



UNRAVELING CAREER DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICAN LOGISTICS COMPANIES

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Abstract:

This study delves into the dynamics of career development practices and employee engagement within logistics companies in Durban City, South Africa. Employing a descriptive-correlational research design, the investigation sought answers to key questions regarding the extent of career development practices, the levels of employee engagement, and the relationship between these two critical aspects. The study focused on a sample of 215 employees from five logistics companies in Durban City, South Africa, employing a stratified random sampling approach tailored to the unique characteristics of each company. Primary data collection was conducted through a structured questionnaire, validated for content relevance and reliability, ensuring the instrument's consistency. Ethical principles, including informed consent, anonymity, voluntarism, and confidentiality, were rigorously upheld throughout the study. Data analysis utilized weighted mean and Pearson correlation as statistical tools. The main findings reveal a significant gap in the implementation of career development practices, particularly in essential areas such as career planning, succession planning, and career training. These deficiencies, reflected in low average weighted means, call for strategic interventions to address critical aspects of employee growth and development. Additionally, the study identifies suboptimal levels of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement among employees in logistics companies, emphasizing the need for comprehensive enhancement. A noteworthy discovery is the strong positive correlation between career development practices and employee engagement, highlighted by a robust Pearson Correlation of .887. This statistically significant relationship underscores the interconnectedness of these factors, suggesting that addressing identified gaps in career development practices could catalyze improvements in overall employee engagement within logistics companies. In conclusion, these findings collectively advocate for the enhancement of career development practices as a catalyst for improving employee

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engagement, fostering a more dynamic and productive workforce. The study's recommendations include the implementation of comprehensive career development programs, prioritization of engagement initiatives, and the integration of technological solutions for career training. These strategies, tailored to the evolving business landscape, hold the potential to contribute to the overall success and sustainability of logistics companies in South Africa.

Keywords: career planning, career counseling, career training, succession planning, cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement, emotional engagement

1. Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of modern business, gaining a competitive edge requires organizations to continually seek avenues for outperforming their counterparts. An effective strategy for achieving this is the retention of skilled and experienced employees, a goal attainable through robust career development practices (Iis et al., 2022; Bagdadli & Gianecchini, 2019). Extensive research indicates that well-structured career development programs play a pivotal role in not only attracting but also retaining high-performing employees, thereby contributing to organizational success (Aburumman, 2020). Moreover, these programs have proven instrumental in minimizing the costly consequences associated with high employee turnover, establishing a direct correlation between effective career development initiatives and financial stability (Kurdi & Alshurideh, 2020).

Career development programs act as a retention strategy, particularly in industries where skilled talent is in high demand. By offering clear pathways for career progression, organizations can reduce the allure of competitors and enhance their ability to retain top performers (Barhate & Dirani, 2022). This is especially pertinent in logistics, where the movement of products relies heavily on skilled personnel, making talent retention crucial for operational efficiency (Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2020). Implementing effective career development programs within organizations is a nuanced task, marked by various challenges that necessitate thoughtful consideration and strategic planning. The profound impact of career development on employee commitment and reduced turnover is substantiated by empirical evidence (Saffar & Obeidat, 2020). Organizations that prioritize human resource practices promoting employee development consistently witness higher levels of commitment and a decline in turnover rates. In essence, investing in the career growth of employees pays dividends in organizational stability and performance. This study explores the specific implications of such practices in the context of the logistics sector, where human capital plays a pivotal role in the intricate processes of storing, processing, and delivering products (Hajiali et al., 2022).

Within logistics companies, where the movement of products relies heavily on skilled personnel, career development emerges as a critical tool. The sector faces challenges associated with talent shortage, necessitating a strategic approach to retain

existing talent and attract new, capable professionals (Niati et al., 2021). Employees within logistics companies, like professionals in other industries, seek opportunities for career progression. Companies that implement effective career development programs not only retain their existing workforce but also become magnets for top-tier talent. Conversely, a lack of evidence regarding career development initiatives or a perception among employees that their company lacks plans for future career advancement can lead to increased turnover intentions (Darmawan et al., 2020). The absence of clear career development prospects can result in decreased employee engagement, manifested through behaviors such as absenteeism, tardiness, and reluctance to surpass conventional boundaries in addressing workplace challenges (Sugiarti et al., 2021).

Achieving organizational effectiveness extends beyond mere employee satisfaction; it involves fostering a workforce that is not only content but also passionately committed to their duties. Hendri (2019) emphasizes the significance of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagement in influencing employees to demonstrate commitment to their work and organization. Engaged employees, as defined by Adnan (2019) are emotionally connected, psychologically invested, and actively involved in their organizations. They exhibit enthusiasm, passion, and purposeful effort, contributing positively to organizational success (Davidescu et al., 2020).

In the logistics industry, characterized by intense competition and a scarcity of skilled talent, organizations face the challenge of retaining top performers. Career development practices emerge as a strategic approach to respond to individual employee needs, enhancing engagement and commitment (Wiradendi et al., 2020). However, despite the recognized benefits, organizations, including those in logistics, encounter difficulties in implementing successful career development programs. The competitive labor market, the emergence of organizations offering better compensation and advancement opportunities, and changing employee demands contribute to the hurdles in establishing effective career development initiatives (Toan, 2023). Additionally, the evolving nature of the workforce has distinct career perspectives, and poses challenges for organizations aiming to retain talent throughout their careers.

In the global logistics sector, these challenges are further compounded by factors such as financial constraints and the hierarchical structure of organizations (Do, 2019). The repercussions are evident in decreased employee engagement and commitment, negatively impacting performance (Ul-Hameed et al., 2019). One of the primary hurdles in implementing successful career development initiatives lies in resonating with the diverse needs and aspirations of the workforce. Employees within an organization often span different demographics, experience levels, and professional backgrounds. Tailoring career development programs to cater to this diversity requires a comprehensive understanding of individual career goals and preferences. Furthermore, aligning these programs with the overarching goals of the organization ensures a harmonious integration that benefits both employees and the company (Singh, 2019). In the context of the logistics industry, the challenges become even more pronounced due to the nature of the sector. Logistics organizations operate within a dynamic and fast-paced environment,

where adaptability and specialized skills are crucial. Crafting career development programs that account for these unique demands, such as the need for continuous training on emerging technologies or specialized certifications, adds an additional layer of complexity (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2019).

Moreover, financial constraints pose a significant impediment to the successful implementation of career development programs. Logistics organizations, like many others, may face limitations in budget allocation for employee training and development. The need for investment in technology, infrastructure, and day-to-day operations often competes with the budget available for employee-centric initiatives. This scarcity of funds can impede the creation of comprehensive and sustained career development programs (Kamau et al., 2022). The organizational structure, often characterized as flat in logistics companies, adds another dimension to the challenges faced. In a flat organizational structure, there are fewer hierarchical levels, and decision-making processes may be streamlined. While this structure has its advantages, such as enhanced communication and quicker decision-making, it can also present challenges in terms of career advancement. Limited upward mobility within a flat structure may lead to employee dissatisfaction, especially if career development pathways are not clearly defined (Bosch-Sijtsema et al., 2019). Addressing these challenges demands innovative solutions and a proactive approach from organizational leadership.

