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Strategies Leaders in the Retail Industry Use to Increase Employee Engagement

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Lack of employee engagement increases expenses for organizational leaders. Retail leaders struggle with identifying successful engagement strategies to achieve performance outcomes. Grounded by the motivation-hygiene theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. The participants comprised 5 retail leaders in South Florida who experienced an increase in employee engagement. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews and documents that included publicly posted annual reports and strategic plans. The three themes that emerged using thematic analysis were employee incentives, effective communication, and affirmation from leaders. A key recommendation for business leaders is to conduct stakeholder listening sessions to receive feedback that could resolve concerns, increase morale, and guide change initiatives. The implications for social change include the potential for leaders of thriving companies to support local community projects that benefit the citizens of surrounding communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my husband and best friend, Aaron Joseph Crawford. Even though I started this journey before the creation of our union, you are the primary reason this accomplishment is now a reality. You believed in me when I did not believe in myself. You pushed me when I had no strength. You have seen me struggle with depression, loneliness, and self-confidence. However, you made me rise above it all and provided the comfort I needed to overcome it all. You, my dear husband, are a selfless man. Thank you for being the exemplary role model for our children. I further dedicate this doctoral study to my beautiful children, Isaiah and Samiya. Thank you both for the support and remaining patient with me throughout this entire process. You both will always be my inspiration to excel in life. To my bonus babies, Dayzohnuh, Alric, Asher, and Shiloh, remember there is no goal too high. God will forever be on your side.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

To improve productivity in the workplace, leaders need to implement strategies to increase employee engagement (Anand, 2017). The problem is that the lack of employee engagement negatively affects workplace engagement, thereby diminishing the organization's effectiveness in the marketplace (Al-Tkhayneh, Kot, & Shestak, 2019). The focus of this study was on strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement**.**

Background of the Problem

Retail leaders are concerned with how a decrease in employee engagement directly affects the organizational profitability and productivity outcomes (Kumbhat, 2019; Schroeder & Modaff, 2018). Gilbert, Horsman, and Kelloway (2016) noted that despite their attempts, many leaders did not properly strategize how to increase employee engagement. One obstacle that leaders face when trying to increase employee engagement is the assumption that all employees react to the same set of strategies (Qabool & Jalees, 2017); therefore, retail leaders need strategies to increase employee engagement.

Leaders who experience a decrease in productivity will witness a reduction in employee engagement and revenue, and an increase in expenses. According to Schroeder and Modaff (2018), lack of employee engagement from an individual’s attentive and absorbed performance leads to the loss of customers and revenue. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020) reported that more employees quit the retail industry in comparison to the wholesale industry.

Problem Statement

Bake (2019) found that 40% of leaders do not provide efficient and effective leadership, thus creating a lack of employee engagement in the organization. Companies in North America are experiencing a 37% employee disengagement rate, costing an average of $1,000 annually per employee (Jha & Kumar, 2016). Jha and Kumar (2016) revealed that the implicating factors for disengaged workers included 75% do not love where they work, 55% reported stagnant productivity, and 50% are not satisfied with the professional development opportunities available. The general business problem was lack of employee engagement increases expenses. The specific problem was that some retail leaders lack strategies to increase employee engagement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. The target population includes five retail leaders who experienced an increase in employee engagement. The social change implications are that engaged employees are more likely to participate in activities in the surrounding communities, such as community service initiatives. If a leader increases revenue, there is the potential for donations, community service, or added contributions to companies surrounding the community.

Nature of the Study

Three research methods explored for this study were qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Liao and Hitchcock (2018) indicated that a researcher uses the qualitative method to study the depth of the phenomenon through open-ended interview questions. In quantitative studies, researchers test theories and collect numerical data to examine relationships among variables and test hypotheses (Bikas, Stavropoulos, & Chryssolouris, 2016). Because I explored strategies through open-ended interview questions rather than collecting numerical data or testing a hypothesis, the quantitative method was not appropriate for my study.

With the mixed methods approach, researchers combine both qualitative and quantitative data to understand a research problem fully and address the purpose of the study (Venkatesh, Brown, & Sullivan, 2016). The mixed methods approach was not appropriate because this study did not contain any quantitative elements. The qualitative method was most appropriate to gather detailed responses through open-ended interview questions to explore strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement.

I reviewed four qualitative research designs: ethnography, phenomenology, narrative, and case study. According to the U.S. Department of the Interior (2006), ethnography involves understanding a thorough description of a culture. The ethnography design did not apply to this study because I did not explore participants' culture. Researchers use a phenomenological design when exploring the meanings of participants' lived experiences, focusing on discovering the underlying structure of shared essences of some social phenomenon (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). The phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study because I did not explore a life-changing event; however, I explored strategies. Researchers use a narrative design when interested in participants' spoken words or perspectives; the focus is typically on participants' lives told through their personal stories (Reijseger, Peeters, Taris, & Schaufeli, 2017). The narrative design was not appropriate because I did not collect personal stories involving participants' lives. To explore a specific occurrence, event, incident, or topic, researchers use case studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). By interviewing leaders who implemented strategies to increase employee engagement, a case study design was most appropriate to ensure leaders offered in-depth data.

Research Question

The research question was: What strategies do retail leaders use to increase employee engagement?

Interview Questions

To address the research question, I asked each of the five retail leaders eight interview questions. The questions are as follows:

1. What strategies do you use to increase employee engagement?
2. What strategies work best for increasing employee engagement?
3. What were your employees' reactions to implementing the engagement strategies?
4. How do you overcome the key barriers that arise from implementing new engagement strategies?
5. What strategies had the most immediate impact on increasing employee engagement?
6. How do you assess the strategies that you implement to increase employee engagement?

7. How did you communicate the strategies for employees to increase employee engagement?
8. What additional information can you share with me to help me better understand the strategies you use to increase employee engagement?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, also known as the two-factor theory. Herzberg created the theory to explain characteristics related to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction factors that are critical components of employee engagement. According to Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959), several intrinsic and extrinsic factors affect job satisfaction (motivation factors) and job dissatisfaction (hygiene) that strongly correlate with employees' productivity. According to Bryant (2018), Herzberg hypothesized that extrinsic factors lead to dissatisfaction, and intrinsic factors lead to satisfaction, and satisfied employees are more engaged. When leaders develop both intrinsic and extrinsic factors as motivators, performance is high. Ozsoy (2019) suggested that future researchers conduct in-depth interviews to understand employee engagement strategies better. I used Herzberg's theory during the data analysis process to help develop codes, and the findings revealed that intrinsic factors lead to satisfaction and satisfied employees are more engaged.

Operational Definitions

To better present information in this study, there are key terms that merit defining. The terms are defined as follows:

Employee engagement: The degree to which employees are committed to the organization, feel passionate about their jobs, and put unrestricted effort into their work (Yaneva, 2018).

Extrinsic factors: Hygiene factors that represent the basic needs of employees such as status, salary, job security, and fringe benefits (Delaney & Royal, 2017).

Intrinsic factors: Motivating factors involving the emotional needs of employees such as recognition, challenging work, relationships, and growth potential (Delaney & Royal, 2017).

Successful strategies: Guidance and information that leaders use to run an organization with greater efficiency to reach its full potential (Kostanek & Khoreva, 2018).

Workplace environment: The surrounding conditions that employees operate regularly (Tanabe, Haneda, & Nishihara, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts that researcher may not be able to prove as true. Wolgemuth, Hicks, and Agosto (2017) described assumptions in research studies as features of a proposed study that researchers assume to be true. The first assumption was the outlined questions led to information about participants' perceptions of employee productivity. The second assumption was participants provided honest and thorough responses about their personal experiences. The final assumption was that the data provided a clear understanding of strategies that retail leaders used to increase employee engagement.

Limitations

I limited the study to retail leaders located in South Florida. Limitations are potential shortcomings in the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). One of the main limitations was that I trusted the information provided by participants was accurate and did not contain embellishment or false statements beyond my control. To minimize this limitation, I developed a relationship with participants to strengthen my trustworthiness as a researcher. Another limitation was that participants might not understand the questions. To minimize this limitation, future researchers should use terms commonly used in the retail industry and ask for clarification as needed.

Delimitations

Delimitations are factors that restrict the scope of the study and outline its parameters (Snelson, 2016). Unlike limitations, delimitations are within the researcher’s control (Snelson, 2016). The participant population was limited to five leaders who were in South Florida. This small and specific population contributed to filling a research gap but may not be generalizable to the rest of the United States. The focus of this study was on the retail industry; this serves as another delimitation that could result in the study being nongeneralizable for companies in industries outside of retail. Future researchers may explore additional strategies that may impact employee engagement and replicating the study in other industries outside of the retail industry.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The leaders of retail businesses used strategies to increase employee engagement. Engagement strategies may be helpful to leaders who are unaware of these strategies or currently struggling with engaging their employees. Understanding the engagement strategies used to improve employee engagement may help retail leaders learn alternative techniques. Another implication for business is that higher levels of employee engagement may lower overhead costs, which may allow leaders to reduce costs for products or services, thereby appealing to consumers (Kumbhat, 2019). Employee engagement will lead to increased productivity in the organization (Devi & Mahajans, 2019). Retail leaders may gain additional knowledge about successful strategies used to increase employee engagement.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study may contribute to social change through leaders increasing engagement in the workplace, thereby encouraging employees to connect with people in the local community. Positive social change is relevant because increased consumer loyalty results in spending in the community, which could raise local revenue for community development (Lasrado & Pereira, 2018). Community developments offer services, convenience, and products paramount to the quality of life of residents (Roy, Shekhar, Lassar, & Chen, 2018). By using the results of this study, retail leaders may implement strategies to increase employee engagement that could impact people in the surrounding community.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

This literature review is a discussion, critical analysis, and synthesis of historical and current data about the strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. Within this study, 85% of the sources are peer-reviewed articles between 2016 and 2020 (see Table 1).

Table 1

Sources

Year published	Peer reviewed	Not peer-reviewed
2016-2020	169 (90%)	6
2015 and earlier	17 (10%)	2
Total	186	8

The first part of this review includes discussions about the role of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory to understand the process of employee engagement. Following the discussion of Herzberg's two-factor theory, the factors identified include subjects related to motivation, strategies, and productivity in the retail industry. Databases used for identifying scholarly journals and peer-reviewed sources included Google Scholar, Business Source Premier, ProQuest Central, SAGE Premier, and Academic Search Premier. The keywords and phrases used were *Herzberg's motivation*-*hygiene theory*, *employee engagement*, *extrinsic factors*, *intrinsic factors*, *successful strategies*, and *workplace environment, how to increase employee productivity in the workplace, successful strategies to increase productivity, and successful motivation strategies to increase employee productivity*. Peer-reviewed studies included books and journals to help facilitate an understanding of the many factors associated with increased employee engagement.

