



Career adaptability and emotional intelligence on work engagement among employees: A theoretical approach

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Abstract—This paper investigates a theoretical approach to career adaptability and emotional intelligence on work engagement among employees in the Education sector. This paper presents a theoretical framework of the career construction theory of career adaptability. It discusses the literature review on career adaptability, emotional intelligence, and employee engagement as conceptual literature. This paper ensures that readers, scholars, and researchers get the values, knowledge, and skills necessary to lead successful lives and contribute to the growth of the education sector in South Africa. It advocates for providing every scholar in school and the classroom with a high-quality education.

Keywords: Career adaptability, Emotional intelligence, Work engagement

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I. INTRODUCTION

EVERY year, the education industry faces the difficulties of escalating employee turnover. Multiple inner, outer, and contextual causes may involve workers, for whatever reason, being initially engaged yet becoming increasingly disengaged and unmotivated. Gouveia et al., (2018) highlighted staff retention among academic staff in South Africa. They found career flexibility and emotional intelligence as the most significant challenges influencing university retention strategies (Gouveia et al., 2018). The exodus of talented academics to first-world nations has made the brain problem in South Africa's education system even more pressing. There is a large body of literature on employee engagement, but there is limited study on the effect of career flexibility and emotional intelligence on employee engagement in the education sector (Gupta, Bakhshi, & Einarsen, 2017; Jakobsen, Gluud, Wetterslev, & Winkel, 2017). Given this vacuum in the literature, this research aims to investigate employee engagement within the context of South African educational institutions, focusing on the Western Cape. The objective is to have insights for school management, WCED officials, organisational leaders, managers, and Human Resources (HR) practitioners. Helpful information and insights on the influence of career flexibility and emotional intelligence on job engagement among education sector workers in the Western Cape are important.

Work engagement

It is essential to consider that an engaged staff may significantly contribute to an organisation's success. Work or job engagement is that state of mind which reflects workers being energised by their work, fully engaged, giving of self with commitment, making a difference, and being fulfilled in what they do at work, rather than merely doing a job (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002, p. 74). Some scholars showed that job engagement would drive several beneficial organisational outcomes, including higher employee productivity, financial returns, organisational success, and stronger customer connections (Gawke, Gorgievski, & Bakker, 2017; Delaney & Royal,

2017; McGregor, 2017; Pitt-Catsoupes & Matz-Costa, 2008). According to Knight, Patterson, Dawson, and Brown (2017), work engagement is of interest to academics since it correlates favourably with job performance, customer loyalty and satisfaction, and financial benefits. Engaged employees may have enhanced stress management, may be more content or appreciative of their personal life, despite inevitable challenges, and are more likely to remain with an organisation (Delaney & Royal, 2017). Work engagement involves mindset, decisions, and responding in ways that impact work and home. It is relevant to mention that some variables could be connected to work engagement. For example, positive work attitudes and health management could connect with high levels of work engagement (Delaney & Royal, 2017). Employees who are engaged are more inclined to exert more discretionary effort in their employment (Robertson-Smith, & Markwick, 2009). In addition, there are connections between organisational innovation and engagement and between engagement and corporate goals, such as operational measures, revenue growth, and client focus (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Employee engagement may be impacted by the connection between emotional intelligence and career flexibility (Bodrogi, Bereczkei, & Deak, 2020). Staff with a growth mindset, and a visible work engagement, are more adaptable to the necessities of their role or organisation. A growth mindset is beneficial as it impacts how one is present at home or work and responds to challenges from within.

Career Adaptability

Career adaptability refers to a person's capacity to respond to change and the coping skills that enable them to do so through career planning, investigation, and decision-making (Brinberg, Ram, Hülür, Brick, & Gerstorf, 2018). Four components encourage self-management techniques: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. (Caron, 2019). Career adaptability helps individuals cope with workplace adjustments, namely staffing issues, reorganisation, outsourcing, and job insecurity (Gutermann, Lehmann-Willenbrock, Boer, Born, & Voelpel, 2017). This view is further confirmed by research indicating that specific abilities, such as coping skills and self-regulation, are also associated with

outcomes such as work engagement (Hayes, Montoya, & Rockwood, 2017).