While overcoming these challenges requires an upfront investment of resources and effort, the long-term benefits far outweigh the initial impediments. Increased employee engagement translates to higher productivity and job satisfaction, contributing to organizational success. Commitment from the workforce fosters a positive organizational culture and reduces turnover, which is particularly critical in industries like logistics where skilled talent is in high demand (Turner, 2019). The challenges in implementing effective career development programs are significant but not insurmountable. By understanding the unique needs of the workforce, aligning programs with organizational goals, and exploring innovative solutions, logistics companies can create impactful initiatives. The strategic investment in overcoming financial constraints and navigating the flat organizational structure is justified by the long-term benefits of heightened engagement, commitment, and talent retention, ultimately contributing to the sustained success of the organization.

The logistics sector, like many others, faces the imperative of developing and implementing effective career development programs to enhance employee engagement and commitment. The challenges are multifaceted, ranging from the evolving nature of the workforce to financial constraints. However, the literature supports the argument that the benefits, including enhanced employee engagement, talent retention, and organizational success, outweigh the challenges. As logistics companies navigate the complexities of the global business environment, a strategic emphasis on career development is essential for fostering a workforce that is not only skilled but also passionately committed to achieving organizational objectives.

2. The South African Logistic Sector

The logistics industry in South Africa has witnessed remarkable growth, emerging as one of the fastest-growing sectors contributing significantly to the nation's economy. In 2021, the sector, encompassing transport, storage, and communication, added approximately 333.8 billion rand (US\$19.3 billion) to the country's GDP, marking a notable increase from the previous year (Statista Research Department, 2023). This growth, however, has brought about a critical challenge for industry players in securing and retaining qualified, experienced, and competent employees in an increasingly competitive business landscape. Preliminary investigation by this researcher revealed a lack of opportunities for career advancement and upward mobility in the logistics sector has resulted in a talent drain, with skilled professionals opting for roles in other industries. The flat organizational structure prevalent in South African logistics companies exacerbates this issue, limiting career progression opportunities and contributing to low employee engagement and high turnover rates. While some investments have been made by logistics firms in the country to facilitate career advancement, the challenge of low employee engagement still needs to be addressed in the existing literature.

Employee disengagement poses a significant challenge to the logistics sector, as its manifestations, including absenteeism, subpar productivity, delayed deliveries, and high turnover rates, can have severe repercussions on overall productivity and customer satisfaction (Garg et al., 2021). This issue is particularly acute in the logistics industry in South Africa, where employees often find themselves undervalued and underpaid despite being integral to the operation of service-based organizations. In the competitive landscape of the logistics sector, recognizing the pivotal role of engaged and committed employees becomes paramount. The benefits of having an engaged workforce extend beyond individual job satisfaction to organizational success, productivity, and customer loyalty (Alshaabani et al., 2021). As employees play a crucial role in the smooth functioning of logistics operations, addressing disengagement is not just a matter of workforce well-being but a strategic imperative for sustained business growth.

Effective career development emerges as a compelling solution to counteract employee disengagement in the logistics sector. To cultivate a highly engaged and committed workforce, logistics companies and organizational leaders need to invest in comprehensive career development strategies that address the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of employee engagement. This involves a multifaceted approach encompassing career planning, training, counseling, and succession planning. Career planning stands out as a foundational element in this strategy. Providing employees with a clear and transparent path for career progression within the organization can instill a sense of purpose and direction, reducing feelings of stagnation and frustration that often contribute to disengagement. By outlining potential career trajectories and opportunities for skill development, logistics companies can demonstrate their commitment to employee growth and success.

Training programs further contribute to employee engagement by equipping staff with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in their roles. Continuous learning opportunities not only enhance individual capabilities but also convey a commitment to employee development. This, in turn, fosters a culture of growth and innovation within the organization. Counseling and mentorship programs are equally crucial components of effective career development. Providing employees with access to guidance and support helps address personal and professional challenges, fostering a sense of belonging and value (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2021). Mentorship programs, in particular, can connect employees with experienced professionals who can provide insights, advice, and encouragement, contributing to a positive and supportive work environment.

Succession planning is the final piece of the puzzle, ensuring that employees see a viable future within the organization. Clearly defined pathways for career progression, coupled with opportunities for leadership roles, communicate to employees that their contributions are recognized and valued. This proactive approach not only mitigates turnover risks but also ensures a steady pipeline of skilled and experienced professionals to drive the organization forward (Lévesque & Subramanian, 2022). Investing in these career development strategies sends a powerful message to the workforce: that the organization is committed to their growth, success, and well-being. This, in turn, fosters a sense of loyalty and dedication among employees, leading to higher engagement levels and increased productivity. As logistics companies navigate the challenges of the South African business environment, a strategic emphasis on career development emerges not only as a solution to employee disengagement but as a catalyst for organizational resilience, growth, and sustained success.

3. Review of Literature

Career development practices play a pivotal role in shaping employee engagement across various dimensions in the logistics sector. Among these practices, career planning stands out as a foundational element that contributes significantly to emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement. Career planning involves providing employees with a clear and transparent path for career progression within the organization (Lartey, 2021). This practice addresses the emotional dimension of engagement by instilling a sense of purpose and direction. When employees have a roadmap for their professional growth, it reduces feelings of stagnation and frustration, contributing to a more positive emotional state (Othman & Mahmood, 2019). Additionally, it positively impacts cognitive engagement by fostering a proactive approach to personal and professional development. When employees can envision a future within the organization, it stimulates cognitive processes related to goal-setting and skill acquisition (Rumman et al., 2020). Career planning also influences behavioral engagement by encouraging employees to take ownership of their career trajectories. Employees actively participate in skill development and seek opportunities aligned with their career goals, resulting in enhanced behavioral engagement (Burnett & Lisk, 2021).

Career training is another crucial aspect of career development practices with a profound impact on employee engagement in the logistics sector. The significance of training programs lies not only in the acquisition of specific skills but also in their overarching influence on emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of engagement. Emotional engagement, a critical component in fostering a positive work environment, is intricately linked with employees' perception of the organization's commitment to their professional growth. Career training initiatives send a clear message to employees that their skills are valued and that the company is invested in their continuous development. This sense of acknowledgment and appreciation serves as a catalyst for emotional engagement, as demonstrated by Riyanto et al., (2021). When individuals feel that their organization is genuinely interested in enhancing their competencies, a positive emotional connection is established, contributing to a workplace culture where employees are emotionally invested in their roles.

Cognitive engagement, characterized by employees' mental involvement and commitment to their work, receives a significant boost through well-designed career training programs. Continuous learning opportunities not only impart new skills but also stimulate cognitive processes associated with knowledge acquisition and adaptation to evolving job requirements. As highlighted by Arslan & Roudaki (2019) employees engaged in ongoing learning experiences are more likely to exhibit heightened cognitive engagement. The acquisition of new knowledge and the ability to apply it in the workplace not only enhances individual capabilities but also aligns employees with the dynamic demands of the logistics sector, fostering a workforce that is mentally engaged and adaptable.

On the behavioral front, the impact of career training is evident in the proactive engagement of employees with their job responsibilities. Training equips individuals with up-to-date skills and knowledge, empowering them to actively contribute to organizational objectives. The correlation between training and behavioral engagement is emphasized by Azmy (2019) who underscores the role of skill development in influencing employees' behaviors in alignment with organizational goals. Employees who undergo regular training are more likely to exhibit proactive behaviors, taking the initiative to apply their acquired skills to address challenges and contribute meaningfully to the organization's success. Career training emerges as a multifaceted instrument that positively influences emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of employee engagement in the logistics sector. Beyond the acquisition of technical skills, training programs foster a sense of value and appreciation, stimulate cognitive processes related to learning, and encourage proactive engagement with job responsibilities. As logistics companies navigate the complexities of the industry, strategically designed career training initiatives emerge as a cornerstone for cultivating a highly engaged and adaptive workforce, poised to contribute to the sector's sustained growth and success.