The research referenced in this study included peer-reviewed scholarly sources about strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. Included in the research is the role of motivation in human behavior and how retail leaders develop and foster motivation in the workplace. Additionally, there is research about leaders and the leadership role in guiding employees to success and establishing a supportive environment. Research regarding the retail industry added depth and context to the study.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, also known as the two-factor theory. Herzberg et al. (1959) developed the two-factor theory in 1950. Herzberg et al. distinguished the interaction between external factors (hygienic) and internal factors (motivators) that affect the motivation of labor activity in the workplace. Herzberg's two-factor theory could minimize job dissatisfaction and maximize job satisfaction in the workplace (Andersson, 2017; Herzberg et al., 1959). Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory is appropriate to understand what strategies leaders used to increase employee engagement through external and internal factors. Meeker (2017) noted that researchers use Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory to focus on the significance of internal job factors as motivating forces for employee engagement. Researchers may use Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory as a resource to understand employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the workplace.

Employees who experience deficiencies in the workplace may become dissatisfied with their job. Herzberg et al. (1959) related job dissatisfaction to company policy and administration guidance, supervision, salary, interpersonal relationships, job security, and working conditions. Herzberg et al. related the phrase job dissatisfaction to hygiene factors and associated them with deficiencies in the workplace. Reeve (2016) noted that hygiene factors do not motivate employees; however, when hygiene factors are insufficient throughout the workplace, dissatisfaction occurs. According to Porter, Riesenmy, and Fields (2016), leaders use hygiene factors to make employees feel happy, secure, and comfortable in the workplace. To avoid dissatisfaction, leaders must address hygiene factors to create an effective workplace.

Motivated employees may experience a higher level of job satisfaction in the workplace. Herzberg et al. (1959) related job satisfaction to achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth. Herzberg et al. related these motivators to employee job satisfaction, which may engage employees. Ingrained conditions of the job arise from employee motivation. According to Porter et al. (2016), if the motivator factors are present in an organization, employees are likely to be satisfied and motivated as a result. Reeve (2016) noted that motivation factors consist of significant needs, directing a person to act in a certain way. According to Porter et al., lack of motivation in the workplace incorporated by leaders negatively affects productivity in the organization. Leaders who understand what motivates employees in the workplace may have a positive effect on employee behavior.

Many researchers used Herzberg's two-factor theory. Andersson (2017) stated that Herzberg's two-factor theory is one of the most important theories of job satisfaction and motivation. Researchers found that the subject of job satisfaction is significant for business leaders to increase overall productivity and decrease employee turnover (Meeker, 2017; Ye & King, 2016). Andersson tested the theory by conducted research using a cross-cultural qualitative method on U.S. and Japanese insurance employees regarding job satisfaction. Andersson concluded that Herzberg's theory of motivation factors led to job satisfaction. Herzberg's two-factor theory regarding job satisfaction is much more complex when researching cross-country (Herzberg et al., 1959). Leonardelli and Lloyd (2016) argued that job satisfaction becomes difficult to measure when dealing with different international business environments and cultures around the world. Further research on job satisfaction should provide additional insight into international business environments and cultures.

Researchers might consider applying Herzberg's two-factor theory to understand employee turnover rates. The two-factor theory is the foundation for employee engagement and motivation that may assist with employee turnover in the workplace (Herzberg et al., 1959). Bryant (2018) applied Herzberg's two-factor theory as the framework for investigating job satisfaction, motivation, engagement, work environment, compensation, and employee turnover rates of CNAs in long-term care facilities. Bryant noted that variables identified in Herzberg's two-factor theory were measurable using motivational-based questionnaires to forecast employee turnover intentions. Babić, Kordić, and Babić (2014) examined the turnover rates of health care professionals in public and private health care centers, Herzberg's theory did not provide a direct reason to why the turnover rate was so high. The constructs that pertain to employees' perceptions of work environments could potentially affect employee motivation.

Other researchers used Herzberg's theory to examine the effects of motivation. Ozsoy (2019) reported that leaders who provide motivation factors experienced an increase in employee motivation. Benmore, Henderson, Mountfield, and Wink (2018) acknowledged that when leaders support employees' commitment and performance, productivity, and motivation increase in the workplace. Ozsoy (2019) used a Likert scale to determine a percentage distribution of the role of each hygienic and motivator factor in the theory to test how significant the factors are in employee motivation. Ouyang, Sang, Li, and Peng (2015) reported that researchers use the Likert scale to measure intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction. Ozsoy reported that the hygiene factors were important motivating factors, unlike in Herzberg's two-factor theory. Therefore, both hygiene and motivator factors may be significant.

Other motivation theories considered for the conceptual framework. Researchers have several content theories of motivation from which to choose. From a historical perspective, content theories tend to be the earliest theories of motivation (Elo et al., 2014; Uher, 2018). The content theories are Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two-factor/motivator-hygiene theory, McGregor's X and Y theories, McClelland's need achievement theory, the equity theory, value-percept theory, Vroom's expectancy theory, and Porter-Lawler model (Badubi, 2017). Other content theories considered for this study included McClelland’s (1985) need achievement theory, Vroom’s (1964) expectancy theory, and Porter and Lawler’s (1968) model theory.

One theory considered was McClelland’s need achievement theory. McClelland (1985) was interested in why some people were higher achievers than others in the workplace. McClelland said that some people reach success through seeking personal achievement rather than rewards themselves. Ewugi, Karim, and Abdul-Hakim (2015) noted the intrinsic factors of McClelland’s theory link to the work itself and how employees view the form of achievement. Also, Ubale and Dhabe (2019) reported that there is a direct link between high-performing leaders and the need for achievement. Delaney and Royal (2017) reported that employees perform well for achievement. McClelland’s need achievement theory was not appropriate for this study because it focuses on higher achievers rather than engagement strategies for all employees.

Another theory considered was Vroom’s expectancy theory. Vroom offered perspective to understand the factors that underlie motivation. According to Vroom (1964), expectancy theory refers to the goals and achievements from the results of desired employees. Bakar, Ali, and Zaki (2016) expressed that employees who meet goals desire achievement. Vroom developed the expectancy theory to support employee motivation to increase job performance. Baakeel (2018) identified three perceptions that affect Vroom’s expectancy theory: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Vroom (1964) also explained that efforts, motivation, and performance are individual goals. Leaders must set clear goals and provide reasonable timelines to achieve the goals (Uher, 2018). Leaders who offer attractive compensations will further motivate employees to do well in the workplace (Mokhber, Tan, Vakilbashi, Zamil, & Basiruddin, 2016). Vroom's expectancy theory was not appropriate for this study because it focuses on individuals driving job performance rather than leaders engaging employees.

Another content theory that was worthy of consideration was the Porter and Lawler model. Porter and Lawler (1968) developed the integrated model of motivation that contains six elements, which are: effort, the value of a reward, effort-reward probability, performance, reward, and satisfaction. According to Delaney and Royal (2017), managers try to find ways to satisfy employees to increase productivity. Porter and Lawler added that job satisfaction is the result of the significance of remuneration. Additionally, Porter et al. (2016) explained how satisfying employees' efforts directly links to productivity, and rewards motivate employees to perform. Porter and Lawler's model was not appropriate because I am looking for broader strategies apart from rewards to engage or satisfy employees.

Using Herzberg's two-factor theory as the conceptual framework for this study may provide the opportunity to explore strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. Badubi (2017) acknowledged that Herzberg's two-factor theory is one of the prominent theories on motivation. Uher (2018) reported that leader motivation is an important and complicated topic because employee motivational needs are different from one individual to another. Herzberg's (1965) theory contains constructs used as incentives for employees. Retail leaders might consider using incentives as a motivation strategy to increase employee engagement.

Herzberg’s two-factor theory allows the opportunity to explore strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement by using hygiene and motivation factors. Badubi (2017) reported that Herzberg's two-factor theory identifies management approaches and working condition factors that are crucial to employee motivation. Fiaz, Su, and Saqib (2017) noted that employees are likely to produce in an organization where leaders are motivating. Uher (2018) found that researchers use the theory to explain the characteristics related to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction that are associated with productivity and motivation. Leaders who address hygiene and motivation factors could develop successful strategies to increase employee engagement.

Motivation

Motivating employees in the workplace may start with a positive organizational culture. An organizational culture that includes a positive and supportive environment is often a silent contributor to the success of a business (Baillien et al., 2016; Beakley, 2016). Leaders who help instill a positive and supportive environment may create a positive culture dynamic (Harwiki, 2016). Leaders may motivate employees through a positive culture affecting the organization.

Motivated employees may have a direct effect on organizations. Commitment of employees to organizations will enhance level of satisfaction leading to motivation and increased productivity (Menguc, Auh, Katsikeas, & Jung, 2016). Also, Baillien et al. (2016) found that motivation has a direct influence on improving the productivity of employees. Introduction of motivational strategies may help leaders in terms of greater efficiency and transparency and overall level of productivity in the workplace. Uher

(2018) acknowledged motivation in job satisfaction is vital for the achievement of organizational and personal goals. Motivation plays a vital role in employees' drive towards achieving organizational and personal goals. Leonardelli and Lloyd (2016) determined that motivation factors include fundamentals such as recognition, advancements, and achievement. Bryant (2018) reported that motivated employees directly affect overall performance and achievement of the organization. When the overall performance of the organization improves, employees may become an integral asset to the company and proactively participate in building a strong organizational culture.

The gap existing between employees' motivational needs and leaders' motivational efforts may be due to lack of communication. Employees' perceptions differ from those of leaders, which creates a disconnect (Kossek et al., 2018). Schuetz (2017) found that for a leader to be effective, it requires more than communication. Schuetz added that effective communication is a fundamental requirement proven to avoid creating more problems than solutions. Van De Voorde, Veld, and Van Veldhoven (2016) argued that strategies used to construct a productive workplace culture could seem counterintuitive. Van der Haar, Li, Segers, Jehn, and Van den Bossche (2014) acknowledged that decisions that seem to have been innovative ideas at one point in time could become very counterproductive. Leaders and employees who lack communication may create job dissatisfaction.

Lack of communication or motivation in the workplace may cause employees to experience job dissatisfaction. Reijseger et al. (2017) argued that employee motivation in the workplace is partly related to job satisfaction as well as job dissatisfaction. Van der Haar et al. (2014) noted that when having the ability to both identify and channel job dissatisfaction, leaders will encourage employees to perform better as employees. Khan, Rehman, and Ur-Rehman (2016) found that employees reach a state of complete satisfaction in a healthy work environment. Khan et al. also noted that lack of achievement in a person's life could cause dissatisfaction. Employees may experience job dissatisfaction due to lack of communication or motivating factors.

An additional motivating factor is money. In the context of work, Ozyilmaz, Erdogan, and Karaeminogullari (2017) described high paying salaries as being a motivator, however, if employees do not feel challenged or acknowledged, the employee may become unsatisfied with the job. Reijseger et al. (2017) acknowledge that once leaders reward employees with monetary incentives, other needs may surface. According to Maslow (1943), people always want more. As a result, individuals with unsatisfied needs, such as money, may lack motivation in the workplace.

Some researchers define basic human needs differently than others. According to Maslow (1943), a person's needs are the fundamentals of a human. Motivation is the intention behind much of human behavior (Reijseger et al., 2017). In Maslow's hierarchy needs for the workplace include health, safety, and comfort. Reeve and Lee (2018) also noted that basic needs include independence, the ability to relate to other people, and the ability to perform needed tasks. Safety needs follow psychological needs, which include whether the company is compliant with national and statewide labor laws and standards, as well as a clear job description that assures stability (Maslow, 1943). Safety factors may determine an employee's confidence in the job going forward. By meeting employees' basic needs, leaders may motivate employees.

