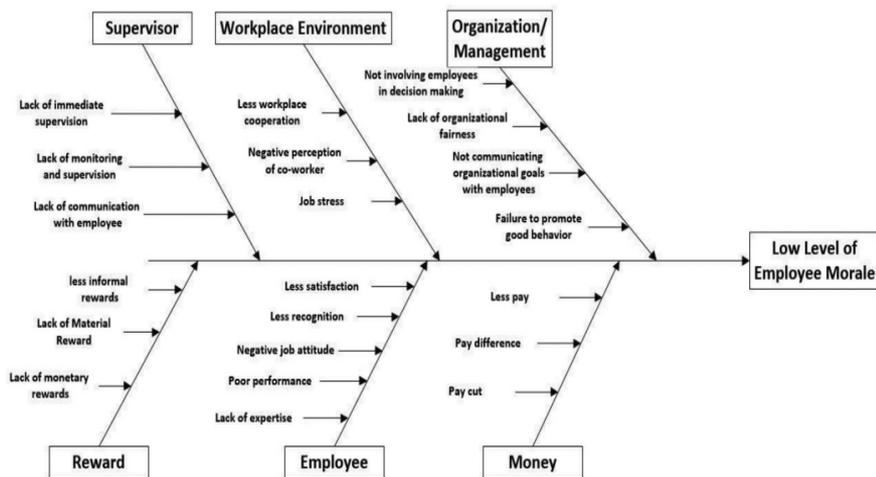
Source: Nur et al. (2021)

Figure 2.1 above depicts the main factors that influence employee morale negatively, and include money, or remuneration, rewards for a job well done, employee dissatisfaction which has an influence on performance and attitude at work, the supervisor or leader, the overall work environment, as well as the management and the organisation, which include fairness, communication and recognition.

A study by Ladson (2019) on how to increase employee morale and decrease employee turnover in the banking sector is in agreement with Nur et al. (2021), and identified adopting motivational leadership techniques, applying open and transparent communication skills, and applying recognition or rewards as important steps to increase employee morale. The study by Oppong, Chan and Dansoh (2017) further found that the organisation should adopt a transformational leadership style, where the important characteristics such as to motivate, inspire, and retain talented employees are prevalent.

2.7 Gaps in the literature

A number of gaps in the literature was identified which necessitated the undertaking of this study. The available literature is most often on studies in developed countries (Sabitova, Hickling & Priebe, 2020) and not in developing countries such as South Africa, where there are complex issues that employers need to take into consideration. Studies conducted in small public sector organisations such as the NHC on employee morale were limited, as the focus seems to be on Small and Medium Enterprises and job satisfaction, or large public sector departments and employee performance. The NHC is unique in the sense that it is a public sector entity within the heritage industry; however, it employs less than 60 employees and is viewed as a "new" department, as it was only started 15 years ago. For such a young department to have a high employee turnover of over 30% could be indicative of several issues that should be addressed to prevent the turnover rate from increasing or negativity from spreading to other departments.

2.8 Summary

This chapter reviewed the concepts of employee motivation and morale, as well as leadership styles. The influence of employee morale in the workplace was reviewed, and various factors that could influence employee morale were identified. The literature showed a clear relationship between employee morale and leadership, and the negative influence that poor leadership or a leadership style could have on employee morale. Literature further showed the importance of leadership and how the leadership style should fit with the organisation and the employees for increased performance. The theory of Hertzberg underpins this study, and the different hygiene and motivational factors were identified, as well as how these factors linked to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Lastly, a diagram by Nur et al. (2021) identified the factors influencing employee morale, followed by a discussion on approaches to increase morale in the workplace.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this section, the research design and methodology of the proposed study are discussed. This chapter presents the target population, sample, data collection, and data analysis methods used, with justification for each choice. The outcome of the pilot study is presented, as are the steps to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and its ethics.

3.2 Research paradigm and orientation

For this study, the phenomenological philosophy, which is located in the interpretivist paradigm, was used. The interpretivist paradigm enables the researcher to gain further depth by seeking experiences and perceptions of a particular social context (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020), in this case, the reasons and causes of low morale among NHC employees. The positivist paradigm enables the researchers to obtain more statistical reliance and generalisation, leading to the development of universal laws and findings (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). The study intended to examine the factors contributing to employee morale within the NHC and make recommendations on the leadership style and possible improvements that the NHC could implement to reduce employee turnover. By using an interpretivist paradigm, the researcher gained in-depth information on the experiences of the employees at NHC, how they perceive the leadership, and what they believe could be done to improve employee morale, thereby reducing turnover.

3.3 Research approach

The researcher adopted an inductive approach. Selected employees at NHC were interviewed to get a sense of what could be (1) factors affecting employee morale, (2) how the current leadership style influences employee morale, and (3) to determine how to improve employee morale.

3.3.1 Research approach to data collection

A qualitative method was used to conduct this study. The researcher chose to collect data through a cross-sectional study by using an interview schedule to gain an in-depth understanding of employee morale and the influence of the leadership style on employee turnover, which is at 35.6% of the total staff, which is very high. Interviews are useful to determine people's perceptions, attitudes, and opinions (Vos et al., 2011). Leedy and Ormrod (2010) confirm that an interview can be used to acquire information about people's characteristics, opinions, and past experiences, where the researcher poses questions and records responses.

An interview schedule was developed to collect data to answer the research questions. Open-ended questions were posed, and participants were allowed to freely express their thoughts. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, as posited by Leedy and Ormrod (2010).

The advantage of the selected method is that it is cost-effective and does not take up a lot of time when analysing the data. A pilot study with two participants was used to test the interview schedule.

The selected method is subjective, as the collected data was based on emotions, perceptions, and personal experience; however, the researcher took steps to check the information and guard against leading the participant or allowing researcher bias to influence the study. Some of the interviews were audio recorded, and notes were taken by the researcher that contributed to the data. Employees who chose not to be interviewed or recorded agreed to complete a self-administered questionnaire and return it after completion. These questions were the same questions asked in the interviews.

3.3.2 Research approach in data analysis

The researcher adopted an inductive approach. Selected employees at NHC were interviewed to obtain a sense of (1) factors affecting employee morale, (2) how the current leadership style influences employee morale, and (3) to determine the improvement of employee morale.

3.3.3 Techniques and procedures

The duration of the study is estimated at three months, starting in September 2022, and completed at the end of December 2022. The primary data was collected using face-to-face interviews and self-administrated questionnaires.

3.4 The quantitative or qualitative strand in research approach

This study adopted a qualitative approach. The associated target population, research design, sampling method, pilot study, and trustworthiness are discussed and justified in the section below. Ethical considerations, data collection, and data analysis are also presented. The researcher selected a qualitative approach due to the small number of

employees eligible for participation. According to Ando, Cousins and Young (2014), up to 12 interviews are often sufficient before reaching data saturation. The study also aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the participants related to leadership and employee morale, which is best suited for a qualitative study.

3.4.1 Coverage of the study

The location of this study was at the offices of the NHC of SA in Pretoria. Most employees are based at these offices, which serve as the primary location for the NHC.

3.4.2 Target population

The target population is the employees at the NHC in Pretoria. There are currently 59 employees, with 39 on the non-management level. For this study, the researcher had access to the sample frame (list of NHC employees) that was obtained from the Human Resources department. According to Bui (2014), sampling is the process of selecting participants for the study. Saunders and Lewis (2018) define a sample as a "sub-group of all members or the whole population". From the 39 employees, the researcher used non-probability sampling to select 11 employees for interviews. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, as the participants had to have certain attributes that ensured their responses addressed the research questions. These attributes included being on the non-management level, having at least 1 to 5 years' experience with NHC, and having a tertiary qualification.

3.4.3 Research design

This qualitative study followed an exploratory research design, which is best suited when exploring new happenings and events that have limited academic literature available. Exploratory research does not try to solve the research problem but rather attempts to explore the topic at different depths (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that the three forms of research designs include exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory research. With this exploratory design, the study attempts to find an answer to the questions of "what or why," such as what factors, reasons, or challenges influence a specific event, such as why employee motivation and morale are low, and if the leadership style is the reason why the turnover of employees is so high. An exploratory design was the best choice for this study, and it is popular when limited information is available on a topic, in this case, employee motivation at the NHC in South Africa.

3.4.4 Sampling methods

Probability and nonprobability sampling are the two methods of sampling, where probability sampling is random and every element has an equal chance of inclusion in the study, and with non-probability the chance of being selected for the study is not known (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

According to Bui (2014), sampling is the process of selecting participants for the study. Saunders and Lewis (2018) define a sample as a sub-group of all members or the whole population. For this study, the researcher had access to the sample frame (a list of NHC employees), which was obtained from the Human Resources department.

Non-probability sampling was applied, with a purposive sampling technique to select participants. The selection criteria for this study was non-managers only.

From the target population of 59 employees, and the sample of 29 non-managerial employees, 13 employees were selected with at least 1 to 5 years' experience with the NHC, and have a tertiary qualification. Collected data was stored on cloud storage.

3.4.5 Data collection methods

This study took three months, starting in September 2022, and was completed at the end of November 2022. The primary data was collected using semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions.