Career counseling plays a critical role in supporting employee engagement across emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. Emotional engagement benefits from career counseling through the provision of psychological support. Employees navigating

personal or professional challenges find solace in counseling, positively impacting their emotional well-being and engagement (Moletsane et al., 2019). The cognitive dimension of engagement is influenced by career counseling through the guidance provided. Counselors offer insights into potential career paths, helping employees make informed decisions and fostering cognitive engagement (Govender & Bussin, 2020). Behavioral engagement is positively affected as counseling equips employees with coping strategies. When facing challenges, employees with access to counseling are more likely to exhibit adaptive behaviors, contributing to increased behavioral engagement (Budrienė & Diskienė, 2020).

Succession planning, the strategic identification and development of potential future leaders, is a career development practice with significant implications for employee engagement. Emotional engagement benefits from succession planning through increased job security. When employees see a clear pathway for career progression, it alleviates uncertainties, positively impacting emotional engagement (Hulshof et al., 2020). Succession planning also influences cognitive engagement by providing a tangible vision for the future. When employees have visibility into potential leadership roles, it stimulates cognitive processes related to goal-setting and long-term commitment (Yoon et al., 2021). On the behavioral front, succession planning encourages proactive engagement. Employees identified for leadership positions are likely to exhibit behaviors indicative of leadership readiness, contributing to heightened behavioral engagement (Silitonga et al., 2020).

In the logistics sector, the impact of these career development practices on employee engagement is crucial for organizational success. Emotional engagement ensures that employees are committed and connected to their work and colleagues. Cognitive engagement enables employees to bring their full cognitive capacities to their roles, contributing to innovation and problem-solving. Behavioral engagement results in employees actively participating in organizational processes and initiatives, driving productivity and achieving organizational goals. The synergy of these dimensions creates a workforce that is not only skilled and capable but also deeply committed to the organization's success. As logistics companies navigate the complexities of the South African business environment, understanding and strategically implementing these career development practices become imperative for fostering a highly engaged and committed workforce.

The existing literature on career development practices in the logistics sector provides valuable insights into the impact of career planning, training, counseling, and succession planning on employee engagement across emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. However, despite the wealth of research, several notable gaps persist; indicating areas where further exploration is needed to deepen our understanding of the subject. Firstly, there is a noticeable lack of in-depth exploration into industry-specific factors that may influence the efficacy of career planning, training, counseling, and succession planning within the logistics sector. The dynamics of supply chain management and the unique challenges faced by logistics companies necessitate a

specialized investigation into how these contextual factors shape the outcomes of career development initiatives. This gap calls for targeted studies that consider the intricacies of the logistics industry, providing insights tailored to its distinctive features.

Secondly, an apparent insufficiency exists in understanding career development practices from the perspective of employees themselves. The majority of studies tend to focus on organizational outcomes and objectives, neglecting the subjective experiences of the individuals undergoing these career development programs. An essential research avenue involves incorporating qualitative methodologies to capture employee perceptions, preferences, and the perceived effectiveness of various career development initiatives. This would offer a more holistic understanding by considering the human element within organizational strategies. Thirdly, the literature often provides insights into the short-term effects of career development practices, leaving a significant gap in our understanding of the long-term sustainability and impact of these initiatives. Research is needed to investigate whether the positive effects endure over an employee's career trajectory, exploring how career development practices adapt to changing organizational landscapes. Longitudinal studies would provide valuable insights into the enduring impact of career planning, training, counseling, and succession planning on employee engagement within the logistics sector.

Moreover, there is a critical need for research that delves into the intersectionality of career development practices with diverse workforce characteristics. The existing literature falls short in addressing potential disparities in the impact of these practices on different demographic groups within the logistics sector, such as gender, race, and age. A comprehensive investigation into how these intersecting factors influence the effectiveness and outcomes of career development initiatives is imperative for fostering inclusivity and equitable practices. A notable research gap lies in the absence of comparative analyses across various logistics companies. Existing studies often focus on individual organizations, limiting the generalizability of findings. Comparative studies encompassing logistics companies of different sizes, structures, and operational contexts would provide a nuanced understanding of best practices, common challenges, and contextual variations in the effectiveness of career development initiatives. This approach would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding applicable to a broader range of logistics organizations.

Additionally, the literature review overlooks the impact of technological advancements on career development practices in the logistics sector. With the rise of Industry 4.0 and automation, understanding how technology influences training methods, career planning algorithms, and counseling platforms is imperative. Research should investigate the integration of digital tools and their implications for employee engagement, offering insights into the evolving landscape of career development practices within technologically advanced logistics environments. There is also a notable gap concerning the potential negative outcomes associated with career development practices. The existing literature predominantly emphasizes positive outcomes, such as increased engagement and retention, while neglecting potential negative consequences,

such as employee burnout or dissatisfaction stemming from unmet career expectations. A balanced exploration of the adverse effects of career development initiatives would contribute to a more holistic understanding of their implications for employee well-being. Finally, the literature review predominantly reflects research conducted in other contexts, neglecting the influence of cultural factors on career development practices, particularly in the South African logistics sector. Comparative studies considering global perspectives and cultural nuances are essential for understanding how these practices operate in different cultural contexts and providing culturally sensitive recommendations for logistics organizations in South Africa. Addressing these research gaps will contribute to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between career development practices and employee engagement in the logistics sector.

4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is underpinned by established organizational behavior and management theories, enhancing the understanding of the relationship between career development practices and employee engagement within logistics companies. Drawing on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1959), the study recognizes that career development practices, including career planning, succession planning, and career training, function as both hygiene factors and motivators. These practices address fundamental needs, contributing to job satisfaction, while also acting as motivators for professional growth and development (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). Simultaneously, the framework incorporates elements from the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) proposed by Hackman and Oldham (1976). The JCM posits that certain job characteristics, such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback, influence job satisfaction and motivation. In the context of this study, career development practices directly impact these job characteristics, contributing to enhanced cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement among employees in logistics companies (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Additionally, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) is integrated to elucidate the role of observational learning and role modeling in career development. SCCT suggests that individuals learn and derive motivation from observing the career-related behaviors of others. In the logistics context, employees might be motivated and engaged by witnessing the successful career paths facilitated by effective career development practices (Lent et al., 1994). Furthermore, the framework underscores the significance of the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), emphasizing the role of leaders in shaping career development and, consequently, employee engagement. Effective leadership, as per LMX, is pivotal in establishing high-quality relationships between leaders and employees, positively influencing engagement levels (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

In summary, the theoretical framework integrates Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, the Job Characteristics Model, Social Cognitive Career Theory, and Leader-Member

Exchange theory, supported by the works of Herzberg et al., (1959), Hackman and Oldham (1976), Lent et al., (1994), and Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995). This comprehensive framework contributes to a nuanced understanding of how career development practices influence employee engagement within logistics companies, considering individual, organizational, and leadership factors.

5. Research Questions

The study assessed career development practices and employee engagement in South African logistic companies in Durban City, South Africa.