Leaders may use motivational practices in the workplace to meet employees' psychological needs. Maslow (1943) reported that psychological needs are a sense of belonging and the ability to form friendships, followed by esteem needs, which are one's sense of accomplishment. According to Maslow, the most important requirement is self-actualization, which is when a person reaches their full potential and experiences self-actualization. In contrast, Owen (2018) believed that people need three types of essential needs, such as existence needs, relatedness needs, and growth needs, which share similarities to the requirements indicated by Reeve and Lee (2018). Unlike Maslow (1943), who stated motivation could only be created from the bottom upward by building upon the lowest and most basic needs, Owen (2018) argued that motivation could go both ways. Fiaz et al. (2017) reported that if a person's efforts to meet personal needs prove to be unsuccessful, then the person will return to the behavior that automatically satisfied simpler needs. It may be necessary for leaders to engage, motivate, and understand employees' needs to improve the workplace.

Motivation factors differ in multiple ways that may have fluctuating results in employee engagement. Herzberg (1965) reported that the content theories of motivation identify main categories of needs, determine human behavior, and establish relationships between a person's needs and behavior. Each person tends to look for ways to move closer toward self-actualization in all spheres of life, including work (Maslow, 1943). Opportunities for growth appear in the presence of growth factors or motivating achievements such as the recognition of accomplishments, the content of the work, the responsibility for the work results, and promotion opportunities (Mokhber et al., 2016). Mokhber et al. (2016) also noted that an essential part of the motivation is the incentive. Motivation factors implemented by leaders influence employees in multiple ways.

Leaders use various motivation strategies. Oliveira, Pascucci, and Fortin (2018) reported that one of the responsibilities associated with any leadership role is to ensure employees feel motivated for success. Nunes (2016) noted that motivated employees are likely to be productive, and productivity yields higher revenue. To motivate employees, leaders use myriad strategies, which include workplace motivation, promotional strategies, relationships with management and workplace environment, job satisfaction, and social expectations (Barbosa-McCoy, 2016; Oliveira et al., 2018; Porter et al., 2016). Barbosa-McCoy found that leaders used workplace motivation, job satisfaction, and social expectations to increase employee engagement. Kim and Gatling (2018) explained how leaders are successful in an organization by increasing employee engagement. Also, Mouzas (2016) found that leaders employed promotional strategies, management relationships, and workplace environments to increase employee engagement. Aside from these findings, there is insufficient contributing literature that explores the strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement.

Strategies

Researchers may explore strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement by research studies related to strategies used to increase employee engagement, workplace culture, communication, workplace productivity, leader encouragement, work habits, investment in employee's skills, and work-life balance. For example, Barbosa-McCoy (2016) and Leder, Newsham, Veitch, Mancini, and Charles (2016) suggested that management relationships, workplace motivation, job satisfaction, social expectation, and workplace environment are strategies leaders use to increase employee engagement. Successful strategies emphasized by leaders in the retail industry affects the productivity of the organization (Levasseur, 2017). Leaders could explore different strategies that may increase employee engagement, as it may determine the fate of the organization.

There are different strategies that can increase employee engagement in an organization. Thriving organizations have good leaders setting strategies to safeguard productivity (Beakley, 2016; Yaneva, 2018). For instance, Leder et al. (2016) found that leaders used promotion strategies to increase employee engagement. Promotion strategies to increase employee engagement might include bonus incentives, time off, position promotion, or increase in salary (Machumu, Zhu, & Almasi, 2018). Retail leaders could use promotional strategies in the workplace to increase employee engagement.

Another strategy leader could use to increase employee engagement is workplace motivation. Barbosa-McCoy's (2016) research concerning workplace motivation strategies leaders use to increase employee engagement was positive. Barbosa-McCoy performed a qualitative analysis, which involved the random selection of three hotel leaders in South Florida. Kostanek and Khoreva (2018) found that leaders who used workplace motivation to increase employee engagement were successful. Ozyilmaz et al. (2017) described workplace motivation as the readiness to apply extraordinary stages of organizational goals conditioned by the leader’s capability to placate employee needs. Retail leaders could use workplace motivation to increase employee engagement.

Another strategy that leaders could use to increase employee engagement is organizational communication in the workplace. Kostanek and Khoreva (2018) found that leaders used organizational communication to increase employee engagement. Lu, Lu, Gursoy, and Neale (2016) discovered that the absence of organizational communication affects productivity in the workplace. Beakley (2016) described organizational communication as internal communication between employees and leaders. Kostanek and Khoreva noted that when leaders communicated with employees, the employees felt of value to the organization and were more productive in the workplace. Retail leaders may use organizational communication as an effective strategy to increase employee engagement in the workplace.

Leaders may enforce several effective strategies in the workplace to increase employee engagement. Kossek et al. (2018) noted that many leaders struggle with establishing effective ways to enhance productivity. Schuetz (2017) also stated that providing leaders with effective strategies can contribute to increasing employee productivity. Kostanek and Khoreva (2018) argued that leaders should understand which strategy is most appropriate for the organization. Leaders may find that assessing effective strategies previously used may help increase employee engagement in the workplace.

Leaders continue to examine theories and look for creative ideas while assessing different strategies to determine the best solution for the organization. Mahmood, Uddin, and Fan (2019) noted that employees would continuously improve their learning skills if organization leaders continue to look for creative ideas, examine various theories, and assess different strategies. De Cooman, Vantilborgh, Bal, and Lub (2016) acknowledged the need for leaders to continue assessing different strategies to further contribute to the growth of the organization to stay competitive with the economy. Mokhber et al. (2016) argued that leaders should continue to change strategies to gain organizational success. Leaders may allow the organization to remain competitive by implementing different productive strategies, which may have an economic influence.

Leaders may implement productive strategies to make employees more proficient in the workplace while increasing competition of the organizations. Menguc et al. (2016) stated that in order for organizations to remain competitive and keep a reasonable cost, employees should be productive and proficient in the organization's products and services. Also, Lassiter, Bostain, and Lentz (2018) said that strategies such as content management and circulation frameworks could enhance the training procedures in the organization, making employees more proficient. Oliveira et al. (2018) also posited that leaders of the organization need to find strategies that will empower and train employees to make them more proficient. Leaders may experiment with different strategies that provide employees with relevant information to keep employees up to date with industry information. According to Yaneva (2018), organizations should provide employees with ongoing opportunities for professional development training. Yaneva also stated that professional development advances the proficiency of the employee and prepares the employee for a more proficient experience. In addition to productive strategies, leaders may also implement conventional strategies to make employees more proficient.

Conventional strategies leaders implement to keep employees productive may include work overload. Nielsen and Einarsen (2018) found that if employees have a substantial amount of work to accomplish, employees will not have unoccupied time. Researchers concluded that an increase in employee engagement results from conventional strategies implemented to keep employees active in the workplace (Belle, 2017; Yaneva, 2018). Leaders who implement conventional strategies in the workplace should caution work overload to ensure employees continue to enjoy the working environment.

A positive work environment may increase employee engagement. Belle (2017) noted that employees enjoy working in positive work environments. Yaneva (2018) also noted that employees who display enthusiasm in the workplace increase employee engagement. Employees who are enthusiastic in a positive work environment may increase productivity. According to Belle, there are four ways leaders can contribute to increasing employee productivity finding ways to improve morale, putting incentives in place to increase retention and reduce turnover rates, showing loyalty and teaching employees the meaning of trust, and remaining consistent and positive. The results of increased employee productivity have a positive effect, making the organization more successful (Belle, 2017). Haddad and Taleb (2016) also noted that employees would want to work in positive workplace culture once an organization gains the confidence of its employees. Leaders who work in a positive environment while increasing productivity may encourage employees to establish goals to increase job opportunities in the organization.

Personal goals established by employees to increase productivity may increase job opportunities in the organization. Ozyilmaz et al. (2017) stated that employees who primarily set personal work goals perform well in the organization. Belle (2017) also noted that employees had gone as far as career investing by pursuing additional training and obtaining additional degrees to increase job opportunities in the organization. Schuetz (2017) emphasized how an employee’s desire to excel can become expensive but is well worth the investment to achieve greatness. Leaders may implement a productive workplace culture by supporting employees’ goals while increasing job opportunities within the organization.

Culture. There may be several contributing motivation strategies that contribute to productive workplace culture. Schuetz (2017) noted that productive workplace culture is something that leaders can force on employees. Harwiki (2016) argued that a productive workplace culture increases productivity from the traits and values reinforced by leaders of an organization. Leaders may learn how to produce a productive workplace culture through the innovation of motivation. Haddad and Taleb (2016) also noted that leaders who; demonstrate a positive culture, are encouraging, are humble, are inclusive, and encourage staff to speak up and ask for help, increased productivity from employees. Leaders might consider implementing motivational and positive strategies to establish a productive workplace culture.

Leaders who develop a productive workplace culture may consider the organization’s working conditions and the well-being of the employees. Holtermann, Mathiassen, and Straker (2018) implied that not only the presence of a productive physical environment of an organization should exist, such as proper workstations, but also encompass the need to treat employees with dignity and respect. Respect in the workplace may influence the daily productivity of employees. Owen (2018) argued that leaders who practice good work habits are influential in creating a productive workplace culture. Buhai, Cottini, and Westergaard-Nielsen (2017) stated leaders in an organization who motivate employees, engage with employees, display good decent work habits, and place the right employee in the right position contribute to positive and productive workplace culture. Therefore, a positive workplace may exist for a multitude of reasons.

A positive workplace culture from leaders who foster a positive workplace might motivate employees to perform their best daily. Buhai et al. (2017) acknowledged that leaders who encourage employees genuinely are pleasant to be around. Barber, Conlin, and Santuzzi (2019) noted that a positive workplace culture raises the morale, increases productivity, increases efficiency, and increases retention of employees. For example, wearing a funny hat to work might create a good topic of conversation for the day while allowing employees to witness the leaderships’ lighter side. Schuetz (2017) argued that encouraged employees are much more likely to stay with the company longer, provide high-quality service, promote the organization in the community, and contribute more to the success of the organization. Leaders who foster a productive and positive workplace culture may provide numerous benefits to the organization.

Understanding significant principles may create a healthy and positive workplace culture. According to Harwiki (2016), the principles include: caring for and being respectful toward colleagues; supporting each other and being kind and compassionate; forgiving mistakes and avoiding blame; inspiring each other at work; highlighting the significance of the work; and treating each other with respect, integrity, trust, and gratitude. Positive actions displayed by leaders could facilitate an environment that promotes success. Yaneva (2018) noted that leaders might have a significant influence by treating employees with respect and encouraging employees to vocalize opinions without fear of humiliation, betrayal, or mockery. Haddad and Taleb (2016) suggested that when leaders in higher positions are not empathic, negative feelings and behaviors toward employees can cause a hectic workplace and a disgruntled environment. For employees to produce, leaders may consider implementing strategies to support a positive workplace culture.