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence involves intrapersonal-interpersonal emotional responses, adaptability, general mood, and stress management in a range of settings, including social, work, and personal settings, and adapting or able to work and have emotional management, use emotions to aid reasoning, intellectual development, and addressing issues, self-control, and the ability to understand others' feelings (Higginbottom, 2018). Several researchers stressed the importance of emotion and emotional intelligence in describing and understanding work engagement. Jain, Budlender, Zizzamia, and Bassier (2020) highlighted the importance of emotional experience, expression, and communication when addressing professional choice-making. Others indicated a favourable relationship between emotional intelligence, less dysfunctional career thinking, higher professional decision-making self-efficacy, more significant job exploration activity, and career commitment (Clarke & Mahadi, 2017). At the same time, Doden, Grote, and Rigotti (2018) confirmed the specific function of emotional intelligence in predicting professional decision-making challenges. Employee engagement has been directly related to career flexibility and emotional intelligence (Dykes & Winn, 2019). Most studies focusing on employee engagement in the education sector in the Western Cape concentrated on organisational aspects that might impact it (Extremera, Mérida-López, Sánchez-Álvarez, & Quintana-Orts, 2018). Furthermore, it focused on individual characteristics that might influence employee engagement (Furnham & Taylor, 2020). Despite the importance and relevance of employee engagement in the modern workplace, relatively little empirical research has examined the impact of career adaptability and emotional intelligence on employee work engagement in the education sector in the Western Cape.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Career adaptability

Career adaptability is a critical variable for employees' success in the workplace. Studies investigated that career adaptability could lead to organisational and individual career success (Haibo, Xiaoyu, Xiaoming, & Zhijin, 2018; Haenggli & Hirschi, 2020). Other scholars perceived that organisational career management and adaptability could predict employee success and turnover intention (Guan, Zhou, Ye, Jiang, & Zhou, 2015). For instance, during the Covid-19 period, it can support their ability to retain balance while adjusting to changes in their job responsibilities, altering their required psychological resources for career advancement and finding greater meaning in life (Chen, Fang, Liu, Pang, Wen, Chen, & Gu, 2020).

According to Klonek et al. (2021), professional adaptability is the individual's preparedness to react to change and the coping tools that allow them to adjust by planning, exploring, and directing career choices. It could consider people's attitudes, competencies, and behaviours to adapt to various job situations (Kunananatt, 2008). It is important to note that adaptability in the workplace allows a person to adjust to constantly evolving circumstances (Lai, Chow, & Loi, 2018).

Rudolph, Lavigne, and Zacher (2017) found four crucial constructs in career adaptability, which could help career success among employees. The control deals with the extent to which one feels they impact their career. The motivation to take on career challenges is referred to as the issue. The propensity to investigate and discover pertinent career-related knowledge is a curiosity. The belief that you can overcome obstacles relating to your work is what is referred to as confidence. It is the capacity to deal with known and unanticipated organisational demands; job and career changes (Liyanagamage, Glavas, & Kodagoda, 2019). Professional activities such as exploration and planning are complementary (Mansolf, Jorgensen, & Enders, 2020). Employees should consider career flexibility as the relationship between people and their living environment (Mansolf et al., 2020). As a psychological ability

for employees, it should help maintain a balance between these elements when they change their career roles. In this study, career adaptability should be considered flexible, which should well-inform individuals in professional choices and see themselves making these selections or achieving their objectives.

Sulistian and Handoyo (2018) argued that years of tertiary education and high school are times when pupils should make choices about their vocation and further improvement, which are critical concerning professional decision-making progressions and adaptability and work changes, which are unavoidable in life. Similarly, Maggio, Ginevra, Santilli, Nota, and Soresi (2020), argue that higher education is essential to acquire extensive information regarding the socioeconomic and conservation global encounters which exist currently and to obtain the required skills, proficiencies, and partnerships to introduce resolutions and tactics and ground-breaking technologies to handle these challenges.

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a significant variable for all people and, in this research, for employees. It could help to understand their emotions and use the knowledge and skills to foster their success and the success of others in the workplace. According to Mayer and Salovey (1990), The capacity to recognise emotion, integrate emotion to facilitate thought, comprehend, and control emotions to support personal development. Their model distinguished four abilities (Mayer & Salovey, 1990). Emotional perception deals with recognizing, evaluating, and communicating our emotional needs to others. Emotional assimilation is the ability to distinguish between emotions and give priority to those that have an impact on one's mental process. Emotional understanding is the capacity to analyse conflicting feelings and recognise how one emotion changes into another. To regulate emotional instability, one must be able to regularly observe them and determine whether they are helpful in a given circumstance. Koh, Li, Wang, and Yuen (2018) acknowledged that it is the ability to recognise and understand one's emotions and skills to manage relationships with others. It could lead to accomplishing job duties (Koh et al., 2018).