Specifically, it provided answers to the following research questions:

- 1) What is the extent of career development practices for employees among logistic companies in Durban City?
- 2) What is the level of employee engagement in logistics companies?
- 3) What is the relationship between career development practices and employee engagement?

5.1 Null Hypothesis

- There is no relationship between career development practices and employee engagement.

6. Value of the Study

The significance of the study on career development practices in the logistics sector extends to various stakeholders, playing a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of the industry and enhancing overall organizational effectiveness. For employees within logistics companies, the study holds profound importance as it directly addresses their career trajectories and professional growth. By comprehensively investigating career planning, training, counseling, and succession planning, the study aims to provide insights that empower employees to make informed decisions about their career paths. This knowledge is particularly valuable in an industry where clear advancement opportunities are often perceived as lacking due to a flat organizational structure. Employees stand to benefit from a more transparent understanding of available career development programs, fostering a sense of empowerment, job satisfaction, and increased engagement.

For the management of logistics companies, the study carries strategic significance in terms of talent management and retention. Logistics companies face the challenge of attracting and retaining skilled employees in a highly competitive environment. The findings of the study can serve as a roadmap for designing and implementing effective career development programs that resonate with the workforce, ultimately contributing to increased employee engagement and commitment. The ability to retain top talent is paramount in ensuring operational efficiency and sustaining a competitive edge. As

logistics is a people-centric industry, the study assists management in aligning organizational objectives with employee career aspirations, creating a symbiotic relationship that benefits both the workforce and the company.

Human Resource Management (HRM) consultants also stand to gain substantial insights from the study, as it addresses the challenges and opportunities specific to the logistics sector. The findings can inform HRM consultants about industry-specific nuances, allowing them to tailor their services to meet the unique needs of logistics companies. Consultants can leverage the study's recommendations to develop targeted interventions that enhance employee engagement through customized career planning, training, counseling, and succession planning initiatives. By aligning their consultancy services with the industry's demands, HRM consultants can play a crucial role in optimizing workforce management strategies and contributing to the overall success of logistics companies.

Government bodies and policymakers focused on economic development can derive value from the study's insights into the logistics sector. A thriving logistics industry is vital for national economic growth, and the study's recommendations can inform policies that foster a conducive environment for career development in the sector. By understanding the specific challenges faced by logistics companies, policymakers can formulate initiatives that incentivize investment in employee training, counseling services, and succession planning, thereby contributing to the overall resilience and competitiveness of the logistics industry.

Furthermore, academic institutions and researchers in the fields of logistics, human resource management, and organizational behavior can benefit from the study by gaining a deeper understanding of the intricacies involved in career development within the logistics sector. The study provides a foundation for future research endeavors, offering a framework for investigating the evolving dynamics of employee engagement and career progression in logistics. This, in turn, contributes to the academic discourse and knowledge base, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between career development practices and organizational success within the logistics industry. In summary, the study holds immense importance for employees, management, HRM consultants, government bodies, and academic institutions associated with the logistics sector. By addressing the unique challenges and opportunities within the industry, the study serves as a catalyst for positive change, promoting employee well-being, organizational effectiveness, and the sustained growth of the logistics sector.

8. Methodology

8.1 Research Design

The selection of a descriptive correlational research design for this study is underpinned by the need to comprehensively understand the existing relationships between career development practices and employee engagement within the logistics sector. This non-

experimental approach allows for the exploration of these variables in their natural setting, providing valuable insights into their associations without introducing external influences. The methodology aligns with the study's objectives, which are centered on assessing the extent of career development practices and the levels of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement among employees in the logistics sector.

Several scholars emphasize the suitability of the descriptive correlational design for studies aiming to unravel relationships between variables without intervention (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Fraenkel et al., 2019). Given the complex dynamics of career development practices and employee engagement, a non-experimental design is appropriate to capture the nuanced patterns and interdependencies within these constructs. The design's non-invasive nature ensures that the researcher observes and measures these variables in real-world contexts, reflecting the genuine experiences of employees in the logistics sector (Fraenkel et al., 2019). The variables of interest, namely career planning, career training, career counseling, succession planning, and the dimensions of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement, lend themselves well to quantitative measurement. Utilizing surveys or questionnaires will facilitate the systematic collection of data, employing Likert scales or numerical ratings for participants to express their perceptions. This approach aligns with the principles of a descriptive correlational design, enabling the generation of numerical data that can be statistically analyzed to reveal the strength and direction of relationships (Babbie, 2016). Descriptive statistics, such as means, medians, and standard deviations, will offer a clear picture of the average perceptions of career development practices and employee engagement within the logistics sector. Correlational analyses, such as the Pearson correlation coefficient, will further elucidate the extent and nature of relationships between these variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This methodological choice ensures a rigorous exploration of the research questions, contributing to the depth of understanding regarding how career development practices influence different dimensions of employee engagement in the logistics sector. Moreover, the use of a descriptive correlational design is particularly relevant when the study aims to describe patterns and relationships rather than establish causation. Given the practical constraints faced by logistics organizations, the focus on descriptive correlation allows for a nuanced exploration of associations that can inform actionable insights for both practitioners and policymakers in the field of human resource management. In summary, the selection of a descriptive correlational research design is justified by its alignment with the study's objectives, its appropriateness for exploring relationships without manipulation, and its capacity to generate valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of career development practices and employee engagement within the logistics sector.

8.3 Population, Locale and Sampling

The study's population comprised employees currently engaged in the logistics sector within Durban City, South Africa. Specifically, participants were drawn from five distinct logistics companies operating within the city. To maintain ethical standards, the actual

names of the companies were anonymized, and acronyms (Company A, B, C, D, and E) were employed for identification purposes. Upon examination of the available data, it was revealed that Company A had a workforce of 84, Company B employed 77 individuals, Company C had 110 employees, Company D boasted a total of 128 employees, and Company E rounded out the group with 88 employees, summing up to a collective workforce of 487 employees. To determine the sample size for the study, the Raosoft (2004) sample size calculator was utilized. The computation resulted in a targeted sample size of 215 employees, selected through a stratified random sampling approach tailored to the unique characteristics of each company. The stratified random sampling allocation for each company is outlined below.

Logistic Companies	Total no. of Employees	Sample Computation	Actual Sample Size
Company A	84	$84/487 \times 215$	37
Company B	77	$77/487 \times 215$	33
Company C	110	$110/487 \times 215$	49
Company D	128	$128/487 \times 215$	57
Company E	88	$88/487 \times 215$	39
Total	487		215

Based on the computation, a total sample size of 37, 33, 49, 57, and 39 respondents were chosen from companies A to E, respectively. In selecting the actual sample size, purposive sampling was used. The selection of purposive sampling for this study is underpinned by the need for a targeted and strategic approach to participant selection, aligning closely with the specific objectives of exploring career development practices and employee engagement in the logistics sector. The logistics industry, being the focal point of the investigation, demands participants with a profound understanding of its nuances. By intentionally selecting individuals with expertise in this sector, the study ensures that the insights garnered are contextually relevant and offer a comprehensive view of the industry's intricacies (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Moreover, purposive sampling allows for the inclusion of participants from varied organizational positions within the logistics sector. This deliberate selection ensures a diverse representation of job roles, from entry-level positions to managerial roles, contributing to a holistic understanding of how career development practices and employee engagement vary across hierarchical levels. The study also aims to capture diverse career trajectories, and purposive sampling facilitates the intentional inclusion of individuals with different career planning, training, counseling, and succession planning experiences. This approach ensures a nuanced exploration of the various paths employees navigate in the logistics sector.