Positive workplace culture is good in the workplace. McKeown, Fortune, and Dupuis (2016) reported that leaders should demonstrate compassion toward employees by fostering a positive workplace culture, implementing resilience in challenging times. According to Goyal and Gupta (2016), leaders in the retail industry promote a positive work environment for employees to feel comfortable in the workplace. Yaneva (2018) added that leaders who are self-sacrificing and fair inspire employees to commit to the organization. Leaders may build trust in the workplace to create a positive workplace culture; however, a mixture of cultures in the organization may also play a factor.

A careful mixture of culture and proper leadership are a couple of benefits employees may see in an organization. McKeown et al. (2016) noted that a culture of fear mixed with a cutthroat environment could sometimes cause employee disengagement and low productivity. Harwiki (2016) argued that disengaged employees could become absent regularly, cause an accident, and be less productive. Allam (2017) stated that employees in cutthroat and high-stress cultures tend to show behaviors related to lack of motivation and not want to increase productivity. Organizations that have high pressure and a cutthroat culture may not be as successful as organizations that support the opposite. Han, Seo, Yoon, and Yoon (2016) discovered that researchers of organizational psychology acknowledged that high-stress culture environments are harmful to productivity over time, but those positive environments will lead to increased revenue and dramatic benefits for the employees. In organizations where the employees' productivity is low, leaders might consider researching other cultural dynamics.

Leaders of organizations around the world with diverse cultures may empower employees to be more productive and valuable to the organization. Buhai et al. (2017) stated that an organization with a diverse culture has leaders that care for the workers. McKeown et al. (2016) noted that organizations that lack diverse cultures have an issue with retaining employees with prime talent. Harwiki (2016) argued that as organizations expand, leaders face challenges retaining talented employees while maintaining a diverse culture. Leaders in a diverse cultural environment might consider seeking positive outcomes in the workplace and infuses passion in the employees of the organization. The lack of loyalty in a diverse culture is likely to have an effect on the overall workplace culture.

The lack of loyalty in the workplace can cause a culture setback. The lack of trust in the workplace has shown an increase in voluntary turnover (Harwiki, 2016; Lu et al., 2016). Awi, Salahuddin, Baharuddin, and Shafee (2018, July) acknowledged that employees who experienced a lack of loyalty in the workplace declined promotions or quit the organization. Employees may consider resigning from a position because of the lack of loyalty from leaders. The cost associated with recruitment, training, lost expertise, and lowered productivity is significant (Haddad & Taleb, 2016). Lu et al. (2016) suggested that instead of using valuable resources toward improving or expanding divisions of the business, leaders should allocate funds to replace employees. Harwiki (2016) added that the cost to make up the expenses associated with advertising, recruiting, interviewing, recruiting, training, and loss of productivity from departed employees are high. Leaders may also want to consider how to reduce turnover costs. The Center for American Progress researchers estimated that replacing an employee costs 20% of that employee’s salary (Harwiki, 2016). Lu et al. also stated that in addition to cost, the lack of communication is an intangible downfall associated with employee turnover. Positive communication in the workplace may come from leaders who remain loyal, resilient and motivated in the organization.

Communication. Leaders with positive communication in the workplace may help maintain a strong organization. Buhai et al. 2017 noted that leaders prefer the use of face-to-face communication, particularly in workplaces, where employees have constant interaction with consumers. According to Woods (2016), without positive communication in the workplace, there would be no productivity. Leaders should understand that building a positive workplace through communication takes time (Rosemberg & Li, 2018). Employees may desire other communication techniques. Darics (2017) stated that leaders should also use visual communication methods, such as eye contact or facial expressions, while communicating with employees. The awareness of visual communication throughout the organization allows employees to receive information from leaders in a positive manner (Darics, 2017). Leaders who foster a strong organization focused on communications might also consider implementing other strategies employees can use to better communicate with customers.

Leaders who implement communication strategies may empower employees to provide effective feedback to increase productivity. Pearlman-Avnion and Zibenberg (2018) acknowledged that leaders who implement positive communication in the workplace allow employees to feel understood and valued. Also, Pearson (2017) noted that leaders who facilitate effective communication strategies could address concerns before becoming exacerbated. Effective communications also contribute to higher productivity of employees when leaders can provide proper instructions in a timely and efficient manner (Domingues, Vieira, & Agnihotri, 2017). Other than empowering employees to increase productivity, leaders may use communication to provide guidance.

Leaders could be responsible for communicating guidelines for the workplace. Woods (2016) stated that communication entails the dictation from leaders regarding rules and procedures, the assessment of progress, and the knowledge of products or services to consumers. Leaders establish a communication environment that enables employees to provide feedback and address consumer concerns regarding the product or services within the workplace (Schuetz, 2017). Barr and Michailidou (2017) noted that communication is imperative for the ongoing operations and guidance of an organization. Blanz (2017) discussed that leaders must be transparent in communication specific to guidance and policies affecting employees in the workplace. Employees' trust factor might rise if leaders establish a positive communication environment in the workplace.

Leaders may establish trust in the workplace through communication. Woods (2016) noted that communication in the workplace is a simple exchange of information between two people. Ozmen (2018) also stated that when there is open communication between a leader and employees in the workplace, the employees feel the leader's information is reliable and trustworthy. Lu et al. (2016) added that employees are likely not to challenge information provided once leaders establish trust in the workplace. When there is a lack of communication in the workplace among leaders and employees, there may be a break in trust.

By establishing trust while collecting employees' feedback through communication, leaders could further work on finding ways to increase employee engagement. Charness (2019) acknowledged that communication is only effective when employees understand the leader's intent. Ozmen (2018) added that leaders who properly guide employees could assume the communication is effective if there is an increase in employee engagement. Hanaysha (2016) noted that when leaders fail to communicate, the employee is not successful. Leaders might reward employees for increasing productivity.

Productivity. Leaders in the retail industry may explore the relationship between employee engagement and various outcomes such customer satisfactions and productivity. Hanaysha (2016) argued that leaders can increase productivity by keeping employees engaged and motivated. Goyal and Gupta (2016) stated that poor levels of employee engagement could negatively affect productivity. Employee interactions have a substantial influence on customer satisfaction in the retail industry (Kumbhat, 2019). Retail leaders might consider focusing more on employee engagement to increase productivity in the workplace.

Employees are likely to become more engaged when rewarded. Sauermann (2016) noted that when leaders are giving employees constructive criticism, leaders should add rewards for a job well done. Heidary Dahooie, Ghezel Arsalan, and Zolghadr Shojai (2018) found that employee engagement increased when rewarded and informed on ways to improve in the workplace. Schuetz (2017) discussed offering personal incentives to employees is another form of rewarding that can increase employee engagement. A leader might consider offering time off or a recognition plaque to employees for going beyond to increase productivity. More perspectives to increase employee engagement in the workplace might include identifying factors that decrease productivity.

Leaders might consider identifying factors that could potentially decrease productivity by implementing procedures that may prevent a reduction. Heidary Dahooie et al. (2018) acknowledged that many factors contribute to a decrease in productivity. Burke and Esen (2005) conducted a that included a random selection of 613 employees from more than 180,000 members of the Society for Human Resource Management to understand more about factors that affect productivity. Leaders may want to consider each factor to avoid a decrease in productivity. Burke and Esen reported that:

- 58% of employees believe that poor leadership negatively affects the workplace.
- 38% of employees lack the motivation attributed to the work itself.
- 26% of employees lack productivity caused by changes in the organization.
- 24% of employees acknowledge the lack of clear objection.
- 16% of employees lack productivity in preparedness to leave the organization.
- 13% of employees fail to remain productive because of a lack of responsibility.
- 16% of employees do not produce because of pressure from leaders when there is no task to complete.

Lu et al. (2016) reported employees frowned upon having to complete a task for another colleague, negative feedback, interaction with disgruntled consumers, a lack of recognition for accomplishments, and unvarying tasks. Leaders may avoid a decline in productivity from negative factors through encouragement.

Leader encouragement. Leaders who encourage networking in the workplace may see an increase in employee engagement. Lu et al. (2016) reported that collaboration between different employees in the workplace results in the opportunity to propose innovative ideas. Mills, Keller, Chilcutt, and Nelson (2019) noted that leaders should streamline different strategies through collaboration, secure networking, and coordination between employees. Mills et al. also stated that leaders are encouraging and enhancing the productivity of employees by streamlining different strategies. Leaders may consider implementing different strategies for each employee. Rosemberg and Li (2018) also added that leaders who implement network techniques encourage the integration of various employees who interact or see one another daily. Networking and socializing in the workplace may encourage employees to become more productive.

Leaders may encourage employees to socialize in the workplace. Lu et al. (2016) reported that social interaction in the workplace is essential to the employee's well-being. Harwiki (2016) added a genuinely compelling organization is one that has leaders who create social endeavors around the driven success of its employees. Similarly, Rosemberg and Li (2018) stated that a productive workplace is one where leaders encourage employees to socialize and be natural. An increase in productivity may result from socialization.

Employees may increase productivity when encouraged by leaders. Schuetz (2017) stated that when leaders are encouraging, and employees can talk openly, productivity increases in the workplace. Also, Heidary Dahooie et al. (2018) noted that encouraging an employee to complete a task and praising the employee once the task is complete will increase productivity. Leaders may supply consistent encouragement in the workplace that allows employees the opportunity to supply input on the higher cognitive processes in areas that influence the organization. Heidary Dahooie et al. suggested the leaders motivate employees to work harder to receive rewards, and in return, employees are likely to increase productivity. Schuetz found that leaders should make employees feel accomplished in the workplace, which adds value to the organization. Employees may embrace the opportunities encouraged by leaders through an increase in productivity within the organization. Blanz (2017) reported that if productivity in the workplace starts to decline, leaders should find other encouraging and effective techniques to motivate employees. Encouraging employees in the workplace to increase productivity may create a positive workplace.

Leader encouragement may simplify a productive and positive workplace. Mahmood et al. (2019) stated that leaders must ensure there are opportunities for employees to offer input on decision-making that affects the daily operations of the organization. Also, Holtermann et al. (2018) noted that employees feel empowered when leaders encourage and provide opportunities to excel in the organization. Schuetz (2017) explained how leaders could encourage employees through compliments for a job well done and through motivation. Leaders may show a positive effect in the workplace as a motivator while encouraging employees to produce more. If employees' productivity starts to decline from lack of motivation, leaders may consider encouraging smarter work habits.

Work habits. The work habits of employees in the workplace can contribute to the overall level of productivity. Heidary Dahooie et al. (2018) recognized that when leaders assign the workload, resources should be available for employees to be productive. Leaders must take decisive actions to allow employees the opportunity to succeed (Beakley, 2016). Fiaz et al. (2017) noted that employees in the retail industry should have the necessary resources to manage and solve customer inquiries on time. To ensure employees have the right resources, leaders might consider having a weekly meeting implemented as an established work habit.

Weekly meetings by leaders might show an increase in productivity in the workplace if the information is beneficial to the employees and the organization. Heidary Dahooie et al. (2018) noted that leaders use meetings to discuss employees' roles and to delegate any requirements not addressed in the earlier meetings. According to Saratun (2016), there are more than 11 million meetings held in the United States every day. Harwiki (2016) argued that employees perceive meetings as an interruption, inconvenient, a disservice to the workday, and others with heavier workloads suffer because of the meeting's time requirements. Employees may consider meetings helpful if the information can increase productivity. Heidary Dahooie et al. argued that leaders have meetings to collaborate and discuss productivity. In large organizations, leaders spend 75% of the meeting giving employees suggestions on ways to increase productivity (Saratun, 2016). Leaders who inform employees using a genuine approach are creating good work habits.