3.4.6 Instruments for data collection

Ritchie et al. (2013) state that face-to-face interviews are the most often used data collection technique for qualitative research, as they offer the possibility for in-depth examination and knowledge of the participants' personal settings and realities, as well as the capacity to present an unaltered perspective from the participant.

3.4.7 Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke (2019) suggest that thematic analysis is flexible, and the researcher could modify it to suit a specific purpose. They further explain that thematic analysis is used to identify and describe hidden meanings within the data:

The six steps to thematic analysis that were followed in this study are:

- Step 1 developed an understanding of the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts and listening to the recordings until there is a sense of familiarity.

- Step 2 generated initial codes from interesting features in the data that could form the foundation of the analysis.

- Step 3 searched for patterns of meaning to collate the codes to identify broader patterns of themes.

- Step 4 followed a process to review the themes and to group together similar patterns of meaning into themes.

- Step 5 defined and named the different themes by linking the meanings to the theme and creating a thematic map.

- Step 6 created a report on the findings to answer the research questions. Verbatim quotes from the participants were used as support.

These steps were followed with the aid of a qualified analyst to assist with the thematic analysis, using the manual reflexive TA method developed in 2006 by researchers Braun and Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Thematic analysis, although subjective, is flexible and the interpretation of themes is supported by data.

3.4.7 Pilot study

The pilot study was conducted with two participants selected for this study. The first pilot interview was conducted without issues, and the voice recording was transcribed. The interview took approximately 30 minutes, as the researcher first explained the study and how the data will be used and attempted to make the participant feel comfortable.

The second pilot participant was not prepared to give consent for the recording or to be interviewed face-to-face. After consultation with the analyst, it was decided to test the option of a self-administered interview schedule, and an email was sent to the participant. The body of the email explained that elaboration is required on each question, and for proper findings, the participant should refrain from giving one-sentence answers. The participant returned the completed interview schedule, and the researcher and analyst reviewed the quality of the answers and were satisfied that they would suffice.

The results of the pilot study allowed the researcher to add an alternative method of data collection, which was the self-administered option with no voice recording.

3.4.8 Trustworthiness

Nowell et al. (2017) state that the concepts of reliability and validity cannot be used in a qualitative study; however, the alternative construct of trustworthiness is used. The four criteria for trustworthiness are listed below:

3.4.8.1 Credibility

Credibility relates to the accuracy of the research findings in matching reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For enhanced credibility, the participants were asked to evaluate the results, how they were interpreted, and the conclusions.

3.4.8.2 Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the results could be generalised to other contexts. The pilot study was conducted successfully and contributed to ensuring the instruments' transferability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

3.4.8.3 Confirmability

Confirmability relates to the question by Mbele-Kokela and Moodley (2021): "Are the findings a product of participants' responses and not the researcher's bias, interest, or perceptions?" To ensure the credibility of this study, the findings were subjected to peer review and a review by an independent analyst.

3.4.8.4 Dependability

Dependability is concerned with the replicability and consistency of the findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Dependability was ensured with detailed record-keeping of the entire process, as well as audio recordings of the interviews and hard copies of the raw data.

3.4.9 Administration of research instruments

The initial plan for this study was to conduct face-to-face interviews with the selected participants and to make voice recordings of the interviews to assist with data analysis. Due to the unavailability of the participants (foreign travel, conferences, meetings) and their reluctance to be recorded, the researcher opted for self-administered questionnaires as an alternative option if the participants were not available or refused to be recorded.

Three participants were available and willing to conduct the interview and give permission to be recorded. These recordings were transcribed onto a Word document and emailed to the independent data analyst for further assistance. The other eight participants were prepared to complete the interview schedule and email it back to the

researcher. These completed documents were checked and emailed to the independent data analyst for further assistance.

3.4.10 Ethical considerations

All ethical principles were adhered to. The researcher solicited written and informed consent from all respondents, who were provided with forms with a clear description of the purpose and scope of the study and what the collected data was intended for (see Annexure B). The researcher informed participants of their right to decline participation at any stage of the interviews should they so wish. The research was conducted in a way that ensures the confidentiality of the individuals participating in the interview to protect them from harm. Participants' names were not included in the project and are referred to as Respondent 1, Respondent 2, and so forth to be presented as R1, R2 throughout. Permission was obtained from the NHC of SA to conduct the study among the employees and to use company resources such as email and a meeting room for the interviews (see Annexure C). Ethical clearance was obtained from Regenesys Business School's Ethical Board to conduct the study (see Annexure D).

3.5 Summary

This chapter provided details on the research design and methodology used. The selected target population, which were all non-managers at NHC, was discussed, as was the process and justification for selecting 13 participants as the sample size. The outcome of the pilot study contributed to the final method of data collection, as participants were not prepared to be recorded or interviewed in person. The steps

taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study are explained, as are the ethical considerations made during the study.

The next chapter presents the data analysis and findings from the collected data.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, Chapter 3, the research design and methodology of the proposed study were discussed. In this chapter, the response rate will be presented, followed by a summary of the demographics of the participants. The findings of the thematic analysis will be presented using a thematic map to provide structure for the presentation.

4.2 Response rate

A purposive sampling was used to choose from the target population of 59 employees at the NHC in Pretoria a sample of 13 employees that are on the non-management level, have at least 1 to 5 years' experience with the NHC, and have a tertiary qualification. Purposive sampling was used because the participants had to have certain attributes that ensured their responses could help achieve the research objectives.

4.3   Demographical Characteristics of The Participants

The demographical characteristics of the study participants are presented in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Demographical Characteristics of The Participants

Participant	Gender	Experience in Years	Education
1	Female	11 to 15	Post Graduate
2	Female	1 to 5	Post Graduate
3	Female	6 to 10	Post Graduate
4	Male	1 to 5	Post Graduate
5	Male	1 to 5	Post Graduate
6	Female	1 to 5	Degree
8	Male	6 to 10	Degree
9	Male	6 to 10	Degree
11	Male	6 to 10	Post Graduate
12	Female	1 to 5	Post Graduate
13	Female	1 to 5	Post Graduate

As presented in Table 4.1 above, the gender participation is equally distributed, meaning that the findings will not be biased towards a specific gender group. All the participants have 1 to 5 years of work experience or more, and all are well qualified. Based on this information, it can be accepted that the participants provided valuable information to achieve the research objectives of this study.

4.4 Findings from The Study

The aim of this qualitative study is to determine the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at the NHC of South Africa using a qualitative method. A qualitative approach was used to collect data from well-informed participants through semi-structured interviews. This data was submitted for thematic analysis with the aim of achieving the following research objectives:

- ***Research objective 1:*** To identify the factors influencing employee morale at the National Heritage Council.
- ***Research objective 2:*** To determine the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at the National Heritage Council.
- ***Research objective 3:*** To determine the improvement of employee morale at the National Heritage Council.

A six-step thematic analysis was used to analyse the data with the purpose to find relationships or patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

4.3.1 Development of the Themes

As described by Braun and Clarke (2019), a six-step thematic analysis was followed to analyse the data. Firstly, the researcher familiarised herself with the data by reading the transcripts a few times. Secondly, the data was read line by line, searching for relationships and patterns within the data. Codes were created based on the content of the text and the links to the text. These codes were sorted according to the similarities between them. From the sorted code, main and sub-themes were created. To assist in the understanding of the findings, a thematic map was created, as presented in Figure 4.1 below, to serve as a structure for the findings' presentation.

Figure 4.1 Factors that influencing employee morale
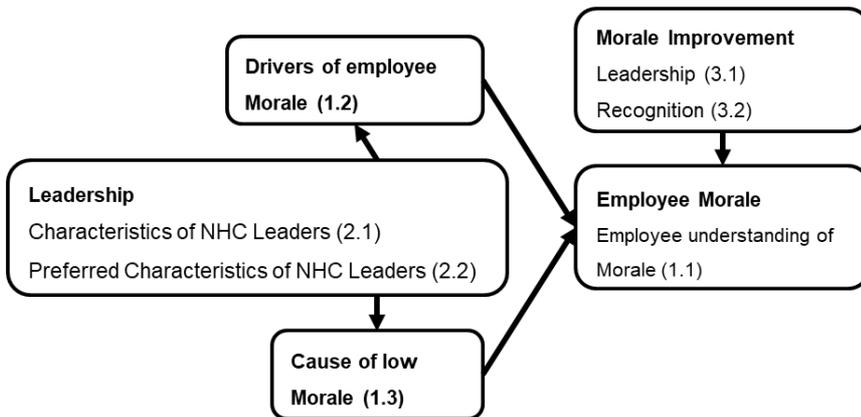
The thematic framework above serves as a structure to present the findings from by main themes and sub-themes below.

4.3.2 Main Theme 1: Factors that influence employee morale at their workplace

The first objective of the study is to identify the factors influencing employee morale at the NHC. Shaban et al. (2017) defined morale as "an elusive quality that involves feelings, emotions, attitude, and perception towards the organisation and its members". La Fata et al. (2021) agree with this definition but add that employee morale includes the general outlook an employee shows at the workplace. Table 4.2 below is a representation of the development of the emerging main theme 1: factors influencing employee morale at their workplace.