8.4 Data Collection Instruments

The primary data for this study were collected through a structured questionnaire, systematically organized into three distinct sections. The initial segment encompassed queries pertaining to respondents' biographical information, comprising a

comprehensive set of five statements. The subsequent section delved into assessing the extent of career development practices, addressing the study's inaugural research objective. This portion of the questionnaire evaluated four dimensions, career planning, career training, career counseling, and succession planning, each represented by seven statements. Respondents utilized a four-point Likert scale to express the extent of these practices, ranging from 4 (to a considerable extent) to 1 (to no extent). The formulation of this section drew inspiration from the studies conducted by Ndiritu (2022) and Githu (2017) with necessary modifications to align with the specific research objectives.

Conversely, the final segment concentrated on probing the level of employee engagement, tackling the second research objective. Aligned with Kahn's (1990) three models of engagement, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral, the questionnaire contained eighteen statements, with six dedicated to each dimension. The researcher employed a four-point Likert scale to articulate their engagement levels, varying from 4 (always) to 1 (never). The development of this section was influenced by the works of Akinyi (2022) and Riaz et al., (2021), with adjustments made to ensure alignment with the study's unique research goals. This meticulous structuring of the questionnaire aimed to elicit comprehensive and nuanced insights into the biographical backgrounds, career development practices, and engagement levels of the participants in the logistics sector.

8.5 Data Gathering Procedures

First, the questionnaire was subjected to content validation by three experts in the field of human resource management. The questionnaire was determined to have a validity rating of 4.90 indicating that the questions in the questionnaire are considered more relevant, appropriate, and representative of the construct being measured. A high content validity rating implies that the questions are valid and accurately measure what they are intended to measure, contributing to the overall reliability and quality of the research instrument. The validated questionnaire was further subjected to a reliability test using Cronbach Alpha. Here, a pilot test was conducted using 20 respondents outside the five chosen logistic companies. The results of the test yielded a coefficient of 0.899. This level of reliability is generally considered excellent, indicating that the instrument is dependable and produces consistent results.

Results of the validity and reliability test were communicated to the researchers and approval to gather actual data for the study was granted. Questionnaires were uploaded online via Google Forms. The link to the Google form was sent to the targeted respondents via email and social media accounts. Considering the widespread accessibility, ease of use, and efficient data management features, the use of Google Forms in this study was justified because it stands out as a practical and contemporary choice for distributing questionnaires. It aligns with the evolving landscape of digital research methodologies, ensuring a seamless and effective data collection process for the researcher and providing a user-friendly experience for respondents.

8.6 Ethical Consideration

In this research, several ethical principles were upheld to ensure the well-being and rights of the respondents. Firstly, informed consent is a fundamental ethical principle. Before participating in the study, respondents were provided with comprehensive information regarding the research's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. They were allowed to ask questions and fully understand what their participation entails. It was only after providing informed consent willingly were respondents included in the study. Anonymity is another crucial ethical consideration. Respondents' identities were kept confidential, and all data collected was anonymized, meaning that individual responses were not linked to specific respondents. This ensures that respondents' privacy is protected, promoting a sense of security and trust in the research process.

Voluntarism was strictly adhered to in this research. Respondents were assured that their participation was entirely voluntary, and they could withdraw from the study at any point without facing any consequences. This principle emphasizes the importance of respecting respondents' autonomy and freedom of choice. Finally, confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. Personal information was handled with the utmost care, and access to data was restricted to the research team. The findings presented were aggregated and generalized, ensuring that individual respondents cannot be identified. This commitment to confidentiality builds trust and encourages open and honest participation. These ethical principles collectively serve to protect the rights and well-being of the respondents, fostering an environment of transparency, respect, and trust throughout the research journey.

8.7 Statistical Treatment of Data

The following statistical tools were used. First, the weighted mean was used to organize and interpret the data for the extent of career development practices and level of employee engagement. Finally, Pearson Correlation was used to organize and interpret the data for the relationship between career development practices and employee engagement.

9. Results and Discussions

Presented in this part of the paper are the results of the study. The results were chronologically presented based on the stated research questions mentioned in the previous part of this paper.

Table 1: Extent of Career Development Practices for Employees of Logistic Companies

No.	Dimensions	Weighted Mean	Description/Interpretation
1	Career counseling	2.49	To little extent – high level of implementation
2	Career planning	2.37	To little extent – low level of implementation
3	Succession Planning	2.23	To little extent – low level of implementation
4	Career training	1.78	To little extent – low level of implementation
Average		2.22	To little extent – low level of implementation

In Table 1, findings reveal the status of career development for employees within logistic companies in Durban City, South Africa. The overall weighted mean, standing at 2.22, implies that the current level of career development practices in these companies is notably low. The finding underscores a potential stagnation in the professional growth of the workforce within the logistics sector. Employees may find themselves in a situation where opportunities for skill enhancement and career progression are limited. The dimensions that measured the extent of career development practices for employees of logistic companies are presented as follows starting with the highest mean of: 2.49 for career counseling, 2.37 for career panning, 2.23 for succession planning, and 1.78 for career training. All the dimensions got a qualitative interpretation of “to little extent – low level of implementation”.

Beginning with career counseling, the results suggest that on average, there is a low level of implementation which falls within the "to little extent" category. This suggests that while there is a certain degree of effort invested in providing career guidance, it might be insufficient or inadequately tailored to meet the diverse needs of employees navigating the complex landscape of the logistics sector. Akdere & Egan, (2020) corroborate this finding, emphasizing the significance of personalized career counseling in enhancing employee development and job satisfaction. The study underscores the pivotal role of tailored guidance in aligning individual career aspirations with organizational objectives. This aligns with the notion that generic or insufficiently personalized career counseling may not effectively address the unique challenges and aspirations prevalent in the logistics industry. Employees may find themselves at a crossroads, lacking the specific guidance needed to navigate the intricacies of career progression within this dynamic sector.

The profound impact of personalized career counseling on job satisfaction, as emphasized by Hunter-Johnson et al., (2020) delves into the core of employee well-being and commitment within the logistics sector. The dynamics of this industry, marked by both dynamic challenges and diverse skill requirements, underscore the critical need for a comprehensive and tailored approach to career counseling. Zürcher et al., (2021) support the assertion that job satisfaction is a pivotal metric in measuring overall employee well-being and commitment. In the context of logistics, where the demands can be unpredictable and multifaceted, the absence of personalized career counseling may lead to a ripple effect of disengagement and dissatisfaction among the workforce. This is especially pertinent as individuals seek a more tailored approach to their professional growth in an environment that demands adaptability and specialization.

Building on this, Mullen et al., (2021) further explore the link between personalized career counseling and employee morale. It posits that a lack of individualized guidance may result in employees feeling underserved, impacting their morale and, consequently, diminishing their contributions to the organization. This highlights the intricate interplay between personalized career counseling, employee morale, and organizational productivity, emphasizing the broader ramifications of the identified gap. Moreover, Tang et al., (2021) delve into the role of comprehensive career

counseling in talent development and retention. The study suggests that employees are more likely to stay committed to organizations that invest in their personal and professional growth. This aligns with the notion that a more individualized and robust career counseling framework is not only an investment in current job satisfaction but also a strategic move to retain and nurture talent within logistic companies.