Good leaders could be the reason for good work habits. Kossek et al. (2018) acknowledged that good work habits come from the top of the organization, also known as a top-down method. In addition, Buhai et al. (2017) noted that the example set forth by leaders encourages employees to follow by example. Holtermann et al. (2018) explained the production expectations in the workplace are evident throughout the organization and that leaders should set the example by sharing employees' workload. The share of workload between leaders and employees could increase productivity. A leader must distribute and delegate down to the lowest level, the proper workload to the employee (Stephens, 2017). In addition to delegating the workload, leaders could show a good work habit by being present during the hiring phase.

The presence of a leader during the hiring phase could ensure that human resources hire the right employee for the right position. Hassard, Teoh, Visockaite, Dewe, and Cox (2018) recommended that leaders place the right employee in the right positions to increase productivity. Mahmood et al. (2019) argued that determining the right employee for the position begins during the hiring process. By joining the interview process, leaders can identify strengths and knowledge the potential employee has, contributing to a good work habit (Kossek et al., 2018). Organizational leaders involved in the hiring process to select employees with certain strengths may also help leaders create a good work habit.

Leaders in the workplace should strive to maintain good work habits. Holtermann et al. (2018) suggested encouraging employees to work smarter, not harder, to ensure employees will accomplish more while remaining positive. Mahmood et al. (2019) further suggested that another good work habit is for leaders to teach employees how to handle negativity in the workplace. Leaders may deal with an employee’s negative emotions daily. Pearson (2017) stated that if leaders do not address negative emotions, the organization could potentially become an uncomfortable work environment. Holtermann et al. recommended evaluating employees’ performance expectations for a clearer understanding of day-to-day requirements. Leaders may implement giving encouragement and ongoing feedback regarding the employees’ performance while setting goals and offering rewards when met. The lack of good work habits in the workplace from negative emotions may also affect productivity.

Leaders might consider addressing negative emotions in the workplace to avoid a decrease in productivity and creating a careless work habit. Hassard et al. (2018) noted that negative emotions in the workplace could provoke employees to react inappropriately to consumers. According to Alsharo, Gregg, and Ramirez (2017) and Pearson (2017), leaders must acknowledge employees who express negative emotions to avoid putting employees in positions that could contribute to productivity. Nanquil (2019) argued that leaders must pay close attention to employee's skills and emotional triggers daily. Leaders who implement good work habits might consider investing in ways to enhance employees' skills.

Investing in employee skills. Enhancing employee skills may increase productivity. Nunes (2016) reported that leaders struggle with creating a productive workplace and should find ways of enhancing the skills of employees in the organization. As well, Alsharo et al. (2017) stated that leaders are responsible for providing ongoing training to employees. Carlson, Carlson, Hunter, Vaughn, and George (2017) discussed how leaders who implement training to ensure employees are aware of the different technologies, advancements, and innovations taking place in the organization. Employees who receive proper training may produce more in the workplace. Schuetz (2017) expressed that leaders who incorporate multiple learning techniques to motivate employees to learn would see a rise in productivity. Leaders may also consider enhancing employee skills to increase productivity.

Productivity in the workplace might arise when employees have good social skills. Having good social skills has become a priority to leaders in the workplace because it affects customer satisfaction (Neira, 2019). Holtermann et al. (2018) noted that leaders should consider placing the right employee with good social skills in positions where the majority of the interaction is customer based. Buhai et al. (2017) noted that employees in customer service positions should have the traits of a people person. The first impression of the employee may determine if the customer decides to make a purchase. Employees should practice great social skills in the workplace to avoid a loss in revenue for the organization (Neira, 2019). Another skill that leaders may ensure employees have is patience.

Employees who deal with customers daily may need to work on the skill of patience. Rosemberg and Li (2018) acknowledged that employees who interact with customers struggle with patience. Employees must remember that working in customer service is not easy (Clark, 2017). Harwiki (2016) noted that patience is important when dealing with frustrated and irate customers. When employees show patience and support in an already frustrating situation, it could allow the customer to feel important. Rosemberg and Li expressed that employees who have patience understand the addictive nature of irritation, outrage, and anger. Employees who work in the customer service industry may meet an irate customer. Patience may be a way to manage a frustrated customer.

Another skill that leaders may want to address is adaptability. Lu et al. (2016) noted that organizations are constantly changing, as the markets remain unpredictable.

Clark (2017) stated that leaders are responsible for ensuring that employees have the right skill to adapt to organizational changes. Cortes and Salvatori (2019) argued that when changes happen in the workplace, employees should be ready to adapt to all guidance from leaders. Employees who deal with customers might understand that customer service is a continuous learning process. According to Clark (2017), an organization with employees who have adaptable skills can be immortal and transferable, increase workplace productivity, motivate other employees to work on becoming adaptable, and express the willingness to want to learn. Other researchers reported that employees who can adapt to change, collaborate well with customers (Cortes & Salvatori, 2019; Lu et al., 2016). Employees should also remain adaptable when dealing with personal life encounters.

Work-life balance. Leaders of an organization should pay close attention to unproductive employees who might have some personal life issues. Lim and Misra (2019) argued that employees who do not produce might struggle with work-life balance. Harwiki (2016) acknowledged that employees take pride in being able to maintain a job while being a spouse, a parent, and having a social life. People who work nonstop and dedicate time to work may be good employees. According to Barber et al. (2019), there is the perception that work-life balance indicates a fulfillment in one’s personal and professional life. If employees’ lives are satisfying and productive in the workplace, there may be no need to portray a false balance. Barber et al. stated that when an employee shifts the focus from work-life balance because of a new position in the organization, leaders are at risk of a decrease in productivity. Leaders might consider some amenities to help with work-life balance to best support employees' productivity.

Common amenities associated with work-life balance may include additional benefits offered by the organization. The benefits could include childcare, paid parental leave, assistance with adoption, time off and temporary leave, education assistance, health insurance, and flexible work hours such as telecommuting and job-sharing (Barber et al., 2019). Each benefit may vary according to the nature of the job. Toffoletti and Starr (2016) reported that working mothers often struggle with work-life balance when dealing with children. Sorensen (2017) expressed that working mothers often look for work in organizations that provide benefits such as childcare. Organizations with added benefits that contribute to work-life balance for employees might have an increase in productivity.

Another benefit that leaders may offer to contribute to a work-life balance is a healthy work environment. Segal (2018) conducted a study that confirmed that healthier employees are happier and more productive. Leaders might want to encourage a healthy environment, such as encouraging employees to eat healthily, all while practicing a healthy lifestyle. Harwiki (2016) suggested that leaders enforce a healthy environment by supporting the local fitness club or offering free membership to top-performing employees. Harwiki also recommended that leaders strive to make healthier meals and snacks readily available to employees. According to Owen (2018), leaders are vital when it comes to enforcing specific values, ideals, and morals in the workplace. Benefits offered by leaders in the retail industry could potentially affect productivity.

Productivity in the Retail Industry

The role of leadership may be subjective when it comes to providing retail employees with a productive environment. Beakley (2016) noted that the relationship consists of sharing common goals and objectives between leaders and employees. Fiaz et al. (2017) added that in the retail industry, a leader should incorporate employees during the decision-making process to meet objectivities. Qabool and Jalees (2017) added in large-scale organizations, employees, and leaders alike should share similar views when it comes to devising goals, and the strategies required to fulfill those goals. Understanding the strategies and goals implemented by leaders might affect retail productivity if the employees do not agree.

Leaders in the retail industry may have to work with young adults who view things from a different aspect. Grewal, Roggeveen, and Nordfält (2017) stated that 23% of retail employees are between the ages of 16 to 24. Hanaysha (2016) further expressed that leaders should be aware that retail employees within the 16 to 24 age range may not express the drive or desire to remain productive in the workplace. Blitz (2016) encouraged leaders to set clear obligations and requirements for all employees, regardless of age. Leaders may want to ensure that employees are aware of requirements and expectations when work is moderate. In addition, leaders might consider setting standards to ensure employees remain productive throughout the day.

The level of productivity in retail organizations might increase if leaders implement successful strategies. Understanding which strategies leaders should enforce may increase employee engagement. Despite a considerable number of studies on the subject, retail leaders have a challenging time finding effective strategies to increase employee engagement.

Transition and Summary

Section 1 of the study included separate discussions introducing the study. The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore the strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. The main research question allowed me to seek the strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. The main topics within the literature review were Herzberg's two-factor theory as the conceptual framework, motivation, strategies, and productivity in the retail industry. The subsection topics included culture, leader’s engagement, work habits, investing in employee skills, and work-life balance. The prior researchers stressed the importance of strategies that retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. Other researchers noted the facets that affect employees’ engagement, whether internal or external to the organization, or intrinsic to the individual employee. The conclusions of the literature review indicated a need for further study of strategies to improve employee engagement.

Section 2 contains information specific to this study. Included is the purpose statement; the role of the researcher; retail leaders as participants; selection of a qualitative research method and multiple case study design; population and purposive sampling; ethical research; interviews as data collection instruments, techniques, and organization methods; NVivo 12 data analysis techniques; and reliability and validity. Section 3 will provide an overview of the research methods designed for the qualitative case study. This section will also include a finding of the study results.

Section 2: The Project

In this qualitative multiple case study, I explored strategies used by five retail leaders in South Florida to increase employee engagement. The section begins with a reiteration of the purpose of the case study. Subsections contain detailed information about the role of the researcher during the data collection process and the ethical principles and guidelines of the Belmont Report. Also included is an explanation of the participants, the purpose of using a qualitative multiple case study design, ethical issues, outlines of the data collection and analysis process, and how I addressed the reliability and validity of the study. Research findings might influence leaders to implement some of the motivation strategies to improve employee productivity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. The target population includes five retail leaders who experienced an increase in employee engagement. The social change implications are that engaged employees are more likely to participate in activities in the surrounding communities, such as community service initiatives. If a leader increases revenue, there is the potential for donations, community service, or added contributions to companies surrounding the community.

Role of the Researcher

As a researcher, I was the primary research instrument. The researcher is the primary instrument for collecting data and interpreting the results from analysis (Masny, 2016; Miracle, 2016). The researcher’s role is to find participants and collect, interpret, and organize data (Yin, 2016). I created a list of questions to guide the interview process, allowing for the use of open-ended questions to encourage in-depth descriptions. I did not interrupt the participants and recorded responses to each question.

I have a connection to this study that is both experience- and location-based. My experience-based connection is that I have served in the same job for more than 8 years, with more than 19 years of experience in the customer service industry, and I am familiar with how employees can affect the performance and standing of a business. My connection to the research location is that I have been a resident of South Florida for 2 years and familiar with the region. I chose to study employee engagement in the retail industry based in South Florida.