McNeish (2017) states it is an ability to recognise, express, comprehend, and process emotions and control excellent and negative emotions. Koh et al. (2018) illustrated that when an individual has a goal to achieve when they perform a task or work or when they can maintain relationships and terms with their family members and the outside world. Then they may moderate their emotions so that their emotions support the activities and enhance the quality of life. Emotional intelligence encompasses knowing when and how to express emotion and the capacity to control emotion (Megias-Robles et al., 2019). However, Munshi and Haque (2017) categorised fundamental characteristics of emotional intelligence, which include perception, comprehension, and successful management of one's emotions. For example, a person with high emotional intelligence can comprehend, evaluate, and adequately sense the emotions of others, which allows them to adapt to changes in their social situations and form social networks more effectively (Mysirlaki & Paraskeva, 2020).

Those with emotional intelligence can control themselves and those of others (Nagalingam, Kadir, & Hoesni, 2019). In this study, emotional intelligence is a critical component of employees' success in the workplace. It helps understand and regulate employees' emotions and assists them in performing better, creating an environment for others to do their best, and producing a positive workplace atmosphere.

Employee engagement

Employee engagement is a significant variable for employees' success in the workplace. Osborne and Hammoud (2017) highlighted that employee engagement could positively affect workplace outcomes. According to Nicholson, Deboeck, and Howard (2017), it is the concentration of an employee's efforts on achieving organisational goals. It includes people's physical, cognitive, and emotional ties to their jobs. It is further described as a good, satisfying, work-related frame of mind marked by energy, commitment, and immersion (Nozaki, 2018).

Engagement differs from commitment, job participation, job satisfaction, and overall work motivation (Peng, Chen, Xia, & Ran, 2017). Person engagement, as described by Prapanjaroensin, Patrician, and Vance (2017), is the process by which an employee may tie himself to their work function and express themselves physically, emotionally, and intellectually via the execution of his job. Employee engagement is a good, rewarding, work-related state of mind characterised by vitality, commitment, and absorption. It consists of workers' significance in their job and the discretionary effort and time spent on them (Preece, Becerra, Robinson, & Gross, 2020).

According to the above description, employee engagement suggests that employees feel highly interested and linked to their job, put more discretionary effort into their employment, and are focused and centred on the task they are involved in (Radstaak & Hennes, 2017). Further, employee engagement is a product of working circumstances and people's influence over their employment (Rožman, Treven, & Cingula, 2018). In this way, employee engagement is correlated adversely with burnout and tiredness (Sapta, Muafi, & Setini, 2021). In this study, employee engagement will be helpful because it may provide a solid foundation for organisational leaders to improve disengaged employees, reducing workplace productivity and decreasing customer service skills.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Career construction theory of career adaptability

This study will adopt the career construction theory, which focuses on the adaptability of people within the organisational setting. Donald Edward 1981, developed this theory when they discovered that "vocational maturity" was inadequate in the adult context (Kusyadi, 2020). Kusyadi (2020) reiterated that this theory focused on how adults interacted with their environment. Savickas (2020) later extensively used this theory in 2013 (Kusyadi, 2020). It examines how individuals prepare for, enter, and engage in their work position and manage career transitions and workplace changes (Savickas, 2020). The career construction theory implies changing or fitting in; nonetheless, it has been employed in various ways to describe a sequence ranging from adaptable preparedness to adaptability resources to adapting responses to adaptation outcomes (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Career construction theory is one of the vocational models which attempts to clarify career options and occupational adaptation, through each examining and interrogating various aspects of career performance, Savickas (2005). Career adaptability refers to the resources people draw upon to manage activities and changes within their employment setting (Savickas, 2005). This shows that everyone can adjust to variable degrees, has different resources, and will do so when necessary. Over time, this could lead to varying degrees of integration into various life roles (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). As an individual's environment changes, they adjust to maintain person-environment compatibility. Adaptability is a competency that implies quickly discovering new talents and conducts in reaction to varying situations. Additionally, adaptability is when a person shows flexibility in their career, is adaptable and can react efficiently to their employment situations no matter how things go. Career adaptability is a psychosocial concept one needs, i.e., the capacity and the resources to successfully handle responsibilities related to one's job, career transitions, and unforeseen problems (Rossier, Ginevra, Bollmann, & Nota, 2017). The objective of adaptation is fitness-aligning the individual's demands with the possibilities presented by the environment (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Success, contentment, and progress are compatibility indicators (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Adaptability, as a psychological attribute, is a person's responsiveness and readiness to adjust to allow job mobility (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). For example, when people reach their threshold for assimilation of change and persistence in everyday activities, they must change, alter their context, or both (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). This theory is essential in this study due it explains the interpretive and interpersonal processes