Table 4.2: A representation of the development of the emerging main theme 1: Factors that that influencing employee morale at their workplace

Morale Related Factors	Emerging Theme
1.1: Employee understanding of Morale	

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1.2: Drivers of employee Morale	1: Factors that that influencing
	employee morale at their
1.3: Cause of low Morale	workplace

In this section the sub-themes that was used for the development of the emerging main theme 1 are presented.

4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Employee understanding of Morale

Morale is the mental or psychological state of a person (Chakroff & Young, 2015), expressed in the enthusiasm or loyalty shown towards an organisation, and should not be confused with a similar concept called moral, which refers to behaviour that is right or wrong. This section aims to determine if the participants of this study have developed an understanding of this concept. The following statements from the participants reflect their understanding of this concept:

> R 4: *"Employee morale basically mean how employees feel about their working environment, are they satisfied, motivated and happy to be in the workplace which eventually affects the productivity of the employees."*

> R 2: *"In my own opinion employee morale refers to the professionalism attributes one has to possess."*

> R 11: *"Intrinsic aspects within the working and job environment influencing the extent to which an employee is influenced either negatively or positively performance wise in relation to their job requirements, duties and responsibilities."*

> R 12: *"It is the way in which individual employees behave in the organisation and their contentedness in that institution."*

R 8: *"It's a measure of how motivated and satisfied the employees are with the organisation. High morale results in productive and confident employees whereas low morale has adverse effect on productivity of the employees."*

R9: *"Spirit is high and feel motivated."*

R 3: *"The feeling of the employee in the working environment."*

R 6: *The work environment which employees work under and what they think of/about it."*

Based on the participants' contributions, the participants describe employee morale as the overall outlook, attitude, satisfaction, and confidence that they as employees feel at work. This finding is supported by Newman et al. (2016) who stated that morale is part of job satisfaction, and reflects in the behaviour of the employee. This is something that influences their mental or emotional state, which in turn influences their behaviour (Tanchaisak, 2019). When employees are positive about their work environment and believe that they can meet their most important needs at work, their morale gets boosted.

4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Drivers of employee Morale

Morale drivers are those actions or happenings that influence the mindsets of employees in a positive way and influence their working performance (Waseem, Biggemann & Garry, 2020). The following statements from the participants are a reflection of their understanding of what they think are drivers of employee morale:

R 5: *"Being competitive: Being competitive with unique business plans which differ from organisation to organisation reveals their conduct in enhancing service growth and marketing focus are facing employee retention challenges."*

R 5: *"Clear Goals: Keeping in mind the end goal to concentrate the effectives of representative assurance in the present review an endeavour has been made to understand how once morale affects organisation.'*

R 8: *"Competent management: Management that competent is a motivation to employees as they look up to them.'*

R 11: *"Consistence and Fairness: Consistence and fairness in the application of organisational policies to inspire confidence amongst employees especially on employee benefits."*

R 2: *"Emotionally intelligence and Self-awareness."*

R 5: *"Proactive: Employees work efficiency takes mains stage in being any employee straightforwardly identifying various issues which can be resolved amicably."*

R 3: *"Engagement: Engaging the employees by giving feedback job satisfaction."*

R11: *"Fair training and development: Fair training and development opportunities that assures employees of professional growth prospects and opportunities."*

R 8: *"Financial reward: Adequate pay in comparison with similar positions in the market."*

R 5: *"Happiness: Cheerful employees go an extra mile who has high spirit while disappointed and desponded representatives have low assurance utilising work fulfilment, authoritative duty, turnover rates, objections.'*

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R 6: *"Leadership: Good leaders lead by example."*

R 9: *"Listen to employees and show respect.'*

R 4: *"Macro management: This leadership style enables employees to be confident about their work and increase their individual productivity as they feel trusted and relied on to work to the best of their abilities.'*

R 4: *"Open door policy: This policy enables employees to feel free and at ease in the workplace to express themselves and not afraid to communicate work and personal matters."*

R 8: *"Proper and timely communication: Information communicated timeously in a proper channel shows that management has interests of the employees at heart."*

R 4: *"Recognition: Being able to identify and congratulate or reward an employee that has done a great job will improve their morale."*

R 3: *"Rewarding: It has a positive effect because employees feel recognised and motivated to always perform their duties better.'*

R 11*: "Rewards: Attractive, market related and competitive performance regime and reward system that is on par with similar organisations or sector expressed in the organisational staff retention policies."*

R 6: *"Safe working environment."*

R 1: *"Support: Employee morale would be impacted positively where they get support from their leaders and each other. Show sympathy."*

R 3: *"Work Culture: The last factor is a positive culture.'*

R 12: *"Being Valued: They show employees that they are valued, being honest and transparency."*

Based on the contributions from the participants, there is an array of work-related factors that can influence morale in a positive way. Important factors mentioned by the respondents are a positive work culture, strong supportive leadership, effective communication channels, the opportunity to develop and grow, recognition, rewards, clarity of goals, and consistency and fairness, to name a few. This finding is in agreement with Waseem et al. (2020) who stated that the drivers of employee motivation and morale is a psychological process that directs and energises the employee's inner desire to take action. The prevailing culture in an organisation can have an impact on the morale of the employees.

4.3.2.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Cause of low Morale

Causes of low morale are those actions or happenings that influence the mindsets of employees in a negative way (Ghandolfi, 2011) and, in turn, influence their work performance. The following statements from the participants reflect their understanding of what they think are the causes of low employee morale:

R 12: *"Adversarial, toxic, intolerable and hostile working environment undermining cohesive and team work."*

R 4: *"Disrespect: No one should be disrespected in a workplace even if one holds a higher title that the other, respect should be mutual within the workplace without undermining those below you after all we are adults at work."*

R 7: *"Exploitation of employees: Having no policies on benefits and rewards of extra duties, overtime and high performance."*

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R 8: *"Having an employee acting on a certain position and not providing allowance or having an employee do overtime without any incentive."*

R 8: *"Incompetent and punitive management: Incompetent inspires no confidence and often become punitive to those who hold different views."*

R 11: *"Inconsistent application of organisational policies especially employment benefits, opportunities and performance reward system."*

R 6: *"Job insecurity: It is important for employees to know that their jobs are safe, regardless of whatever internal affairs are happening in the organisation."*

R 4: *"Lack of team building initiatives: Lack of team bonding leads to employees feeling isolated in the workplace where teamwork is not implemented."*

R 3: *"Lack of training: The last one is the lack of training; employees need to be effective and feel independent in their position. It makes them feel the support from the employer."*

R 1: *"Leadership: Autocratic leadership."*

R 4: *"Micromanagement: Constantly breathing down an employee's neck about work they know they should be doing and are busy with will decrease their morale and confidence levels as they will feel as if their work is not appreciated."*

R 3: *"Trust: Lack of trust has a negative impact in team work, team members need to trust each other."*

R 3: *"Unclear Roles: Employees will not be productive if they don't know their roles and what is expected from them."*

R 8: "Unsafe and unhealthy working environment: An environment which is toxic would mostly result in emotional and mental sicknesses which may lead to absenteeism and low productivity."

The causes of low or negative employee morale are nested in an array of factors in the work environment. These include behaviours like disrespect and exploitation of employees, incompetent and punitive management, inconsistent application of organisational policies, job insecurity, lack of training, micromanagement, unclear roles, and an unsafe and unhealthy working environment that, over a period of time, can result in an adversarial, toxic, intolerable, and hostile working environment that can lead to the demise of the organisation. Ghandolfi (2011) states that morale can impact positively or negatively on the employees and the organisation, and low employee morale transforms into low productivity, a sense of chaos, and uncertainties.

4.3.3 Main Theme 2: The influence of leadership styles on employee morale at their workplace

The second objective of the study is to determine the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at the NHC. According to Beeka (2006), as cited by Scott (2016), leadership style can be described as the way a leader behaves and performs towards and with the team members. Schwella (2008) agrees with this and further describes leadership style as the ability of the leader to be task- or people-oriented. Table 4.3 below is a representation of the development of the emerging main theme 2: the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at their workplace.

Table 4.3: A representation of the development of the emerging main theme 2: The influence of leadership styles on employee morale at their workplace

Leadership Characteristics	Emerging Theme
2.1: Characteristics of NHC Leaders	2: The influence of leadership styles on employee morale at their workplace
2.2: Preferred Characteristics of NHC Leaders	

In this section. the sub-themes that was used for the development of the emerging main theme 2 are presented.

4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Characteristics of NHC Leaders

The participants were asked to list the characteristics of the NHC leaders that make them good leaders. The following statements from the participants are a reflection of those characteristics the NHC leaders possess:

R 3: *"Accountability and communication."*

R 11*: "Coordination and networking competencies."*

R 6: *"Experience that has led to a good work ethic and knowledge about the fields they are in."*

R 9: *"Few can respect and engage."*

R 11: *"Knowledge and understanding of the heritage sector policy and legislative interpretation prowess."*

R 12: *"Listening skills and respect."*

R 1: *"None, they view their subordinates as competition."*

R 2: *"Openness, willing to assist."*

R 5: *"Production this is observed by the NHC hiring young people."*

R 8: *"There is still a lot of improvement needed."*

R 3: *"Vision."*

Although the participants made some effort, they were not keen or comfortable listing the current characteristics of their NHC leaders. Based on this finding, there are characteristics or behaviours that can be associated with good leadership. Some of the identified behaviours can however be associated with weak leadership, for example, "there is still a lot of improvement needed" and "they view their subordinates as competition." This is supported by Lee et al. (2012) who found that that poor leadership is one of the top reasons for low staff morale.