To ensure ethical conduct, I followed the Belmont Report protocol by protecting and showing respect to all participants. The Belmont Report is a resource that includes requirements for research that involves people (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). The three essential components of the Belmont Report are respect, beneficence, and justice (Miracle, 2016). To fulfill the three components of the Belmont Report, I provided participants with explanations of rights regarding the study and requested consent before participating via informed consent forms. Rights included participants’ ability to cease involvement as desired, without reason. I encouraged participants to vocalize any feelings of discomfort. It was essential that participants felt comfortable and respected throughout the interview process. I treated each participant with care, consideration, and respect, and acknowledged their willingness to participate in this study.

To reduce viewing data through a personal lens, I carefully selected participants, recorded interviews, and used member checking. To remain nonbiased, I did not interview individuals with whom I had established a relationship before conducting the study. Interviews were recorded using two recording devices, and participants were asked to provide both verbal and written consent via the informed consent form for the recording process before commencing the interview. The recording device was only heard by me and used for transcription purposes. I used my iPhone X1 voice recorder and a Sony voice recorder as a backup for recording to transcribe each participant's responses accurately. Participants participated in the member checking process. Researchers use member checking to allow participants the opportunity to validate the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations of the interview (Thomas, 2017). Member checking helped to eliminate my personal biases, which could have otherwise affected the integrity of the study.

As the main instrument in this study, I avoided interfering with participants' expressions of honest thoughts, ideas, and recollections. The goal is to have participants explain in detail past experiences by responding to open-ended questions, which called for comprehensive answers instead of *yes* or *no* responses (Yeong, Ismail, Ismail, & Hamzah, 2018). The open-ended questions structured in this study were to circumvent the potential for non-descriptive answers.

Researchers may establish trust by using an interview protocol with participants. Yin (2016) acknowledged that following an interview protocol is significant to ensure the researcher captured data associated with the research question. Bengtsson (2016) explained how researchers should process the data through data coding to diminish bias and check for reliability, accuracy, and effective conclusions. I created a coding system to keep each participant's information segregated and confidential. Booth (2016) stated that researchers who use semi-structured interviews gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences. It is important to follow the interview protocol to ensure that the exact interview protocol is followed with each participant (Yin, 2016). I used the interview protocol (see Appendix A) as a guide during the semi-structured interviews to collect data regarding strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement.

Participants

Retail leaders who used successful strategies to increase employee engagement were invited to participate in the study. All participants were over 18 years old, worked in South Florida, and had access to documentation regarding strategies used to increase employee engagement. Researchers can select and reach out to specific individuals to partake in the study who meet eligibility criteria (Hu & Qin, 2018). Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2014) and Yin (2018) acknowledged that people who agree to participate should have the essential experience to address the study phenomenon. Participants agreed to be interviewed and audio recorded and explain their experiences regarding strategies used to increase employee engagement.

To gain access to qualified and experienced participants, I conducted a search using the public mall database of department stores in Tampa, Florida, to find management contact information for participants. If store managers could not participate without approval from general managers, I requested additional contact information to seek approval for participation in the study. I did not contact any participant until I received approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) 05-11-20-0527692. Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2014) noted that researchers should ensure potential participants are aware of the nature of the research during initial contact. The amount of information the participant can provide will assist researchers with the overall research (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Wilson, 2016). Once I contacted leaders via the mall database, I assessed the eligibility criteria for participation. I worked to build a relationship with the senior leaders of the retail stores. Once the senior retail leader acknowledged my research, I emailed the consent form to participants for review and requested to respond with their consent. Once I received the consent emails, I moved forward with the interview process. The interview process with participants consisted of face-to-face conversations. I created a contact list of leaders' names, job titles, email addresses, and phone numbers. Access to participants was vital to validate data and the collection of information about strategies used to increase employee engagement.

I used multiple strategies to establish a working relationship with participants. Once I identified the participants for this study, I continued to remain in contact with each participant through email, telephone, and in person. Researchers need to remain in continuous contact with study participants (Heath, Williamson, Williams, & Harcourt, 2018; Lancaster, 2017). I allowed the participant to select a convenient time and location for the interview, recommending a private manager's office or mall conference room. Enosh and Ben-Ari (2016) noted that to build a strong relationship between the researcher and participant, researchers must show interest in the participants' experiences. Other strategies that I used to establish a relationship consisted of ensuring the data provided by the participant remained confidential and restated how important the participant's participation helps retail leaders identify successful strategies to increase employee engagement.

Research Method

As a researcher, I chose to use a qualitative method in this study. A qualitative method was useful to explore participants' perspectives thoroughly by gathering data in a text or a narrative format (Abdalla, Oliveira, Azevedo, & Gonzalez, 2018; Makrakis & Kostoulos-Makrakis, 2016; Smith, 2018). I gathered data in a text format to explore strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement; therefore, a qualitative method was appropriate to gather the data. Fletcher (2016) suggested that the purpose of using a qualitative method is to understand the research subject better and to discuss any circumstances that might arise. Using a qualitative method allowed me to gather in-depth data and ask further questions that arose.

I did not use a quantitative research method. Participants are not required to mention specific details during the interview in quantitative research (Bikas et al., 2016). To better understand the strategies retail leaders used, I asked participants to provide detailed information during the interview process. Researchers use quantitative methods to collect numerical data (David, Hitchcock, Ragan, Brooks, & Starkey, 2016; Lubbers, Verdery, & Molina, 2018). I did not collect numerical or statistical data, but, rather, explored strategies, retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. The quantitative research method was not appropriate for the study.

I did not use mixed methods. Mixed methods research integrates both quantitative and qualitative features for research, and which researchers used most often when researching large sets of data (Smith, 2018). Researchers have found inconsistent data that does not support the study between the quantitative and qualitative methods by using mixed methods (Benoot, Hannes, & Bilsen, 2016; Lucero et al., 2018). Since I did not use the quantitative measurements nor interview a large pool of participants, the mixed methods were inappropriate for this study, and the qualitative method was selected.

Research Design

I considered various qualitative research designs, which included ethnography, phenomenology, narrative, and case studies. The qualitative designs of ethnography, phenomenology, or narrative studies were not suitable for this study. Researchers use ethnography to focus on a group over a protracted timeframe through interviews and basic observations (Joslin & Müller, 2016; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Woermann, 2018). I did not observe the leaders over a lengthy time. Researchers use phenomenology when exploring the meanings of participants' lived experiences, focusing on discovering the underlying structure of shared essences of some social phenomenon (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016; Yin, 2018). The focus in this study was not on participants' individual life experiences, but, rather, explored strategies retail leaders used by gaining an in-depth understanding. Researchers use a narrative research design when interested in the participants' spoken words or perspectives; the focus is typically on participants' lives told through personal stories (Makar, Ali, & Fry, 2018; Reijseger et al., 2017; Yang & Hsu, 2017). Because I did not focus on the participants' lives, a narrative research design was not appropriate for this study. For these reasons, I considered ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative research designs inappropriate for this study.

The qualitative case study design was most appropriate because I explored strategies retail leaders used from each participant's point-of-view. Researchers use case study designs to discover the *why* and *how* to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016; Yin, 2018). Case studies include information gathered from a face-to-face interview, such as body language or behaviors, and note-taking to gather data from the participants about their views and experiences (Hilgert, Kroh, & Richter, 2016; Hogan, Romaniuk, & Faulkner, 2016; Hu, Schaufeli, & Taris, 2016). I gathered data through face-to-face interviews and note-taking to explore strategies used by retail leaders. The case study design was appropriate for this study.

A case study was appropriate to explore the research question for the study. Yin (2016) explained how qualitative case studies are non-experimental, descriptive, and expressive. Researchers use case study designs to obtain data from real-life surroundings and to explore experiences to reach a clear understanding of a phenomenon (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Edwards & Brannelly, 2017). I chose a qualitative multiple case study to explore strategies retail leaders used to gain a clear understanding through the leaders' experiences of increasing employee engagement.

To ensure data saturation, I interviewed five retail leaders meeting the requirements until I found no new information or themes in data analysis. Data saturation occurs when data are no longer yielding discoveries or themes, which occurs when participants start to provide answers that have already been provided during the interviews (Goodell, Stage, & Cooke, 2016; Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2015; McGrath, Palmgren, & Lilijedahl, 2018). Data saturation will also continue during the sampling analysis, not just during the interview process (Malterud et al., 2015). To achieve data saturation, I continued to interview and analyzed the data collected until no new themes were found. Researchers use member checking to help with data saturation (Thomas, 2017). I used member checking to help achieve data saturation to ensure that no additional information was found.

Population and Sampling

The population for the study consisted of retail leaders in South Florida who used strategies to increase employee engagement. The sample size was five retail leaders from within the population. Researchers use sampling strategies in qualitative research to make inferences concerning a larger population (Marler & Boudreau, 2017). The population included participants who were over 18 years old, in a leadership role, and who had access to company documents such as employee handbooks, employee evaluation forms, productivity workbooks, and training tools regarding strategies and employee engagement. Benoot et al. (2016) defined purposeful sampling as a method for increased reliability and credibility of the sample size. Purposeful sampling may be beneficial because it allows researchers the ability to adjust the sampling method, if needed, throughout the process (Benoot et al., 2016; Tyrer & Heyman, 2016). I opted to use purposeful sampling to select participants who met the criteria.

I conducted interviews, member checking, and analyzed the data until I found no new evidence. Turner, Cardinal, and Burton (2017) stated that qualitative researchers use appropriate sample sizes to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon with enough information to reach data saturation. I conducted member checking as a way to identify data saturation by summarizing the responses from the participants. Researchers reach data saturation once there is no other information from the data collected (Malterud et al., 2015; McGrath et al., 2018). I ensured data saturation once I discovered no new or relevant information by continuing participant selection until no new information or themes developed during the interview process, member checking, and data analysis.

The criteria for the participants was specific to individuals who knew the strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. Rosenthal (2016) emphasized the importance of creating a list of criteria for selecting participants. Additionally, researchers should create vigorous eligibility criteria for participants to participate in the research study (O'Keeffe, Buytaert, Mijic, Brozović, & Sinha, 2016; Petrova, Dewing, & Camilleri, 2016). I selected retail leaders with knowledge of the strategies used to increase employee engagement by creating eligibility criteria for selecting participants.

I conducted all interviews in a relaxed and secluded area. Researchers noted that a researcher should conduct interviews in a relaxing, secluded setting to allow the participant to remain transparent during the interview process (Hu & Qin, 2018; Shapka, Domene, Khan, & Yang, 2016; Sharp, Dewar, Barrie, & Meyer, 2017). The participant chose the time and a secluded location through email or phone conversation. My objective was to ensure I answered all questions the participant had before meeting at the pre-determined location of choice for the interview process.

Ethical Research

I provided the participants with the informed consent form once I had approval from Walden University IRB 05-11-20-0527692 to ensure I conducted ethical practices during the research. An informed consent form was a form that participants signed or returned via email with the words *I consent* that signified the willingness to participate in the study. Researchers use consent forms to reach voluntary consent for an individual to participate in a research study (Artal & Rubenfeld, 2017; Friesen, Kearns, Redman, & Caplan, 2017; Hilgert et al., 2016). The informed consent form included background information, procedures, voluntary nature of the study, risk and benefits of being in the study, payment, privacy, contacts and questions, and statement of consent. The participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. To withdraw, a participant could have issued the request to me via email, phone call, text message, or letter. I would have then validated the request and remove the participant from the study. I did not reward or compensate participants for voluntary participation. I treated all participants with respect and did not mistreat any participant who chose not to participate.