that individuals employ as creative agents from identities to build careers in the workplace. It will be further helpful as it focuses on identity and adaptation by performing vocational development tasks and successful job transitions.

Job-demand-resource (JD-R) model

Bakker and Demerouti developed the job-demand-resource (JD-R) model in 2007 to explain employee engagement. The stress and motivation research traditions were further integrated into this theory. It contrasts work features, namely job requirements and job resources. It might contribute to burnout. Job resources are a position's physical, psychological, social, and organisational components that foster development and motivation. It was considered that each job had unique possible risks associated with stress, including job demands and resources (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). 'Job demands' refers to physical, psychological, social, and organisational aspects that require mental and cognitive sustainability skills related to physiological and psychological costs (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). For example, when individuals experience high job demands, an unsatisfying unsatisfactory physical setting, or irregular working hours, despite the job demands are not harmful. It turns to job stressors if it meets these demands, which require high employee effort.

In contrast, Job resources address the social, psychological, and physical aspects of the workplace and how they relate to achieving work goals, lowering workload pressures and their physiological and psychological consequences, and promoting individual development, learning, and growth (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). This distinction demonstrates that burnout and engagement are rather conflicting ideas than inversely related concepts (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Resources at work include a network of social support, evaluations, diverse skill sets, flexibility, and learning opportunities. The resources supplied to workers assist in minimising or eliminating the adverse effects of demanding work. It decreases workers' psychological expenses without requiring more resources (Maden-Eyiusta, 2016). This JD-R is advantageous in this study because it focuses on the core of the energy compass, which analyses the complexity of organisational reality and identifies the key elements that will boost productivity and prevent burnout. This model is essential in communication, allowing stakeholders such as employees, human resources officers, workers' council, line management, and top management to partake in the project. It consists of using a common language and acting as a lens through which stakeholders could function in the organisation and their personal and professional situations.

Four-branch model of emotional intelligence

Mayer and Salovey developed the four-branch model in 1997, focusing on ability under the hierarchical paradigm. This encompasses emotion perception, facilitation, comprehension, and management (Gutermann et al., 2017). This paradigm is considered a continuum of less complicated to more sophisticated psychological processes. A vital lower-level talent is the ability to detect one's own and other people's emotions accurately (Chukwuorji, Ifeagwazi, & Eze, 2017). Emotional management requires controlling one's and those of others to obtain beneficial results. One of the hardest skills to master is controlling your emotions to achieve specific objectives (Brinberg et al., 2018). Each talent or branch may become a more difficult skill with age and practice. For instance, understanding emotions often begin with recognising fundamental emotions in the tone of voice and facial expressions. These abilities may lead to the correct perception of emotional mixtures and the identification of micro-emotional expressions (Bodrogi et al., 2020). Emotional thought facilitation entails purposefully using felt emotion to support thinking processes, including judgment, memory, and attention, as well as choosing problems based on the feeling one is experiencing at the time. Understanding emotions is awareness of the nature and connections between emotions, the circumstances that could trigger particular feelings, and the potential cultural variations in how emotions are viewed.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Relationship between career adaptability and employee engagement

It is crucial to consider the relationship between career adaptability and employee engagement among employees. Many studies have been conducted (Jiang, Newman, Schwarz, & Le, 2022; Sharma, 2019; Tladinyane & Van der Merwe, 2016). Some evaluated the roles of work engagement and career adaptability (Jiang et al., 2022). The association between career adaptability and employee engagement of adults working for an insurance company was also studied by others simultaneously (Tladinyane & Van der Merwe, 2016). The difference was significant between the two variables (Tladinyane & Van der Merwe, 2016). According to Seo, Nahrgang, Carter, & Hom (2018), employee engagement refers to being enthusiastic about their job, emotionally invested, and focused on the task.