4.3.3.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Preferred Characteristics of NHC Leaders

The participants were asked to indicate what characteristics they think the leaders at NHC should have to increase employee morale. In response to this question, the participants listed the following requirements:

R 1: *"Communication, transparency and consultation."*

R 2: *"Welcoming and being consistent."*

R 3: *"Selflessness, flexibility, trust."*

R 6: *"They should be trustworthy, led by example and recognise efforts."*

R 8: *"Good and timely communication. Have employees' interest at heart. Develop fair policies. Ability to encourage team work. Make employees feel secure at their jobs.*

Attend management courses and other continued professional development programmes to remain competent and inspire confidence."

R 11: *"Strategic and ethical leadership, interpersonal skills blended with emotional intelligence: agility and adaptability; resilience; innovation; ability to align with digital space characterised by automation and paperless e-governance imperatives responding to 4IR."*

R 12: *"Transparency, open to sharing their knowledge and experience with new employees."*

R 9: *"Be sensitive and be a team player."*

Hence, it is vital for employees to be aware of the characteristics of effective leadership. The characteristics of effective leadership are honesty and integrity, confidence, skills and abilities, commitment and passion, accountability, delegation and empowerment, creativity and innovation, empathy, resilience, emotional intelligence, humility, transparency, vision and purpose, team work, and instructional strategies. These characteristics identified by the participants are in line with a transformational leadership style, where the leader strives to empower the employees, displays emotional intelligence, and work with them as part of the team (DuBois et al., 2015).

4.3.4 Main Theme 3: Employee morale improvement

The third objective of the study is to determine how employee morale can be improved at the National Heritage Council. When staff morale is low it creates an unfavourable environment in the workplace and negatively influences performance and directly impacts on productivity (Lee et al., 2012). Staff morale is very important for the success

of an organisation (Willis & Varner, 2010), and for this reason ways need to be found to improve employee morale at NHC. Table 4.4 below is a representation of the development of the emerging main theme 3: Employee morale improvement.

Table 4.4: A representation of the development of the emerging main theme 3: Employee morale improvement.

Morale improvement method	Emerging Theme
3.1: Leadership style	3: Employee morale improvement
3.2: Recognition	

In this section. the sub-themes that were used for the development of the emerging main theme 3 are presented.

4.3.4.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Leadership style as morale improvement method

It is found that leadership style is one of the main drivers of employee morale. This starts from the top and filters down to the lower levels. It is imperative for leaders to act professionally to ensure that there is a fair and consistent application of policies and procedures and everyone is treated fairly. Two-way communication between leadership and employees is very important to ensure free information flow. Good leaders are approachable to enhance communication and to get support when needed. The following statements from the participants suggest how leadership style can be used as a morale improvement method.

> R 1: *"Employee morale would be impacted positively where they get support from their leaders and each other."*

> R 8: "*Equity ensures that everyone is treated fairly, and no one is seen to be favoured over the other."*

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R 11: *"Fair and consistent application of organisational policies across the board."*

R 2: "*Always act professional no matter the circumstance.*

R 8: "*Integrity must start from the top management and flow down to lower levels."*

R 4: *"Open door policy: This policy enables employees to feel free and at ease in the workplace to express themselves and not afraid to communicate work and personal matters."*

R 8: *"Proper and timely communication: Information communicated timeously in a proper channel shows that management has interests of the employees at heart."*

Good and effective leadership is very important to ensure and maintain high employee morale. Leadership plays an important role to ensure that extrinsic factors or job content factors include for example pay, benefits, status and working conditions are maintain at an acceptable standard to eliminate employees' work dissatisfaction. Leaders needs to have integrity and apply policies and procedures fairly. They need to be available to offered support and not be afraid to apply consequence management. Good leadership entails that the leader is knowledgeable, has interpersonal skills, is confident in what they are doing, and has sound judgment.

According to Beeka (2006) in Scott (2016), leadership style can be described as the way a leader behaves and performs towards and with the team members. Lee et al. (2012) indicate that poor leadership is one of the top reasons for low staff morale. Willis and Varner (2010) indicate leadership behaviour as one of the significant determinants of employee morale. Heffes (2009) points to communication as one of the best models to remedy low staff morale and being the most important factor in an organisation's success.

4.3.4.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Recognition as a morale improvement method

It was found that recognition is a very important driver of employee morale. Employees that are recognised and feel recognised experience a morale boost that motivate them to higher performance. The following statements from the participants suggest how recognition can be used as a morale improvement method.

R 1: *"Employees should be treated equally and give credit where is due."*

R 3: *"Rewarding - it has a positive effect because employees feel recognised and motivated to always perform their duties better."*

R 4: *"Recognition - being able to identify and congratulate or reward an employee that has done a great job will improve their morale."*

R 8: *"Recognised and/or reward creativity and encourage teamwork for knowledge to be shared amongst employees."*

R 11*: "Rewards: Attractive, market related and competitive performance regime and reward system that is on par with similar organisations or sector expressed in the organisational staff retention policies."*

To ensure to higher performance and productivity, leadership should focus on intrinsic factors or job content factors to serve as motivators. This is for example recognition, achievements, opportunities for growth, purposeful and challenging work as the presence of these factors will lead. Employee recognition ranks very high. A simple thank you to an employee's positive contribution could go a long way. Employee recognition in the presence of their peers could also motivate others to achieve quality work, which will contribute to organisational performance and competitiveness.

Shaban et al. (2017) pointed out that leaders should acknowledge and appreciate work done to ensure that they remain focused. Managers who communicate using a top to bottom style only may result in low morale and high turnover, which is costly to the organisation. The study by Hassi (2019) found that the recognition and acknowledgement of employees were found to be the most important factor.

4.5 Summary

A qualitative approach was used to collect data from well-informed participants through semi-structured interviews. This data was submitted for thematic analysis with the aim of achieving the research objectives defined for the study. A thematic map was created to serve as a map for the thematic analysis and finding presentation. To achieve the research objectives of the study, two main themes were identified. The first theme focuses on factors that influence employee morale at their workplace, while the second main theme focuses on the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at their workplace. It was found that the most important ways to boost employee morale is the ensure effective leadership and to recognise and reward employees. This will ensure there is an improvement in employee performance.

In the next Chapter 5 a discussion of the findings of the thematic analysis are presented.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, Chapter 4, the response rate was presented, followed by a summary of the demographics of the participants. The findings of the thematic analysis were presented by theme. In this chapter, the findings of the thematic analysis conducted in chapter 4 are discussed and interpretations provided. The data was submitted for thematic analysis with the aim of achieving the following research objectives:

- **Research objective 1:** To identify the factors influencing employee morale at the National Heritage Council.
- **Research objective 2:** To determine the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at the National Heritage Council.
- **Research Objective 3:** To determine how employee morale can be improved at the National Heritage Council.

5.2 Demographical characteristics of the participants

It was found that gender participation was equally distributed, meaning that the findings will not be biased towards a specific gender group. All the participants are well qualified presenting a degree or equivalent qualification and reported that they have 1–5 years of work experience or more within the NHC. Based on this information, it can be accepted that the participants will provide valuable information to achieve the research objectives of this study.

5.3 Discussion of findings from the thematic analysis

The findings of the thematic analysis are presented by research objectives.

5.3.1 Research objective 1

To identify the factors influencing employee morale at the National Heritage Council.

Understanding of the concept morale: As it was expected from the participants to answer questions that relate to employee morale, the first step was to determine if the participants of this study have developed an understanding of the meaning of the word "morale." Based on the participants' contributions, the participants describe employee morale as the overall outlook, attitude, satisfaction, and confidence that they as employees feel at work. This is something that influences their mental or emotional state, which in turn influences their behaviour. When employees are positive about their work environment and believe that they can meet their most important needs at work, their morale gets boosted. Based on this finding, it can be concluded that the participants have a clear understanding of the meaning of the concept of morale.

According to Ghandolfi (2011), morale can impact positively or negatively on the employees and the organisation at large. Low productivity, a sense of chaos, and uncertainties are inclined to cause low staff morale, whereas productivity is linked to high staff morale. Although there is no scale to measure morale (Kurebwa, 2011), the other symptoms that resemble elements of low staff morale have to be managed properly if the organisation wants to remain competitive. To be effective, it is important to understand the drives of morale that influence the employee mindset positively, which in turn influences their performance and, in turn, organisational performance.

Drivers of employee morale: The next step in the formulation of themes was to identify the factors or drivers that influence employee morale in a positive way. Morale drivers are those actions or happenings that influence the mindsets of employees in a positive way and influence their working performance. Based on the contributions from the participants, it was clear that there is an array of drivers in the work environment that can influence the morale in a positive way. The prevailing culture in an organisation can have an impact on the morale of the employees, which will influence their performance. Some of the factors mentioned by the participants are a positive work culture, strong supportive leadership, effective communication channels, the opportunity to develop and grow, recognition, rewards, clarity of goals, consistency, and fairness, to name a few.