I did not foresee an ethical risk to the participants of the study beyond the typical stress of normal daily life because the participants were adult leaders in the retail industry and not considered an at-risk population. Artal and Rubenfeld (2017) described how the IRB’s role is to make sure there are no ethical risks to the participants and that each participant is ethically protected, as noted in the Belmont Report. Ethical research is the researcher's responsibility and code of conduct required to ensure the respect and privacy of the participants (Artal & Rubenfeld, 2017; Miracle, 2016; Ossemane, Moon, Were, & Heitman, 2017). I used the informed consent form and adhered to the interview protocol guidelines as measurements to ensure the respect and ethical protection of the participants.

Before the interview process began, participants received, reviewed, and agreed to the informed consent form for the study. I confirmed again and ensured the participants were aware that participation in the study was voluntary and that the participant could withdraw at any time. The Walden IRB approval number for this study is 05-11-20-0527692 and expires on May 10, 2021. Walden University policy requires students to destroy all files after 5 years. I have stored the data securely for the next 5 years to protect the confidentiality of participants. I did assign aliases such as M1, M2, and so forth for leaders, and D01, D02 and so forth for company documents to ensure the participant's identities remain confidential. Researchers should not entice participants to participate because it is unethical and may lead to false data collection (Artal & Rubenfeld, 2017; Miracle, 2016). I did not entice participants to participate in the study. I conducted each interview at separate times, depending on the participants' schedules. The interview setting, determined by the participant, should protect the confidentiality of the participants (Bengtsson, 2016). I protected the confidentiality of each participant that was digitally recorded by coding the retail companies and participants using separate digital files to avoid compromising the data. In addition, I labeled each recording using the participant coding, starting with code M1 to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. Once I completed the labeling of each interview, I secured both the audio and hardcopy files in my home safe.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument and was responsible for collecting the data from participants. Yin (2016) explained how a researcher could be a source for collecting data in qualitative research. Semistructured interviews were the second data collection instrument. Rosenthal (2016) described how researchers could use semistructured interviews as a data collection instrument to permit participants to be flexible when describing experiences. Via interviews, participants can describe a subject matter or their perception of the subject matter through experiences in their own words (Rosenthal, 2016). The questions asked were semistructured, meaning that I used a frame for the interview questions, but asked follow-up questions that were unique to each participant. Denny and Weckesser (2019) described semistructured interviewing as a meeting where a researcher asks the participant open-ended questions to create a discussion. I also collected company documents from the participants, such as publically posted annual reports and strategic plans located on websites. Researchers use company documents to identify research themes (Bikas et al., 2016). By reviewing the company documents, I focused on the research question and ensured to collect extensive data to explore strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement.

I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix A). Researchers follow an interview protocol to ensure consistency, reliability, and validity of the interview questions (Venkatesh et al., 2016). Rosenthal (2016) explained how researchers should structure interviews in a way that flows and provides extensive detail. I adhered to the interview protocol, so the participants knew what to expect, felt comfortable, and provided me with as much detail as possible without distractions. The participants set the time and location of the interviews during the scheduling process. Once the participant and I arrived at the predetermined location, I received verbal confirmation from the participant verifying permission to use the two recording devices and that the participant was aware that I was recording the interview. As the primary data collection tool, I looked to receive thorough, accurate answers to the questions. One of the primary advantages of collecting data from interviews is the amount of data researchers can collect from the interview process (Lu et al., 2016; Roulston, 2017). Depending on the participants' responses, I asked follow-up questions that prompted further clarification or depth of data.

I enhanced the reliability and validity of the research through member checking and data triangulation. Researchers use participants' validation, or member checking, as a technique for enhancing the reliability of the results (Birt et al., 2016). Researchers use member checking as one of the more widely used validation techniques (Thomas, 2017). I conducted member checking by having the participants validate the summary of their responses through email. Cypress (2017) explained how researchers increase reliability and credibility when participants have a clear understanding of the process. Qualitative researchers employ member checking procedures to establish the reliability and credibility of the study.

I also enhanced the reliability and validity of the research through triangulation. Researchers expressed how triangulation enhances the credibility of the study (Amankwaa, 2016; Hadi & José Closs, 2016; Turner et al., 2017). I used the company documents to triangulate the data from the interviews. Researchers must continue to validate each document’s significance to identify the company documents that are relevant for the study (Kossek et al., 2018). The information I collected enhances the credibility of the study.

Data Collection Technique

The data collection techniques I used in the study were conducting semistructured interviews and acquiring company documents. Wilson (2016) stated that interviews are among the most common data collection tools used in qualitative studies. Researchers use interviews to collect detailed information about something that happened or is happening, according to people’s perspectives and experiences (O'Keeffe et al., 2016; Rosenthal, 2016). I used semistructured questions to obtain a precise amount of information for the study.

I asked participants to review the consent form and consent by responding, "I consent" to my invitation email (see Appendix B). I also asked participants to find a private location for us to connect via Zoom. I was in a secluded area during the data collection process to ensure privacy. The interviews occurred via a password protected Zoom teleconference, and each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes. I asked each participant the same set of questions in the same order. I informed each participant that I would take written notes and use a Sony voice recording device during the interview process. Miracle (2016) reiterated that researchers should receive a verbal and digital confirmation to record and transcribe the participants' interviews digitally. I emailed a summary of participants' responses for their review and validation during the member checking process.

To ensure validity and reliability, I used a software program, member checking, and methodological triangulation. I used NVivo 12 to compare the data collected from the interview recordings. Each participant approved a summary of my interpretation during the member checking process. To eliminate irrelevant data, I analyzed patterns against the interview data and public documents posted on the company websites.

To conduct the interview, I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix A). Researchers must ensure that participants are aware of the entire interview process to avoid a misunderstanding before participating in the study (Heath et al., 2018; Thomas, 2017; Yin, 2018). The interview process was to: enlighten the interviewee of the purpose of the study; ensure the interviewee signed the release form and assured confidentiality; each interview was labeled on the top of the page with the interviewee letter and number on it; all interview questions were asked in the same order; I took notes of the interviewee's responses; I let the participants know that once I transcribed the interview, participants would review a short summary of their responses; and I thanked the interviewee for participating.

After each interview, I recorded any concerns that I had in my reflexive journal. In my reflective journal, I took notes on the tone in how the participants responded. I noticed that the participants were higher pitched when discussing incentives. By annotating the participants' tones, I was able to determine employee incentives as a theme. The journal was a software device platform that had a virtual pen, Livescribe 3 smartpen, which simultaneously records audio as the user writes. I saved the final audio recordings as text files on the Noteshelf. The Livescribe 3 smartpen synthesized the writing and audio data that I collected. Recording during the interview process assists researchers with clarification when needed to provide triangulation (Clark & Vealé, 2018; Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018; Korstjens & Moser, 2017). I reviewed each text file for accuracy against the recordings for consistency.

Leaders may experience advantages and disadvantages to data collection techniques with interviewing. Bias can affect the data when researchers refer to personal notes (Clark & Vealé, 2018). When interviewing, leaders may still witness a chance for bias to influence the participants' responses (Thomas, 2017). For instance, if one of the participants had an unfavorable experience with a phenomenon, person, or subject matter, the participant may have a skewed perception. Even more demanding is the task of reviewing all the data collected. Because of the lengthiness of the analysis procedure, researchers used small-scale populations for data collection (Annink, 2017). Participants' responses were adequate.

Advantages and disadvantages also existed with data collection from analyzing company documents. Researchers can gain a better understanding of the topic by comparing and contrasting documents from the company (Bikas et al., 2016; Wilson, 2016; Yin, 2016). By reviewing the company documents, I was able to view the data from a different perspective than the interviews. No issues were encountered during the document collection process since I used public documents posted on the company websites. Not choosing the right quality documents to analyze could have compromised the reliability of the data.

Member checking happened after the interviews were complete. Researchers use member checking as a process that requires participants to read the researcher's summary to confirm the information or make changes (Birt et al., 2016; Thomas, 2017). Researchers take notes during each interview to assist with clarification when needed to provide triangulation (Clark & Vealé, 2018). I took notes during the participants' responses. After the interviews, I conducted member checking and referred to my notes for data accuracy.

Data Organization Technique

Data has been organized by participants and public company document codes and stored securely. I assigned aliases such as M1, M2, and so forth for leaders, and D01, D02 and so forth for company documents to ensure the participants' identities remain confidential. I conducted each interview via Zoom at the desired time requested by the participants in a secluded location. To avoid compromising the data, I protected the confidentiality of each participant that was digitally recorded by coding the retail companies and participants using separate digital files. I secured both the audio and hardcopy files in my home safe. Once five years have elapsed, I will properly destroy the hard copy files by using a cross shredder and disposing of the digital records in a burn pit.

Data Analysis

I used methodological triangulation and thematic analysis to analyze the data for the case study. Researchers use methodological triangulation to compare company documents to transcribed interview data collected (Amankwaa, 2016; Clark & Vealé, 2018). I adhered to the six phases of thematic analysis, as stated by Braun and Clark (2006). Thematic analysis is a process that researchers conduct during qualitative studies that enable the researcher to distinguish themes or patterns during the research (Braun & Clark, 2006). The phases were as follows:

1. In phase 1, I became familiar with the data by frequently reading and rereading the transcripts, researcher notes, and company documents. According to Braun and Clark (2006), phase 1 of research is the most time consuming as researchers become immersed in the data. In the study, I read and reread the interview transcripts as part of the search for themes.
2. Phase 2 concerns the creation of codes, which refers to parts of the text that I found interesting. I also developed initial codes from the conceptual framework. Castleberry (2014) recommended using NVivo to identify critical themes by word frequencies that occur between numerous sources of data. I uploaded the transcripts into NVivo 12 to identify the data to analyze and to generate codes. Researchers group the initial codes with other relevant codes to form themes (Braun & Clark, 2006), which is the perfect segue into Phase 3, the generation of themes.

3. During phase 3, I reviewed the coded information. Braun and Clark (2006) acknowledged that during phase 3, researchers should create a list of various codes. I considered the association between the trends and patterns from the data collected.
4. After I finished creating the themes, I conducted another review of the themes during phase 4. I was precise and specific during the review. According to Braun and Clark (2006), during phase 4, researchers may wish to exchange one theme for another or eliminate any preconceived notions about existing themes. Braun and Clark (2006) stated that researchers should identify themes, sub-themes, and sub-sub themes that connect to the data before thematically analyzing the text. I created themes to categorize the data and refined the themes.
5. Phase 5, defining and naming themes, is where the researcher is more specific about the themes, ensuring the researcher accurately selected the appropriate themes for the research (Braun & Clark, 2006). I used the conceptual framework to categorize the research in ways that answered the research question.
6. Phase 6 consists of a researcher producing a written report, which is an account of identified themes and analyses about the research study (Braun & Clark, 2006). Braun and Clark (2006) described how researchers present the themes uncovered in the context of thematic analysis in the final written report. I described each theme in detail so that the reader can understand both the significance and relation to the purpose of the study. In section 3, I presented the findings from the thematic analysis.