Consequently, the work environment might be seen as a factor in employee engagement. This refers more explicitly to the job requirements, employment resources accessible to the employee, and the degree of control a person has over their work and career (Sharma, 2019). It is further claimed, guided by the job demands-resources model (JD-R), that employee engagement is a function of personal resources, such as career flexibility, self-efficacy, optimism, and career management (Sinval, Marques-Pinto, Queirós, & Marôco, 2018). Consequently, job flexibility may affect employee engagement (Tanskanen, Mäkelä, & Viitala, 2019). Occupational guidance factors and employee engagement have received little attention (Thakkar, 2020). According to Thoemmes Rosseel, and Textor (2018), little research has included personal attributes such as job flexibility when analysing employee engagement. Previous studies have shown associations between career flexibility and positive outcomes, such as life satisfaction, and negative work-related outcomes, including intentions to leave (Zhang et al., 2021). In decision-making, exploration, confidence, and planning, it has been observed that more professional flexibility facilitates the effective management of job transitions, boosting wellbeing and reducing suffering (Zhang et al., 2021). According to Zhang et al. (2021), career flexibility is a critical human resource that allows people to change with the times and nature of the workplace and, as a result, to make career changes. Moreover, career flexibility is one of the most critical criteria for maintaining employee commitment and motivation in the face of rising external strain, assuring organisational success (Thakkar, 2020).

Despite the expected theoretical association, Seo et al. (2018) found no correlation between career flexibility and employee engagement in their study of laid-off workers. Seo et al. (2018) discovered substantial connections between the two variables, contradicting these results. Thus, it is more important and valuable to comprehend how career flexibility and employee engagement are related. In light of this, it is hypothesised that career flexibility may predict both process-oriented qualities, such as performance, and work-related behaviours, such as engagement. (Seo et al., 2018).

Relationships between emotional intelligence and career adaptability among employees

Emotional intelligence and professional adaptability are essential psychological meta-capabilities for effective adaptation in various life domains, including work (Knight et al., 2017; Coetzee & Harry, 2014). Multiple studies have been conducted in this regard. Coetzee and Harry (2014) highlighted that emotional intelligence could predict employee career adaptability. In today's global economy, common emotional and cognitive adaptations are necessary for dealing with the stress associated with job insecurity and the unpredictability of continuing changes. Individuals must exhibit emotional intelligence and professional flexibility to react successfully to job changes (McGregor, 2017). However, there is a preliminary study on emotional intelligence as a psychological meta-capability for responding to turbulence and stress (Orth & Volmer, 2017). More data indicates that job flexibility is a

psychological meta-competency necessary for successful career transitions. Career adaptation has recently become a crucial psychological meta-capability for effectively dealing with turbulent job settings (Saks & Gruman, 2017). Individuals' career adaptability reflects their resources (attitudes, beliefs, and skills) for responding to potentially stressful work-related events and obstacles (Aslam, Muqadas, Imran, & Rahman, 2018). Separate research on emotional intelligence, job flexibility in settings other than call centers, and connections to different personality traits have been done. For instance, it has been demonstrated that emotional intelligence is associated with professional commitment, career self-management, and career exploration. (Baroudi & Khapova, 2017). The literature revealed that career adaptability correlates with personality, employable abilities, happiness and work stress perspectives, and general and professional wellbeing. (Delaney & Royal, 2017). The lack of research examining these concepts combined justifies the current investigation. The recent research aims to contribute to the existing literature on career growth and wellbeing by evaluating whether emotional intelligence substantially and positively predicts an individual's career flexibility. Researchers anticipate that emotional intelligence could predict career adaptability favourably. Similarly, constructs are self-regulatory methods and skills that serve as crucial psychosocial resources in the relationship between the individual (psychological) and the environment (social) (Gawke et al., 2017).

In contrast to other personality qualities that are more stable, emotional intelligence and career adaptability are thought to be more flexible cognitive-affective behavioural latent traits and capabilities that may be strengthened by training, counselling, and coaching. (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Therefore, research examining the association between emotional intelligence and career adaptability is thought because it may impact the development of solutions that help people manage their career development and wellbeing in a demanding work environment.