Willis and Varner (2010) stated that staff morale is very important for the success of the organisation. According to White (2014), when employees feel not appreciated, they tend to feel negative about their work, complain about their supervisor, call in sick, and arrive late at work, and the quality of their work declines, which impacts negatively on the organisation. Picincu (2019) pointed out that employee recognition ranks highest above all as an activator of employee morale. Employee recognition in the presence of their peers could also motivate others to achieve quality work, which will contribute to organisational competitiveness.

Causes of low Morale: Causes of low morale are those actions or happenings that influence the mindsets of employees in a negative way and, in turn, influence their working performance. The participant listed an array of factors that include behaviours like disrespect, exploitation of employees, incompetent and punitive management, inconsistent application of organisational policies, job insecurity, lack of training,

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micromanagement, unclear roles, and an unsafe and unhealthy working environment. The presence of variables that cause low employee morale can result, over a period, in an adversarial, toxic, intolerable, and hostile working environment that can lead to the demise of the organisation. According to Lee et al. (2012), low staff morale creates an unfavourable environment in the workplace, negatively influences performance, and directly impacts productivity. There are many evident staff behaviours that could be linked to low staff morale, such as absenteeism, sickness, and a lack of motivation, which has been an ongoing trend within the NHC and ultimately leads to the urge to leave the organisation. This is supported by Willis and Varner (2010), who claim that staff morale is very important for the success of the organisation. White (2014) stated that when employees feel unappreciated, they tend to feel negative about their work, complain about their supervisor, call in sick, and arrive late at work, and the quality of their work declines, which impacts negatively on the organisation.

5.3.2 Research objective 2

To determine the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at the National Heritage Council.

To develop an understanding of the NHC leadership styles, the participants were asked to list the characteristics of the NHC leaders that make them good leaders. There was not much of an effort from the participants' side when it came to listing their leaders' characteristics. Some of the characteristics listed that can be associated with good leadership are accountability, communication, listening skills, respect, coordination and networking competencies, and experience that has led to a good work ethic and knowledge about the fields they are in. The participants listed the

following behaviours that can be linked to weak leadership, namely, respect and engagement, and there is still a lot of improvement needed.

Based on this information, it is possible that some of the leaders use an autocratic leadership style that, according to Ashforth and Humphrey (2015), is not very effective. Team members are not part of decision-making, which reduces employee morale and trust between leader and followers. This is supported by Khan et al. (2015), who stated that employees tend to be listless, defiant, have trust issues and low self-confidence, and there is strong rivalry rather than team spirit.

The next step in the process was for the participants to indicate what characteristics they thought the leaders at NHC should have to increase employee morale. Based on the contribution from the participant, leaders should have good and timely communication, have employees' interests at heart, and develop fair policies, display the ability to encourage teamwork make employees feel secure in their jobs and attend management courses and other continuing professional development programmes to remain competent and inspire confidence. They need to have transparency, be open to sharing their knowledge and experience with new employees, be sensitive, and be a team player.

This wish list of the participants pointed to the characteristics of a transformational leadership style that, according to DuBois et al. (2015), places focus on change, control, inspiring vision, and valuing the employee. Transformational leadership style can spark positive changes amongst the followers (Rawat, 2015), and managers who employ it are more likely to be trusted by their employees. Du Brin (2013) stated that the transformational leader encourages the team to reach the set targets and goals.

According to Ling and Ling (2016), the advantages of a transformational leadership style include driving change, engaging employees more, and increasing staff morale.

5.3.3 Research objective 3

To determine how employee morale can be improved at the National Heritage Council.

Based on the finding from the primary research, it is clear that leadership and employee recognition is very important to enhance and maintain high employee morale. Leaders need to have integrity and apply policies and procedures fairly. Loaders need to be available to offer support and not be afraid to apply consequence management. Good leadership entails that the leader is knowledgeable, has interpersonal skills, is confident in what they are doing, and has sound judgment.

It was found that recognition is a very important driver of employee morale. Employees that are recognised and feel recognised experience a morale boost that motivates them to higher performance. Employee recognition in the presence of their peers could also motivate others to achieve quality work, which will contribute to organisational competitiveness.

5.4 Summary of key issues

In this chapter, the findings of the thematic analysis were discussed by research objective. Based on the findings of the study, the participants have a clear understanding of what the concepts of morale mean. Those factors the participants listed that are responsible for low morale in the work situation are disrespect, exploitation of employees, incompetent and punitive management, inconsistent

application of organisational policies, job insecurity, lack of training, micromanagement, unclear roles, and an unsafe and unhealthy working environment.

Although the participants made some effort, they were not keen or comfortable listing the current characteristics of their NHC leaders. Based on this information, it is possible that some of the leaders use an autocratic leadership style that, according to Ashforth and Humphrey (2015), is not very effective and influences employee morale negatively. Based on the wish list provided by the participants, they are looking for a leadership style that shows the characteristics of a transformational leadership style.

In the next Chapter the summary and recommendations of the study are presented.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, Chapter 5, the findings of the thematic analysis conducted in Chapter 4 were discussed and interpretations provided. In this section, the summary of the results will be presented, along with recommendations based on the findings of this study and areas for further research.

6.2 Summary of the chapters

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the study, as well as a problem statement that led to the need to undertake the study. The aim of the study was formulated as the need to determine the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at the National Heritage Council of South Africa. Research questions and objectives were formulated, and the theory that underpinned the study was Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, to determine how employee morale is influenced by leadership style.

Chapter 2 reviewed current literature on employee motivation and morale, and some of the leadership styles. The literature review confirmed that there is a relationship between employee morale and leadership, and confirmed that the leadership style practiced in an organisation could influence employee morale. The review showed the importance of employee morale in the workplace, and provided suggestions on methods and steps the organisation could adopt to increase morale in the workplace.

Chapter 3 provided details on the research design and methodology selected, as well as the target population and sampling strategy. Each choice was justified and motivated in relation to the concepts and aim of the study. The outcome of the pilot

study contributed to the final method of data collection, as participants were not prepared to be recorded or interviewed in person. The steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study were explained, as well as the ethical considerations made during the study.

Chapter 4 provided information on the data collected from well-informed participants. This data was submitted for thematic analysis with the aim of achieving the research objectives defined for the study. A thematic map was created to serve as a map for the thematic analysis and presentation of the findings. The three main themes were factors that influence employee morale at their workplace, and the second main theme focused on the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at their workplace. The third main theme focused on ways to improve employee morale in the work situation.

Chapter 5 presented the main findings that were responsible for low morale in the work place, namely, disrespect, exploitation of employees, incompetent and punitive management, inconsistent application of organisational policies, job insecurity, lack of training, micromanagement, unclear roles, and an unsafe and unhealthy working environment. Based on the findings, the main leadership style at NHC seemed to be the autocratic leadership style, while participants indicated that a transformational leadership style would build morale and motivate for higher performance.

6.3 Findings

The section below provides the main finding of the study from the literature reviewed and the primary data collected in the study.

6.3.1 Findings from the literature

Newman et al. (2016) and Tanchaisak (2019) posit that employee morale is part of job satisfaction and could be affected by organisational behaviour. Cattell and Stice (1960) in Sania et al. (2015) posit that employee morale has five dimensions, which are cohesion, tenacity, leadership synergy, adventurous striving, and personal reward.

When staff morale is low it creates an unfavourable environment in the workplace and negatively influences performance and directly impacts on productivity. There are much evidence of staff behaviour that could be linked to low staff morale, such as absenteeism, illness, and lack of motivation (Lee et al., 2012).

Leadership or lack thereof could be one of the contributing factors to low employee morale. In their research, Lee et al. (2012) indicate that poor leadership is one of the main reasons for low staff morale. Willis and Varner (2010) point out to leadership behaviour as one of significant determinants of employee's morale.

The literature showed the importance of employee morale, where high morale leads to high performance, low absenteeism, and better quality of work, good discipline sustainability and organisational growth (Picincu, 2019). Organisations that ensure that their staff morale is high are likely to keep them longer within the organisation which reduces high staff turnover. Organisations that invest in their employees attract top talent and gain customer loyalty in their annual revenues (Picincu, 2019).

The literature provided methods and steps the organisation could take to increase employee morale, which included employee recognition, solving employees' grievances, proper promotion of employees, and good working conditions. The main considerations should be whether the leadership style is conducive to the working

environment, and if it is contributing to employee morale, or if it is rather one of the reasons for low employee morale and high employee turnover (Sulamuthu & Yusof, 2018).

An autocratic leader acts in a self-centred way and relies on the power of the position to lead and manage (Canary & Mcphee, 2011). The autocratic leader believes in unilateral decision making, communication is a top-down approach with no prospect of input or feedback to the leader from subordinates, and the bureaucratic leaders spend a lot of time on supervising subordinates' work attitudes very closely (Naile & Selesho, 2014). Gordon (2013) explains that employees under an autocratic leader are expected to follow order, even when they are not in agreement with it. Gordon (2013) further posits that to uplift the motivation and morale of employees, the autocratic leader often has a highly structured set of rewards for good performance and punishments for poor performance.

