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**Understanding the Experience of High Workplace
Engagement in a Team Environment:
Workplace Contributors and Influences**

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the degree of**

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Abstract

This research endeavors to understand peoples' experience of working in a highly engaged team, and specifically to understand the aspects of the work environment that contribute to their engagement. As participants' own perspectives and views are central to gaining a rich insight, a qualitative approach is taken. Twenty-five participants from a large government agency who had worked in highly engaged teams took part in five focus group discussions. The discussions were analysed following thematic analysis techniques, and a thematic network of three interrelated layers was developed to explain the findings.

This thematic network focuses more on people's experiences of working in an engaging environment and the feelings associated with these experiences, whereas the literature focuses more on describing engagement and the aspects of the environment which contributes to engagement. At the base of the engagement model, developed from this research, are the seven aspects of the workplace that contribute to people's engagement: leadership; challenging and or varied work; access to knowledge; latitude and responsibility; social atmosphere; safety, trust and support; and respect. Above this are the feelings people connect with working in this environment: feeling at ease and relaxed, having a sense of achievement and satisfaction, and being valued or validated. The top layer of the model is the overall sense of what working in an engaging environment is about: feeling good in one's self.

Three further observations are made. Firstly, the team is an important aspect in peoples' engagement, and a duality exists where the person and the team simultaneously influence each other. Secondly, engagement is an active process; it changes over time, has a lifecycle over peoples' careers, actively transfers between people and exists within a reinforcing loop. Lastly, engagement within this organisation, refers to a connection to the work or workplace: people were interested, participated, enjoyed and were connected to their work, but maintained a separation. There was no sense of merging one's identity with the work as noted within some of the literature on engagement.

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