In essence, the cumulative evidence from the above literatures reinforces the argument for a paradigm shift in career counseling practices within logistic companies. The call for a more nuanced and personalized approach is not merely an operational enhancement but a strategic imperative. The strategic investment in comprehensive and tailored career counseling emerges not only as a means to enhance employee development but also as a significant contributor to job satisfaction. This, in turn, propels a more engaged and motivated workforce within the logistics sector, ultimately positioning logistic companies toward sustained success. In light of this insight, a reevaluation of current practices becomes imperative, underscoring the necessity of adopting a more individualized and robust career counseling framework. The references cited provide a comprehensive foundation, aligning with the broader narrative that strategic investment in personalized career counseling is not only beneficial for individual employees but also instrumental in fortifying the overall well-being, commitment, and success of logistic companies within the dynamic and demanding logistics sector.

Moving on to career planning, the results indicate a low level of implementation. This raises concerns about the strategic alignment of employees' career paths with organizational goals within the logistics companies. This revelation prompts a critical inquiry into the effectiveness of current practices and their potential impact on the symbiotic relationship between individual career development and organizational success. Research by Lartey (2021) underlines the pivotal role of effective career planning in fostering employee engagement and organizational success, reinforcing the importance of addressing this gap in the current practices. The study underscores the dynamic interplay between individual career trajectories and the broader strategic objectives of the company. It suggests that a well-structured and adequately implemented career planning framework is instrumental in ensuring that employees' professional aspirations align harmoniously with the strategic direction of the logistics companies.

The implications of a low level of implementation in career planning extend beyond individual job satisfaction. It raises concerns about the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the logistic companies in Durban City. A lack of strategic alignment may result in a workforce that is not optimally utilized, with employees potentially charting career paths that do not contribute synergistically to the organizational objectives. Mappamiring & Putra (2021) in a parallel vein underscores the multifaceted benefits of effective career planning. It not only enhances employee engagement but also acts as a catalyst for organizational success. The study suggests that companies with well-defined career planning strategies are better positioned to attract,

retain, and leverage talent effectively. The insights drawn from the corroborating references fortify the significance of addressing the identified gap in career planning implementation within logistic companies in Durban City. The imperative for a strategic overhaul becomes more pronounced in light of the multifaceted benefits highlighted by the research conducted by Ali et al., (2019). This body of work not only reinforces the need to align individual aspirations with organizational goals but also positions a robust career planning framework as a strategic imperative for the long-term viability and success of logistic companies.

Ghosh et al., (2019) emphasize that a well-structured career planning system acts as a catalyst for employee engagement, fostering a sense of purpose and direction. Engaged employees are more likely to invest in their roles, contribute meaningfully to organizational objectives, and exhibit higher levels of commitment. This resonates with the notion that an effective career planning framework not only serves individual employees but also becomes a cornerstone for building a motivated and dedicated workforce. Furthermore, Tiwari & Lenka (2020) delve into the role of career planning in talent retention, asserting that employees are more likely to stay with companies that provide clear paths for their professional development. This directly correlates with the argument that addressing the identified gap in career planning is not only pivotal for immediate engagement but also plays a crucial role in retaining valuable talent within logistics companies.

Eka & Anik (2020) in exploring the link between career planning and organizational success, underscores that companies with well-defined career planning strategies are better equipped to navigate the complexities of the business landscape. This resonates with the idea that a strategic overhaul in career planning practices is not just an internal enhancement but a strategic move positioning logistic companies for long-term viability and success in a competitive environment. In tandem, Rahayu et al., (2019) delve into the impact of effective career planning on workforce productivity, suggesting that employees who perceive a clear path for their career development are more likely to be productive contributors to organizational goals. This reinforces the argument that addressing the identified gap is not merely an internal restructuring but a strategic imperative that directly influences the productivity and efficiency of the workforce within logistic companies.

In summation, the confluence of the reviewed references paints a compelling picture of the critical need for a strategic overhaul in the career planning practices of logistics companies. The identified gap is not merely an operational deficiency but a strategic opportunity. By embracing a robust career planning framework, logistic companies have the chance to fortify their workforce, enhance employee engagement and retention, and position themselves strategically for long-term success in the competitive landscape. The call for action becomes not just an internal enhancement but a transformative move with far-reaching implications for the organizational dynamics and strategic position of logistic companies in Durban City.

The revelation of a low level of implementation in succession planning within logistic companies in Durban City raises significant concerns regarding the potential vulnerability in terms of leadership continuity. This finding implies that these companies may face challenges in seamlessly transitioning key roles, exposing them to the risks associated with talent gaps and leadership vacuums. Corroborating this insight, Okwakpam (2019) underscores the integral role of succession planning in mitigating precisely these risks. Reference [14] delves into the potential consequences of inadequate succession planning, emphasizing the importance of urgent attention to this aspect within the logistics sector. The study contends that without a robust succession planning framework, companies may find themselves grappling with disruptions, reduced organizational effectiveness, and heightened uncertainty during leadership transitions.

Furthermore, Ali & Mehreen (2021) extend the discussion by emphasizing the strategic importance of succession planning in fostering organizational resilience. The study posits that an effective succession planning strategy not only ensures a smooth transition of key roles but also contributes to the overall adaptability and sustainability of the organization. This aligns with the notion that addressing the identified gap in succession planning is not just a reactive measure to prevent talent gaps but a proactive strategy to fortify logistic companies against unforeseen challenges. Desarno et al., (2021) contribute to the discussion by exploring the correlation between succession planning and employee morale. The study suggests that employees within organizations with well-defined succession plans often feel more secure and engaged, knowing that there is a clear roadmap for leadership transitions. This reinforces the idea that the impact of succession planning extends beyond leadership continuity to the broader organizational culture and employee satisfaction.

In essence, the amalgamation of evidence from the above-reviewed literatures strengthens the argument for urgent attention to the identified gap in succession planning within logistic companies. The low level of implementation, as indicated by the weighted mean, is not just a procedural deficiency but a strategic vulnerability that requires immediate addressal. The references cited provide a comprehensive foundation, emphasizing the integral role of succession planning in mitigating risks, fostering organizational resilience, and enhancing employee satisfaction within the logistics sector. This collective insight underscores the imperative for logistic companies to prioritize and invest in a robust succession planning framework to navigate the challenges of leadership continuity effectively.

The striking revelation that career training recorded the lowest weighted mean, indicative of a particularly deficient level of implementation within logistic companies in Durban City, highlights a substantial gap in providing essential training opportunities to enhance the skills of the workforce. The weighted mean, reflective of this deficiency, calls attention to a critical aspect of employee development that demands urgent intervention for logistics companies to stay competitive in the dynamically evolving landscape. To fortify this assertion, Arasanmi & Krishna (2019) contribute a pivotal perspective by emphasizing the positive impact of continuous career training on both employee

performance and organizational competitiveness. Park & Johnson (2019) delves into the intricacies of this relationship, highlighting how a robust career training program not only enhances individual skills but also positions the organization as a more agile and competitive entity in the market. The study underlines the urgency of addressing the identified shortfall, signaling that failing to invest in continuous career training can lead to a workforce ill-equipped to meet the demands of the logistics sector. Goestjahjanti (2020) aligns with this urgency by exploring the link between continuous training and employee engagement. The study suggests that employees who perceive an investment in their ongoing development are more likely to be engaged and committed to their roles. This resonates with the notion that addressing the identified gap in career training is not just a means to fill a deficiency but a strategic move to foster a more engaged and dedicated workforce within logistics companies.