The bureaucratic leadership style relies heavily on rules, processes, and procedures, and is often found in the public sector (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2011). A study by Nwokocha and Iheriohanma (2015) in the Nigerian public service found that employee retention and performance could be enhanced through the adoption of suitable leadership styles that aligns the organisational strategy with employee motivation and morale. The study found that when the leadership style is not acceptable to employees, it negatively influences employee performance and increase turnover intention.

According to DuBois et al. (2015), the transactional leadership style can be described as the relationship between the leader and subordinate, which is based on

transactions. The focus of these transactions is on reward and punishment, which is the transaction. When the employee achieves a set of objectives according to the agreed measure, there is a reward. If the employee does not achieve the set goals and objectives, there will be a punishment. Rewards could be money, benefits, promotion, praise, and positive feedback. Punishment could be in the form of withholding money or benefits such as a bonus or an increase, or even disciplinary action.

Transformational leadership theory indicates that when a person interacts with others, they can create a solid relationship that results in the higher percentage of trust that ultimately results in increased motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, in both leaders and followers (Ismail et al., 2009). Transformational leaders can influence staff by charismatic personalities, stimulating them intellectually, and engaging them on developmental considerations (Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018). However, it should also be considered that although transformational leadership has been linked to organisational positive outcomes, the study by Hassi (2019) has shown that not all characteristics are important for positive morale, employee job satisfaction, and effectiveness.

6.3.2 Findings from the primary data

Based on the findings of the study, the participants have a good understanding of what the concepts of morale mean. This is proof that they were able to provide information that will enable the researcher to achieve the study objectives. There is an array of factors that influence employee morale in the workplace. Some of the factors mentioned by the participants are a positive work culture, strong supportive leadership,

effective communication channels, the opportunity to develop and grow, recognition, rewards, clarity of goals, consistency, and fairness, to name a few.

Those factors the participants listed that are responsible for low morale in the work situation are disrespect, exploitation of employees, incompetent and punitive management, inconsistent application of organisational policies, job insecurity, lack of training, micromanagement, unclear roles, and an unsafe and unhealthy working environment.

Although the participants made some effort, they were not keen or comfortable listing the current characteristics of their NHC leaders. Some of the characteristics listed that can be associated with good leadership are accountability, communication, listening skills, respect, coordination and networking competencies, and experience that has led to a good work ethic and knowledge about the fields they are in. Based on this information, it is possible that some of the leaders use an autocratic leadership style that, according to Ashforth and Humphrey (2015), is not very effective and influences employee morale negatively.

Based on the wish list provided by the participants, they are looking for a leadership style that shows the characteristics of a transformational leadership style. Some of the characteristics listed that can be associated with good leadership are accountability, communication, listening skills, respect, coordination and networking competencies, and experience that has led to a good work ethic and knowledge about the fields they are in. According to DuBois et al. (2015), transformational leadership places focus on change, control, inspiring vision, and valuing the employee.

Effective leadership is very important to ensure that the requirements of extrinsic factors or job content factors including benefits, status, and working conditions are met. Achievement of these factors will eliminate employees' work dissatisfaction but will not cause job satisfaction. Leaders should focus on Intrinsic factors or job content factors that are motivators for example recognition, achievements, opportunities for growth, and purposeful and challenging work. Presence of these factors will lead to higher performance and productivity (Wan et al., 2013).

6.4 Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it is found that over time, the stable work environment can become unstable and toxic, which leads to high turnover and diminishes organisational performance. One of the possible reasons is that good leadership leaves the company over a period due to different reasons. The new appointees have different leadership styles and skills, and this results in the quality of leadership going into a downward spiral. The new employed leadership style is adversarial to the employees in affecting the work environment.

6.4.1 Conclusions from research question 1

What are the factors that influence employee morale in the National Heritage Council?

It can be concluded that the factors that are are responsible for high morale in the workplace are a positive work culture, strong supportive leadership, effective communication channels, the opportunity to develop and grow, recognition, rewards, clarity of goals, consistency, and fairness, to name a few.

It can be concluded that the factors that are are responsible for low morale in the work situation are disrespect, exploitation of employees, incompetent and punitive management, inconsistent application of organisational policies, job insecurity, lack of training, micromanagement, unclear roles, and an unsafe and unhealthy working environment.

6.4.2 Conclusions from research question 2

How do leadership styles influence employee morale at the National Heritage Council?

Some of the characteristics listed that can be associated with good leadership are accountability, communication, listening skills, respect, coordination and networking competencies, and experience that has led to a good work ethic and knowledge about the fields they are in. Based on this information it can be concluded that that some of the leaders use an autocratic leadership style that, according to Ashforth and Humphrey (2015), is not very effective and influences employee morale negatively.

Some of the characteristics listed by the participants as to what they want to see in a leader can be associated with good leadership such as accountability, communication, listening skills, respect, coordination and networking competencies, and experience that has led to a good work ethic and knowledge about the fields they are in. Based on this finding it is concluded that the participants, are looking for a leadership style that shows the characteristics of a transformational leadership style. According to DuBois et al. (2015), transformational leadership places focus on change, control, inspiring vision, and valuing the employee.

6.4.3 Conclusions form research question 3

How can employee morale be improved at the National Heritage Council?

Based on the findings of the primary research, it can be concluded that leadership plays and important role to ensure that extrinsic factors or job content factors including pay, benefits, status, and working conditions are maintained at an acceptable standard to eliminate employee work dissatisfaction. It can be concluded that leadership focus should be on intrinsic factors or job content factors that are motivators. This is for example recognition, achievements, opportunities for growth, purposeful and challenging work, as the presence of these factors will lead to higher performance and productivity.

6.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations can be made to the NHC as input to their organisational performance strategy:

6.5.1 Improvement of work culture

It was found that some of the participants listed an array of factors that are responsible for low morale in the work situation, for example, disrespect, exploitation of employees, incompetent and punitive management, inconsistent application of organisational policies, job insecurity, lack of training, micromanagement, unclear roles, and an unsafe and unhealthy working environment. Taking this and the high turnover rate into consideration, the possibility of a toxic work environment exists within the NHC.

Based on this finding, it is recommended that the NHC top management urgently investigates this situation with the help of human resource specialists. Based on their findings and recommendations, they then developed an intervention to change the work situation experience for the employees and to improve employee morale. This intervention needs to be rolled out to all employees at all levels as soon as possible.

6.5.2 Leadership development

It was found that although the participants made some effort, they were not keen on or comfortable listing the current characteristics of their NHC leaders. Some of the identified behaviours can however be associated with weak leadership. Extrinsic factors that are associated with satisfaction are not maintained and intrinsic factors or job content factors that are motivators for example recognition, achievements, opportunities for growth, purposeful and challenging work, do not receive adequate attention, and this leads to the demotivation of employees. Based on this finding, it is recommended that NHC top management urgently investigate this situation with the help of human resource specialists. Based on their findings and recommendations, they can then develop an intervention that focuses on leadership improvement. This intervention needs to be rolled out to all management levels as soon as possible.

6.5.3 Onboarding of new employees

One of the participants indicated that many new employees are appointed within the organisation with the statement, "Production is observed by the NHC in hiring young people" (Respondent 5). This onboarding of employees should be conducted in a very effective way, or else it will become a very costly exercise for the organisation.

Based on this finding, it is recommended that the onboarding process for new employees be revisited to ensure it is effective. New employees should be placed under the control of managers who are able to give them the needed guidance and support. These employees need to be closely monitored to ensure issues are identified promptly and addressed effectively.

6.6 Recommendations for further research

Future research should firstly focus on investigating the influence of getting appointed in a negative work environment on the career development of employees. Secondly, investigate what the reasons are that a stable work environment may turn to be unstable thereafter becoming toxic after a period.

6.7 Limitations of the study

The research used a qualitative study for assessing the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at the NHC of South Africa. The findings of the research are based on the interviews and questions conducted are responded to by 13 employees. Although data used for analysis was from the limited number of participants, it does not affect the validity, but might not be generalised to other departments of organisations.

6.8 Conclusions of the overall study

The study pointed out that there is a relationship between the leadership style and employee morale. It revealed that there are several reasons that could affect employee morale. Several factors such as positive work culture, strong supportive leadership,

effective communication channels, the opportunity to develop and grow, recognition, rewards, clarity of goals, consistency, and fairness are identified as positive contributors to employee morale.

At the same time, the study further revealed that there are factors that negatively impact on employees and are causing low staff morale. Although leadership is knowledgeable in their field of work, there are those using an autocratic leadership style; however, participants indicated that the transformational leadership style is preferred, and this style would motivate and inspire them to higher performance.

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APPENDICES

(The letter of permission from Regenesys is not an actual letter of permission from the THE NATIONAL HERITAGE COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA. Please obtain this letter from the Heritage Council with a letterhead signed by the a Senior member of the Council.)