Implications of career adaptability on work engagement among employees

It is essential to note that career adaptability and work engagement impact employees' career successes. Studies on the impact of career adaptability on employees' local and global work engagement have been undertaken. However, Tladinyane and Van der Merwe (2016) conducted exploratory research on career adaptability and employee engagement of adults in an insurance company. Their results found positive relationships between career adaptability and employee engagement. Tladinyane and Van der Merwe (2016) suggested that employees with higher employee engagement levels exhibited more advanced career adaptability skills. The study's practical findings demonstrated that managers and human resource professionals must understand how a person's capacity for career adaptation affects their organisational engagement (Tladinyane & Van der Merwe, 2016).

Similarly, Coetzee, Ferreira, & Shunmugum (2017) carried on psychological career resources, career adaptability, and work engagement of generational cohorts in the media industry. Coetzee et al. (2017) looked at how much employees' age, psychological career resources, and career adaptability affect their work engagement and whether there are any significant differences between generational cohorts in these areas. Their findings suggested that work engagement could be considerably predicted by generational cohort (age), career confidence (career adaptability), and career harmonisers (psychological career resources). (Coetzee et al., 2017). The conclusions were that work engagement was favourably correlated with psychological career meta-capabilities. As a result, these factors must be considered in career development and engagement strategies that could enhance talent retention and job prospects for those working in the media sector (Coetzee et al., 2017). Rothmann and Rothmann Jr (2010) investigated the factors associated with employee engagement in South Africa. Their findings demonstrated a positive relationship between employee engagement and two psychological variables, psychological meaningfulness, and psychological availability (Rothmann &

Rothmann Jr, 2010). Rothmann and Rothmann Jr (2010) indicated that work role fit was the best predictor of psychological significance and employee engagement.

Additionally, Rothmann and Rothmann Jr (2010) demonstrated that employee engagement was positively correlated with all job resources and that the best measures of vigour, commitment, and absorption were organisational support and advancement opportunities. This study intervention could increase employee engagement and focus on work role fit. To promote employee engagement, the intervention should increase employment resources, including intrinsically satisfying tasks, organisational support, and possibilities for promotion. (Rothmann & Rothmann Jr, 2010).

Implications of Emotional Intelligence on work engagement among employees

Considering how work engagement and emotional intelligence may affect employees' professional success is crucial. Parmentier, Pirsoul, and Nils (2019) examined emotional intelligence's impact on career adaptability in a two-wave cross-lagged study among adult learners. The results found a causal relationship between emotional intelligence and career adaptability (Pirsoul & Nils, 2019). Deshwal (2015) Impact of emotional intelligence on employee engagement. Deshwal's (2015) findings revealed a negative association between high emotional intelligence and low employee engagement. Shukla, Mohsin, and Singh (2013) studied the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement. Shukla et al. (2013) showed that the association between emotional intelligence and employee engagement was modest, favourable, and significant. Shukla et al. (2013) found that, except for wellbeing, there was a positive but small correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement. The results demonstrated an exciting variance in employee engagement due to emotional Intelligence (Shukla et al., 2013). Shukla et al. (2013) suggested that besides emotional intelligence, various other factors affect employee engagement, which needs further research. George, Okon, and Akaighe (2022) developed a serial mediation model on emotional intelligence and work engagement. The findings showed that work engagement and emotional intelligence were positively correlated. Emotional intelligence indirectly affected PsyCap via POS (George et al., 2022). George et al. (2022) indicated that the POS and PsyCap serially mediated the indirect impact of emotional intelligence on work engagement.

V. CONCLUSION

The study aimed to give managerial and HR professionals in organisations helpful information and insights about the effects of career flexibility and emotional intelligence on job engagement among education sector workers in the Western Cape. Organisations must comprehend these effects to implement the necessary adjustments to improve the altered work environment. This study will be necessary for bridging the information gap regarding the impact of career flexibility and emotional intelligence on job engagement among education sector workers in the Western Cape. It will offer direct empirical data on a relevant problem that has not been thoroughly explored in the Western Cape, let alone South Africa. Its findings could lead to a game-changer in implementing policies in the Western Cape education sector. This may increase employee engagement at work. Such contributions will assist in filling the identified vacuum in the literature since there is limited research on the South African education sector concerning career flexibility, emotional intelligence, and job engagement models.

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