Moreover, Riyanto et al., (2021) provide a broader perspective by connecting the dots between continuous training and organizational innovation. The study posits that organizations that prioritize ongoing skill development are better positioned to innovate and adapt to industry changes. This further emphasizes the multifaceted benefits of addressing the shortfall in career training, extending beyond individual skill enhancement to organizational innovation and adaptability. In essence, the amalgamation of insights from the reviewed literature consolidates the argument for urgent and comprehensive intervention in addressing the identified gap in career training within logistics companies. The deficiency, as indicated by the lowest weighted mean, is not just a functional deficit but a strategic vulnerability that poses a threat to the competitiveness, employee engagement, and innovation potential of these companies. The references cited collectively underscore the imperative for logistic companies to prioritize and invest in continuous career training, positioning it as a strategic necessity for individual and organizational success within the dynamic logistics sector.

The overarching narrative painted by the overall weighted mean, indicative of a low level of implementation across all dimensions of career development practices within logistic companies in Durban City, is a compelling portrayal of a systemic challenge that requires immediate attention. This comprehensive measure, reflecting the amalgamation of various facets of career development, consolidates the narrative into a clear and urgent call for intervention. In essence, the consolidation of the narrative through the overall weighted mean serves as a powerful rallying point for change within the logistics companies. This reinforces the argument that a holistic approach to career development is not just desirable but imperative for fostering employee satisfaction and ensuring organizational success. The identified deficiency is not a standalone issue but a systemic challenge that requires a strategic and comprehensive intervention to propel both employees and logistic companies toward sustained success in the dynamic and competitive landscape.

Table 2: Level of Employee Engagement in Logistic Companies

No.	Dimensions	Weighted Mean	Description/Interpretation
1	Cognitive engagement	3.15	High level of engagement
2	Behavioral engagement	2.16	Low level of engagement
3	Emotional engagement	2.11	Low level of engagement
Average		2.47	Low level of engagement

The data on employee engagement within logistic companies in Durban City, South Africa, paints a multifaceted picture of the workforce dynamics. With an average mean of 2.47, signaling a low level of engagement, the dimensions of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement offer distinct insights. The commendably high cognitive engagement, reflected in the weighted mean of 3.15, suggests that employees are intellectually invested in their roles. However, the contrasting low levels of behavioral (2.16) and emotional (2.11) engagement indicate a gap in observable actions and emotional connection to work. For employees in logistics companies in Durban City, this implies a need for a comprehensive approach to address factors affecting motivation, recognition, and overall job satisfaction. While intellectual commitment is evident, bridging the gaps in behavioral and emotional engagement becomes pivotal for creating a work environment that nurtures employee well-being and contributes to the enduring success of these logistic companies.

The data on employee engagement within logistic companies in Durban City unveils a nuanced analysis across cognitive, behavioral, and emotional dimensions. In terms of cognitive engagement, the notably high weighted mean signifies a commendable level of intellectual commitment among employees, suggesting a workplace where individuals are actively invested in the mental aspects of their roles. This implies the existence of a workplace culture where individuals are actively invested in the mental facets of their roles. The elevated cognitive engagement observed in this context may find its roots in a multitude of factors. The presence of challenging tasks that stimulate intellectual curiosity, a clear sense of purpose aligning with employees' values, and opportunities for skill utilization and growth emerge as pivotal contributors to this heightened cognitive commitment. This interpretation resonates with the findings of Basit (2019) whose research emphasizes the profound impact of challenging and meaningful tasks on cognitive engagement. Uddin et al., (2019) support this perspective, underscoring the positive correlation between task complexity and intellectual engagement. The acknowledgment of these elements not only signifies the value placed on intellectual contributions within logistic companies but also points to a workplace culture that fosters an environment where employees derive fulfillment and purpose from their cognitive endeavors. To sustain and enhance this remarkable level of cognitive engagement, ongoing efforts should prioritize the creation and maintenance of intellectually stimulating work environments. This insight is crucial for guiding strategic interventions aimed at nurturing the intellectual commitment of employees within the logistics sector in Durban City.

The analysis of behavioral engagement within logistic companies in Durban City presents a contrasting narrative, with a low weighted mean pointing to a disconcerting trend where employees may not be fully invested in observable actions related to their roles. This finding suggests a potential gap between the cognitive commitment demonstrated by employees and the visible actions or efforts they put forth in their daily tasks. To contextualize and support this observation, Borst (2020) emphasizes in their research the critical role of recognition and motivation in driving behavioral engagement. Rasool et al., (2021) further explore this linkage, asserting that employees who feel recognized and motivated are more likely to exhibit proactive behaviors and go beyond their basic job requirements. This aligns with the identified low levels of behavioral engagement, indicating that interventions focusing on recognition and motivation may be instrumental in bridging the observed gap. Moreover, research by Van-Zyl et al., (2021) underscores the importance of leadership practices in fostering a culture of recognition, which can positively impact behavioral engagement (Ahmed et al., 2020). In essence, the low levels of behavioral engagement in logistic companies necessitate a targeted approach that incorporates recognition and motivation strategies supported by the literature, aiming to bridge the gap between cognitive commitment and observable actions among employees in Durban City.

The exploration of emotional engagement within logistic companies in Durban City reveals a notable deficiency, as indicated by the low weighted mean. This signals a workplace scenario where employees may lack the expected passion and enthusiasm for their work. To delve into the roots of this emotional disconnection, Weer & Greenhaus (2020) shed light on the pivotal role of leadership in fostering emotional engagement. Effective leadership practices, as highlighted in the research, have the potential to positively influence employees' emotional connection to their roles. Braganza et al., (2021) support this perspective, emphasizing the impact of leadership behavior on employee emotional well-being and engagement. Additionally, the work of Rameshkumar (2020) delves into the connection between leadership communication and emotional engagement, asserting that transparent and supportive leadership communication enhances employees' emotional connection to their work (Albrecht & Marty, 2020). Furthermore, a study by Teo et al., (2020) underscores the influence of organizational culture on emotional engagement, suggesting that a positive and inclusive culture contributes to heightened emotional commitment among employees (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). In light of these findings, the observed low emotional engagement within logistic companies highlights the need for strategic leadership interventions and a positive organizational culture to foster a more passionate and enthusiastic workforce in Durban City.

In essence, the imperative lies in addressing the identified low levels of both behavioral and emotional engagement within logistic companies. This dual challenge underscores the critical need for strategic interventions aimed at cultivating a holistic work environment. While the commendable intellectual commitment observed among employees is undoubtedly a strength, leveraging it for sustained employee satisfaction

and organizational success necessitates a comprehensive approach. Focusing on observable actions, such as recognizing and motivating employees, is crucial to bridge the gap between cognitive commitment and actual behaviors. Simultaneously, fostering emotional connections through effective leadership practices and cultivating a positive organizational culture becomes paramount. The goal is to create a workplace where employees not only excel intellectually but also feel recognized, motivated, and emotionally engaged in their roles. This holistic approach is pivotal for nurturing a workforce that is not only intellectually committed but actively contributes through observable actions and emotionally connects to their work, ultimately fostering sustained satisfaction and success within the dynamic landscape of logistic companies.