Annexure A: Interview schedule

Section A:

1. Gender

	Female		Male

2. Experience in years

	1-5		6-10		11-15		16+

3. Job Title

4. Education

	Certificate		Degree	Post Graduate		Other
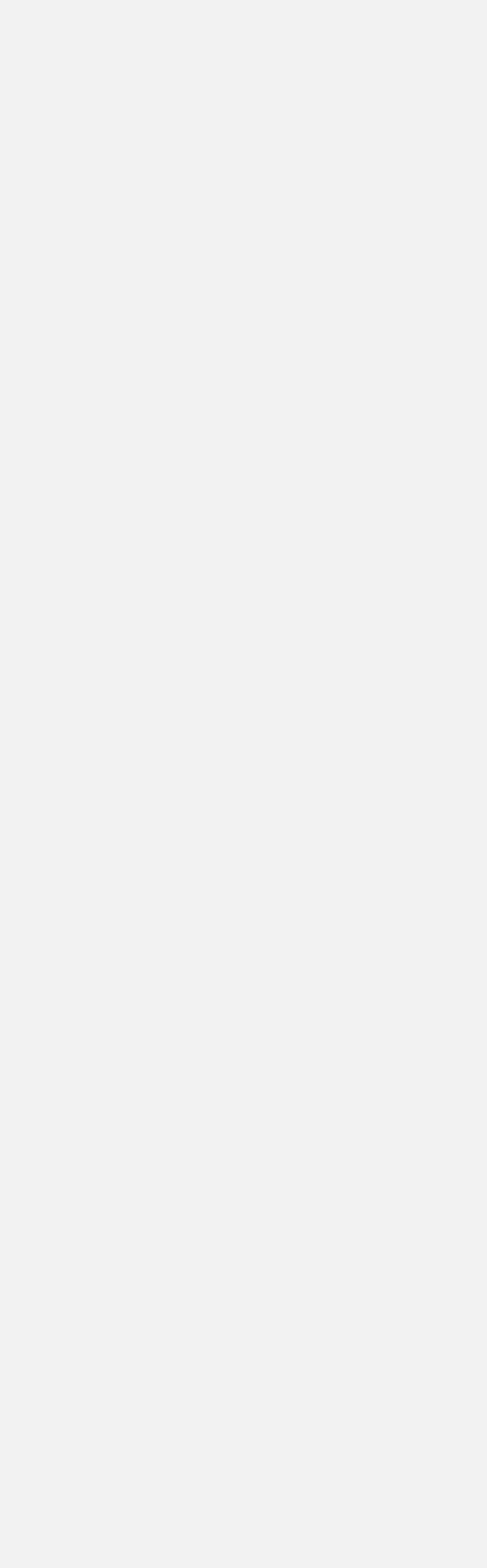
Section B:

SEMI - STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

1. What is your understanding of employee morale in the workplace?

2. Name three factors that you think have a positive influence on employee morale?

3. Please motivate why you think these factors would positively contribute to increasing morale?

4. Name three factors that you think have a negative impact on employee morale?

5. Please motivate why you think these factors have a negative influence on employee morale?

6. **How does the work culture in your work environment influence morale?**

7. **Are you recognised by your supervisor for the quality of the work you deliver daily?**

8. *If yes* **- What was the influence of this recognition by your supervisor on your morale?**

9. *If no* **- What is the influence of not receiving any recognition by your supervisor on your morale?**

10. What characteristics do you think the leaders at NHC have that makes them good leaders?

11. What characteristics do you think the leaders at NHC should have to increase employee morale?

12. What recommendations would you make to NHC to increase employee morale?

Commented [A1]: Additional questions

Annexure B: Informed Consent

BUSINESS S

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date:

Dear Respondent

My name is **Matanato Hartlina Ngwaila**, an employee of the **National Heritage Council of South Africa** who is the Researcher soliciting your inputs towards her mini-dissertation.

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research (describe). The aim and purpose of this research is to: **TITLE ASSESS THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON EMPLOYEE MORALE AT THE NATIONAL HERITAGE COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA.** The study is expected to enroll all NHC employees irrespective of the position they occupy It will involve the following audio-visual interview. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be not more than 30 minutes. Interviews will be conducted at the place and time convenient to you. You are kindly requested to answer questions honestly and objectively. We hope that the study will contribute to body of knowledge.

Kindly be informed that your consent cannot be withdrawn once the interview has been concluded since there is no way to trace it back to you. However, you may choose not to participate in the study and you are at liberty to stop participating at any given time. Please take note that you will not receive any form of payment whatsoever for participating in this study.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the Regenesys Research Ethics Committee.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at contact details as follows:

Ms. Matanato Ngwaila

Cell: 082 8997503

muhluleri@gmail.com

CONSENT

I…………………………………….have been informed about the study entitled TITLE ASSESS THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON EMPLOYEE MORALE AT THE NATIONAL HERITAGE COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA by Matanato Hartlina Ngwaila.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer all questions about the study and will answer to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

Regenesys Business School

Research Office,165 West Street Sandton

Gauteng,

SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 011 669 5000/ 5210

Email: research@regenesys.net

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview   YES / NO

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   **Date**
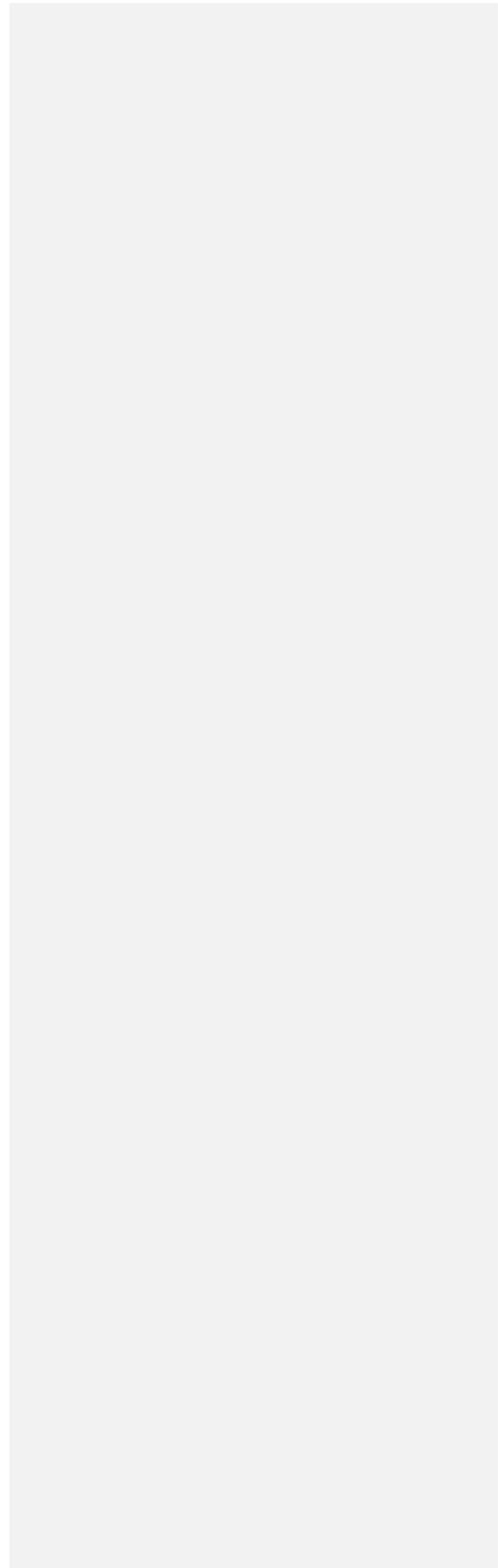
Annexure C: Permission Letter

04 August 2022

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

To Whom It May Concern

This letter serves to confirm that Matanato Hartina Ngwaila (ID No.#8204240480087; Student #REG139228) is currently registered for a **Master of Business Administration** Degree with Regenesys Business School, Sandton.

As part of the required academic rigour and the Council on Higher Education (CHE)'s guidelines on good practice, our students are required to do practical research. We would appreciate your company/department's willingness to assist with the research process, by way of, inter-alia, personal interviews, questionnaires and/or the provision of relevant company information related to the research being undertaken.

Title of study: Factors contributing to employees' low morale in the national heritage council of South Africa.

It is noted that our students are made aware of- and should abide by- ethical considerations in the research process. Furthermore, our students are subject to the constraints of the Regenesys Student's Disciplinary Code.

Please contact me if you require further information in this regard

Yours Faithfully

Ms Nelly Chilufya
Research Manager
Tel: 011 669 5008
nelly@regenesys.co.za

cc: Dr Penny Law, Dean; Sandra Chibanda, Research & Publications Manager

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REGENESYS
BUSINESS SCHOOL
Awakening Potential

I (name)..N.D.LVHDNISWANI....LUKHWARWO... (designation eg CEO or HoD)
hereby grant ..MRS MH NGWAILA...... permission to conduct research as outlined above.

Special conditions, if any: ..........CONFIDENTIALITY.......... Signed:
OF THE DOCUMENT AND ANY
.... Date: .... FINDINGS MUST BE
05/08/2022 . SAFEGUARDED

Ndwhondswani Lukhwara...

Annexure D: Ethical Form

	ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPLICATION FORM
Regenesys *Awakening Potential*	Date: April 2022 Version # 2

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FORM MUST BE COMPLETED IN TYPED SCRIPT

HANDWRITTEN APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED

SECTION 1

1. **Applicant's Personal Details**

1.1 Surname : Ngwaila

1.2 First names : Matanato Hartlina

1.3 Title (Ms/ Mr/ Mrs/ Dr etc.) : Ms

1.4 Gender : Female

1.5 Race
(African/Coloured/Indian/White/Other)
: African

1.6 Student number : REG 139288

1.7 Existing qualification : Post Graduate Diploma in Business Management

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1.8   Qualification requiring research   :   Master of Business Administration

2.   Contact Details

Tel. No.   :   None

Cell. No.   :   082 899 7503

e-mail   :   muhluleri@gmail.com

Postal address :   67 Kiewiet street, Kwaggasrand, 0183

3.   Supervisor/s' Details

NAME	TEL. NO.	EMAIL ADDRESS	INSTITUTION	HIGHEST QUALIFICATION
Dr Sipho Ncongwane	072 152 4464	Ncongwanes76@gmail.com	UNISA	D. Lit et. Phil

SECTION 2: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please do *not* provide your full research proposal here: what is required is a short project description that gives, under the following headings, a brief overview spelling out the *background to the study*, the *key questions to be addressed*, the *participants* (or subjects) and *research site*, including a *full description of the sample*, and the *research approach* or methods.

2.1 Project title

ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON EMPLOYEE MORALE AT THE NATIONAL HERITAGE COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA

2.2 Location of the study

Where the study will be conducted.

National Heritage Council, Pretoria, Hatfield, South Africa

2.3 Objectives of- and need for- the study

Describe the major objectives and the theoretical approach of the research, indicating briefly, why you believe the study is needed.

To identify the factors influencing employee morale at the National Heritage Council.

To determine the influence of leadership styles on employee morale at the National Heritage Council.

2.4 Questions to be answered in the research

The critical questions which you intend to answer by undertaking this research.

What are the factors that influence employee morale in the National Heritage Council?

How do leadership styles influence employee morale at the National Heritage Council?

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2.5 Research approach/methods

This section should explain how you will go about answering the critical questions which you have identified under 2.4 above. Set out the approach within which you will work, and indicate in step-by-step point form the methods you will use in the research in order to answer the critical questions – including *sample description*, *sampling strategies*, *data collection methods*, and *data reduction strategies*.

For a study that involves surveys, please append a provisional copy of the questionnaire to be used. The questionnaire should show how informed consent is to be achieved, as well as indicate to respondents that they may withdraw their participation at any time, should they so wish.

The researcher will adopt an inductive approach. Interview schedule and the consent letter attached. The qualitative method will be used to conduct this study. The researcher chose to collect data through a cross-sectional study by using an interview schedule to gain an in-depth understanding of employee morale and the influence of the leadership style on employee turnover which is at 35.6% of staff compliment, which is very high. Interviews are useful to determine people's perceptions, attitudes, and opinions (Vos et al., 2011). Leedy and Ormrod (2010) confirm that an interview can be used to acquire information about people's characteristics, opinion, and past experiences where the researcher asks questions and records responses.

QUESTION 3.1

Does your study cover research involving:	YES	NO
Children		x
Persons who are intellectually or mentally impaired		x
Persons who have experienced traumatic or stressful life circumstances		x
Persons who are HIV positive		x
Persons highly dependent on medical care		x
Persons in dependent or unequal relationships		x
Persons in captivity		x
Persons living in particularly vulnerable life circumstances		x

If 'Yes' to any of the above, indicate what measures you will take (i) to protect the autonomy

of respondents and (where indicated) (ii) to prevent social stigmatisation and/or secondary

QUESTION 3.2

Will data collection involve any of the following:	YES	NO
Access to confidential information without prior consent of participants		x
Participants being required to commit an act which might diminish self-respect or cause them to experience shame, embarrassment, or regret		x
Participants being exposed to questions which may be experienced as stressful or upsetting, or to procedures which may have unpleasant or harmful side effects		x
The use of stimuli, tasks or procedures which may be experienced as stressful, noxious, or unpleasant		x
Any form of deception		x

If 'Yes' to any of the above, explain and justify. If appropriate, indicate what steps will be taken to

QUESTION 3.3

Will any of the following instruments be used for purposes of data collection:	YES	NO
Questionnaire		X
Survey schedule		x
Interview schedule	X	
Psychometric test		x
Other/ equivalent assessment instrument		

3.3.1 If 'Yes' to any of the above, attach a copy of the research instrument.

3.3.2 If data collection involves the use of a psychometric test or equivalent assessment instrument, you are required to provide evidence here that the measure is likely to provide a valid, reliable, and unbiased estimate of the construct being measured.

Not applicable

3.3.3 If data collection involves interviews and/or focus groups, please provide a list of the topics to be covered or the kind of questions to be asked.

- Employee morale
- Leadership styles
- Leadership influence

QUESTION 3.4

Will the autonomy of participants be protected through the use of an informed consent form, which specifies (in language that respondents will understand):	YES	NO
The nature and purpose/s of the research	x	
The identity and institutional association of the researcher and supervisor/project leader and their contact details	x	
The fact that participation is voluntary	x	
That responses will be treated in a confidential manner	x	
Any limits on confidentiality which may apply	x	
That anonymity will be ensured where appropriate (e.g. coded/ disguised names of participants/ respondents/ institutions)	x	
The fact that participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to themselves	x	
The nature and limits of any benefits participants may receive as a result of their participation in the research	x	
Is a copy of the informed consent form attached?	x	

If 'No' to any of the above: (a) please justify/explain, and (b) indicate what measures will be adopted to ensure that the respondents fully understand the nature of the research and the consent that they are giving.

N/A

QUESTION 3.5

Specify what efforts have been made or will be made to obtain informed permission for the research from appropriate authorities and gate-keepers.

NHC Executive was engaged on the proposed topic and the objective thereof. It was agreed that the participants would be treated anonymously and with respect. Information obtained should be treated with confidentiality. There is a clear understanding that the study will be used to further academic knowledge and will not be used to harm the image of the organisation.

A letter granting permission and authorizing the researcher to collect data and conduct research was obtained.

Regenesys Business School research committee will have to grant a clearance, allowing the researcher to conduct the research. Interviews will be conducted with participants that will give consent to participate in the research. Consent form is attached.

QUESTION 3.6

STORAGE AND DISPOSAL OF RESEARCH DATA

Please note that the research data should be kept for a minimum period of at least five years in a secure location by arrangement with your supervisor.

3.6.1 How will the research data be secured and stored?

The data will be scanned and saved to the external hard drive that will be kept in a safe place by the researcher, or the supervisor with password.

3.6.2 When and how (if at all) will data be disposed of?

After the period of five years as required by the institution, data will be deleted from the hard drive, formatted and cleaned ensure that it is not recoverable at any given circumstance. Hard copied will be shredded and be disposed according NHC policy and the POPI Act.

QUESTION 3.7

3.7.1 In the subsequent dissemination of your research findings – in the form of the finished mini-dissertation, oral presentations, publication etc. – how will anonymity and confidentiality be ensured?

Names will be kept anonymous and confidential. The interview questions of the study do not require participants to disclose their names thereby protecting their identity but known to the researcher.

3.7.2 How will you give feedback to your research participants?

Participants will have access to the mini dissertation once approval has been solicited and granted from the Executive of the National Heritage Council of South Africa. Presentation will be made to management.

QUESTION 3.8

Is this research supported by funding that is likely to inform or impact in any way on the design, outcome and dissemination of the research?	YES	NO X
If 'Yes', please justify and explain here:		

If 'Yes', please indicate what the conditions are:

QUESTION 3.9

Has any organization or company participating in the research or funding the project, imposed any conditions to the research?	YES	NO X
If 'Yes', please indicate what the conditions are: **The condition is that the researcher maintain confidentiality of the information obtained from the organisation.**		

QUESTION 3.10

Do you, or any individual associated with- or responsible for- the design of the research, have any personal, economic, or financial interests (or any other potential conflict of interests) that could reasonably be regarded as relevant to this research project?	YES	NO X
If 'Yes', please provide full details:		

SECTION 4: FORMALISATION OF THE APPLICATION

APPLICANT

I have familiarized myself with Regenesys' Code of Conduct for Research and undertake to comply with it. The information supplied above is correct to the best of my knowledge.
NB: PLEASE ENSURE THAT THE FORM IS COMPLETED IN FULL
DATE: 19 October 2022 **SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:**

SUPERVISOR

NB: PLEASE ENSURE THAT THE APPLICANT HAS COMPLETED THE FORM IN FULL, AND THAT IT IS FORWARDED TO REGENESYS' RESEARCH COMMITTEE FOR FURTHER ATTENTION
DATE: 19 October 2022 **SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR**

RECOMMENDATION OF REGENESY' RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE	
The application is (please tick):	
Approved	
Not Approved, referred back for revision and resubmission	
Other (please specify):	

NAME OF CHAIRPERSON:	
SIGNATURE:	DATE:

Annexure E: Editing Letter

Marieta Grundling (MBA)

366 Rosemary Street
Grootfontein Country Estates
Pretoria, 0081
081 354 1596
edit@profeditmba.co.za
8 November 2022

To Whom It May Concern

This serves to confirm that the mini-dissertation: **ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON EMPLOYEE MORALE AT THE NATIONAL HERITAGE COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA** by *Matanato Hartlina Ngwaila* was edited. The language, presentation, and referencing system (both in-text and against the Reference List), were checked and corrected.
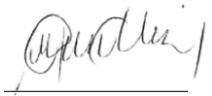
M Grundling
8 November 2022