Table 3: Relationship between Career Development Practices and Employee Engagement

		Employee Engagement
Career Development Practices	Pearson Correlation	.887
	Sig. (2 – tailed)	.000
	N	46

Correlation significance $P < 0.05$ Significant

Understanding the intricate relationship between career development practices and employee engagement is imperative for navigating the dynamic landscape of organizational success. The statistical findings, as presented in Table 3, serve as a gateway to a deeper exploration of this correlation within logistic companies in Durban City. The significance of the p-value, standing at 0.000 and surpassing the conventional threshold of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), lays the groundwork for a robust understanding. This statistical rigor is further augmented by the Pearson coefficient (r-value) of 0.887, signifying a strong and positive relationship between career development practices and employee engagement. The finding led to the rejection of the null hypothesis that there is a relationship between career development practices and employee engagement.

Delving into the realm of existing research, the alignment between the statistical evidence and prior studies is striking. Kwon & Kim (2020) contribute a valuable perspective, emphasizing the transformative impact of career development on employee engagement. Their work, represented by Aboramadan et al., (2020) underscores the notion that investment in career development practices reaps substantial benefits in terms of heightened employee engagement. The positive correlation between these variables is not only reflected in the statistical results but is substantiated by empirical evidence, enhancing the credibility of the observed relationship. Building on this foundation, the research conducted by Soares & Mosquera (2019) offers a nuanced exploration of the intricate dynamics between career development practices and workforce engagement. O'Connor & Crowley-Henry (2019) accentuate the indispensable role of career development initiatives in fostering a motivated and engaged workforce. Their findings resonate with the statistical evidence presented in Table 3, weaving a coherent narrative that positions career development practices as a linchpin for cultivating a positive and dynamic organizational environment.

Moreover, the study by Ismail et al., (2019) provides valuable insights into the enduring significance of continuous career development initiatives. Saks (2019) showcases the instrumental role of such practices in not only advancing individual professional growth but also in elevating overall employee commitment to organizational goals. This aligns seamlessly with the identified positive correlation, suggesting that sustained investment in career development contributes not only to individual engagement but also to the collective commitment of the workforce. In essence, the statistical robustness, as indicated by the p-value and Pearson coefficient, is not merely an isolated observation but aligns cohesively with a broader body of literature. The convergence of evidence from Saks (2019) fortifies the argument that career development practices serve as catalysts for enhanced employee engagement within logistic companies. The implications of these findings are profound for logistic companies in Durban City. It signifies that strategic investments in career development initiatives are not only statistically significant but also resonate with the empirical reality of organizational dynamics. The positive relationship suggests that as companies prioritize and enhance career development practices, they are likely to witness a corresponding rise in employee engagement levels. This has far-reaching consequences for organizational success, ranging from increased productivity and innovation to a more satisfied and committed workforce.

However, it is essential to approach these findings with a nuanced perspective. While the statistical evidence and supporting literature highlight a positive correlation, the causal relationship and the specific mechanisms through which career development practices influence employee engagement warrant further exploration. Additionally, the context-specific nature of these findings emphasizes the need for tailor-made strategies that align with the unique dynamics of logistic companies in Durban City. The statistical evidence presented in Table 3, coupled with corroborating references, paints a compelling picture of the relationship between career development practices and employee engagement within logistic companies in Durban City. This insight provides a foundation for strategic decision-making, urging companies to recognize the pivotal role of career development in fostering an engaged and committed workforce. The synthesis of statistical rigor and empirical support invites a proactive approach, encouraging organizations to invest in and refine their career development practices to not only enhance individual professional growth but also to fortify the collective engagement and commitment of their workforce.

9. Conclusions

The study highlights a notable gap in the implementation of career development practices within logistics companies, particularly in areas such as career planning, succession planning, and career training. This deficiency is reflected in the low average weighted mean. Additionally, the analysis of employee engagement emphasizes a significant need for improvement, as evidenced by the generally low levels in cognitive,

behavioral, and emotional engagement. The statistical correlation between career development practices and employee engagement underscores the interconnectedness of these factors. These findings collectively suggest that enhancing career development practices may serve as a catalyst for improving employee engagement in logistics companies, thereby contributing to a more dynamic and productive workforce ultimately contributing to the overall success and sustainability of logistics companies in a rapidly evolving business landscape.

9.1 Practical Managerial Implications/Recommendations

The practical managerial implications derived from the study's findings suggest a targeted approach for logistics companies to enhance their organizational dynamics. Firstly, implementing comprehensive career development programs tailored to address specific deficiencies in career planning, succession planning, and career training is imperative. This involves creating structured initiatives such as mentorship programs and skill development workshops and establishing clear pathways for employees' career growth. Managers need to actively champion and facilitate these programs to foster a workplace culture that values continuous learning and professional development.

Recognizing the intrinsic link between career development practices and employee engagement, managers must prioritize and strengthen engagement initiatives. This involves fostering a positive work environment through open communication channels, regular feedback mechanisms, and strategies tailored to individual employee needs. Managers play a crucial role in creating and sustaining a workplace culture that encourages and supports cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement, thereby contributing to a more motivated and committed workforce.

Furthermore, embracing technological solutions for career training is a practical implication that aligns with the evolving business landscape. Managers should spearhead the integration of e-learning platforms, virtual training modules, and digital resources to make training programs more accessible and adaptable. This technological integration not only addresses the identified gap in career training but also positions logistics companies to meet the contemporary learning preferences of employees in a tech-driven industry. Ultimately, managers play a pivotal role in steering the organization towards a dynamic and skilled workforce capable of navigating the challenges and complexities of the logistics sector.

9.2 Contributions/Value-Add

This study brings significant contributions and value to the field of organizational management, particularly in the context of logistics companies. Firstly, it identifies and highlights critical gaps in the implementation of career development practices within these companies, shedding light on specific areas such as career planning, succession planning, and career training. This identification is valuable for industry stakeholders, providing them with a clear understanding of areas that require strategic attention and improvement.

Secondly, the study establishes a compelling connection between career development practices and employee engagement, substantiated by a robust statistical correlation. This finding contributes to the existing body of knowledge by emphasizing the interdependence of these factors. It underscores the importance of aligning career development strategies with engagement initiatives to create a more motivated and committed workforce. This insight has practical implications for managers and leaders seeking to enhance organizational performance and employee satisfaction.

Moreover, the study offers practical recommendations for addressing the identified deficiencies, providing a roadmap for logistics companies to enhance their organizational dynamics. The emphasis on comprehensive career development programs, strengthened employee engagement initiatives, and the integration of technological solutions for training reflects a nuanced understanding of the contemporary needs of the workforce in a rapidly evolving business landscape.

In essence, the contributions of this study extend beyond mere identification of issues to providing actionable insights and recommendations. It equips logistics companies and management professionals with the knowledge and strategic guidance needed to foster a dynamic, engaged, and skilled workforce, ultimately contributing to the overall success and sustainability of these organizations in a competitive industry.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

Nkosinathi Emanuel Mdletshe is a dedicated South African educator with a rich and varied professional background. As a skilled Economics, American History, and Literature teacher, he excels in motivating and mentoring students of all ages, employing both traditional and innovative methods to make learning exciting and foster critical thinking skills. Nkosinathi's overarching goal is to help students understand English culture while promoting their healthy development—mentally, socially, and

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