In addition to the six steps, I used additional information for triangulation. Amankwaa (2016) explained that methodological triangulation includes synthesizing numerous sources of data. Joslin and Müller (2016) identified how researchers use methodological triangulation to collect and analyze data with two data collection techniques. I conducted methodological triangulation by comparing transcripts and company documents. Turner et al. (2017) reported that researchers use methodological triangulation to increase the reliability of research and to reduce the misapprehension of the data. I used the transcripts and company documents to triangulate the data.

Before the data analysis process, I performed member checking to ensure validity and reduce the potential for researcher bias. During the member checking process, each participant validated my summary of their responses as accurate, and no changes were requested. I did not ask any additional questions during the member checking process. To interpret the data collected from the five participants, I used NVivo 12 software. NVivo 12 is a qualitative software program used to organize data and themes (Castleberry, 2014; Woolf & Silver, 2017). I used the information gathered from NVivo 12 to help me understand the similarities and differences from the interview transcripts. McGrath et al. (2018) reported that researchers should analyze the data without allowing any opinions to cloud the judgment of the researcher and maintain a neutral perspective throughout the study. Throughout, I remained unbiased in the analysis of the results, which began with inviting the participants to member check the summary responses for accuracy.

I used primary themes related to the literature. Researchers use themes to understand similarities and differences in the answers to the interview questions

(McGrath et al., 2018). Researchers use data analysis strategies to correlate the themes to the conceptual framework (Braun & Clark, 2006; Yin, 2018). I correlated the primary themes found during the data analysis process of my conceptual framework and from participants' responses with new studies published since I started the process. The primary themes related to the literature were productivity, strategies, employee engagement, motivational strategies, effectiveness, and employee engagement.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

To provide dependability, I maintained a reflexive journal, conducted member checking, and provided information in the methodology about the step-by-step process of the study. Researchers use reflexive journals to understand and assess participants' responses (Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow, & Ponterotto, 2017). I kept a reflexive journal using Livescribe 3 in Noteshelf. The dependability process requires participants to check and confirm the data through member checking to ensure the assessments are accurate (Fusch et al., 2018; Moon, 2019). Fusch et al. (2018) expressed how member checking is important because it enables the participants to check a researcher's interpretation of the data provided by the participant for accuracy. I asked participants to partake in member checking to confirm the accuracy of the summarized interviews. Dependability refers to whether the study, if conducted over time, would yield the same results (Korstjens & Moser, 2017; Moon, 2019). I provided detailed information in the study to allow other researchers to follow the same steps.

Validity

To ensure credibility, I maintained a reflexive journal, used an interview protocol, and conducted member checking. Credibility is a particular characteristic or quality that researchers achieve through certain practices or processes (Fusch et al., 2018; Moon, 2019). I used the reflexive journal for interpretation and clarity of the data collected from the participants. Maintaining a reflexive journal required me to be honest and thorough in recording my thoughts or beliefs about the subject matter related to the study. It was important to follow an interview protocol to help ensure that the data collected are reliable (Yin, 2016). By using the interview protocol, I ensured the participants were subject to the same experience or as close to the same experience as possible. I also used the interview protocol as a guide to collect the participants' different responses to understand various perspectives. Researchers asked participants to partake in member checking to reduce the chance of researcher bias (Birt et al., 2016). I asked participants to conduct member checking for triangulation and to ensure the credibility of the study. Triangulation, or the use of various sources of data, can help ensure credibility concerning the information collected (Amankwaa, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2017; Moon, 2019). Through member checking and data triangulation, I strived to ensure credibility.

I attempted to ensure transferability to enhance the validity of the research findings. Transferability is the outcome of qualitative research from different participants through different studies (Birt et al., 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2017). If a researcher conducted the same study in a different location with different participants and the same results, the study would meet transferability (Korstjens & Moser, 2017; Moon, 2019). To ensure transferability, I collected and provided as much data as possible for future researchers to be able to follow the same steps in different research circumstances. Researchers who use qualitative methodology have noted that some studies are not transferable (Elo et al., 2014). For the study, the data may not be transferable to the general population.

I tried to ensure confirmability by providing the detailed steps I took to get to the conclusions so other researchers could follow the same procedures with the possibility of obtaining the same results. Confirmability is the extent to which other researchers can confirm the results of the present research (Korstjens & Moser, 2017; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2016). I ensured confirmability through the consistency of following the interview protocol for every interview. To confirm accuracy, I followed the detailed steps listed in the interview protocol.

I strived to ensure data saturation by collecting as much information as possible, starting with a population pool of five participants, but continuing to interview additional participants until no new information was forthcoming. Jit, Sharma, and Kawatra (2016) explained how researchers would continue to recruit and interview participants until participants share no new information. Researchers reach data saturation once no new information emerges from the data collected (Goodell et al., 2016; McGrath et al., 2018). I reached data saturation once I no longer discovered new data or themes.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of the qualitative, multiple case study was to explore the strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. Section 2 included: the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, the participants, and the research method and design selection. Additional subjects covered included the methodology of the study; the justification for the qualitative, multiple case study design; the population and sampling process; interviews and company archival documents as data collection instruments; open-ended questions as an interview technique, and reliability and validity. Section 3 includes information about the findings of the study, applications to professional practice, the implications of social change, recommendations for action and further research, reflection, and conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. Qabool and Jalees (2017) found that leaders assume all employees react to the same set of strategies when trying to increase employee engagement. I interviewed five retail leaders located in South Florida who experienced an increase in employee engagement through the use of successful strategies. The interview process allowed participants a chance to share strategies they used to increase employee engagement. Employees are more engaged when leaders implement strategies related to employee incentives, effective communication, and affirmation towards employees.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question in this study was: What strategies do retail leaders use to increase employee engagement? The three themes that arose from the data analysis were employee incentives, effective communication, and affirmation from leaders. During the analysis phase, I was able to identify patterns between each participant's responses. Once I was able to identify trends and group themes, I disregarded unrelated data from company documents and participant interviews.

Theme 1: Employee Incentives

Employee incentives was the first theme I identified from the comprehensive analysis of company documents and participants' responses regarding strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. M5 shared how applying numerous incentive options allowed employees to remain engaged in the workplace. M3 indicated that implementing new incentives should be a strategic process between leaders in the organization. Some leaders prefer to inspire their employees through creative incentives to increase employee engagement (Fleischman, Johnson, Walker, & Valentine, 2019). M1 explained how implementing incentives in the workplace led to increases in engagement and morale.

Leaders continue to provide traditional bonus incentives as a successful strategy to increase employee engagement. M4 said:

> We continue to look for ways to keep our employees engaged. Providing quarterly and end of the year bonuses for our top associates has proven to be a huge success throughout our company. I always notice an increase in employee engagement, especially towards the end of each bonus cycle.

These findings align with Ponta, Delfino, and Cainarca (2020). Ponta et al. acknowledged that employees are more engaged and anxious to meet quotas when a bonus is a motivating factor. M1 further noted that the organization offers employee bonuses based on their performance assessments. All participants disclosed that monetary incentives such as bonuses are essential to keeping employees engaged.

Another incentive noted by the participants was rewarding employees with time off. M4 expressed that employees were gratified when rewarded time off. Fleischman et al. (2019), acknowledged that leaders might create a greater work-life balance for employees by implementing effective strategies to keep employees engaged. M2 said:

> Rewarding my team with time off is great for business. I always notice that my employees are more engaged when they return from vacation or a day off. Therefore, I implemented the "time off" strategy as a reward for the sales associate of the month. Because the "time off" strategy has proven to our corporate office as successful, other branches have started to follow the concept.

M3 also reported that employees are more engaged when they return from their days off. Bryson and Freeman (2019) supported the option of granting time off as an incentive and said employees should be able to choose the date. M5 noted that employees are more engaged and motivated when the chance arises for leaders to award them for a job well done.

M1 and M2 emphasized the importance of hosting potlucks as an incentive to understand the cultures of employees. M2 said:

> One of the strategies that I use to increase employee engagement is a friendly potluck competition. It's something about food, you know, and just sitting down and fellowshipping with people that makes people more comfortable and allows the team the opportunity to build friendships. Implementing frivolous events that employees enjoy creates a friendly work environment. Creating a pleasant work environment keeps my employees heavily engaged during their shift and motivated to come to work and put their best effort forward.

Jayaradha and Kumar (2018) indicated leaders must emphasize recreational activities to increase employee engagement. M1 explained:

> The reason why I use potlucks as an engagement strategy is to gain a better understanding of everyone's cultural background in the organization. There are still a lot of barriers that we, as people, need to cross regarding race and cultural differences. As retail service representatives, we must be able to work with each other in the workplace to provide exceptional customer service genuinely. When you can get your team to know each other on different levels outside of the color, then it helps break barriers between your organization and when it comes to engaging with the customers as well.

These findings were consistent with findings by Hall, Taylor, and Altobar (2019) noted that leaders who keep their employees engaged sustain an enjoyable work culture. Based on information shared through interviews, leaders conduct potlucks to develop their team to create a workplace that engages their employees.

Theme 2: Effective Communication

The second theme identified from the study was effective communication. All five participants articulated the importance of effective communication through day-to-day interactions and weekly meetings. The findings are consistent with Hua (2019) said that constant communication is the easiest way to increase employee engagement. M1 divulged that effective communication is also a strategy used by leaders to gain trust from their employees. The strategy for effective communication is similar to the findings shared by Walden, Jung, and Westerman (2017). Walden et al. asserted that leaders who use effective communication experiences result in employees becoming more engaged, loyal, and committed to the company. M3 said:

> Daily interactions with your employees help ensure everyone understands the company objectives. As retail employees, the demand to keep our employees engaged and remain competitive in the industry is exceptionally high. We, as leaders, must stay abreast of changes across the organization. I have found that effective communication and keeping our employees aware of all the latest changes increases their engagement in the store.

Schuleigh, Malouff, Schutte, and Loi (2019) M3 said leaders must ensure they are reaching their employees through effective communication to increase engagement. M4 expressed that daily communication with an employee increases the chance for employees to understand the goals and strategies set in place for the company to succeed. Employees are more likely to be engaged when they know the overall expectations of their leaders due to daily communications.

M2 identified that each employee has their way of communicating and understanding what leaders are relaying. Adiguzel (2019) reported that leaders struggle with communicating with employees and properly communicating information. M5 explained that employees should be well aware of new strategies implemented through effective communication. Furthermore, Adiguzel noted that employees who are aware of new changes through effective communication could improve employee engagement. Meetings hosted by leaders are another form of effective communication. M5 said:

> Communication is one of the primary responsibilities of a good leader. I have implemented things such as “five-minute” face-to-face meetings to address recent changes applied across the company. I designed the “five-minute” meeting for my

> employees to have the opportunity to express their concerns regarding recent changes. This opportunity also allows each employee the platform to provide feedback, suggestions, and recommend additional strategies to increase employee engagement.

Hua (2019) reported that face-to-face meetings is an effective form of communication that can improve employee engagement.

Implementing weekly employee meetings is a successful strategy used by leaders to increase employee engagement. M1 said:

> I primarily disclose strategies to increase employee engagement during our weekly staff meetings. I have found implementing new strategies successful when communicating face-to-face in the workplace. The face-to-face interaction allows my employees the chance to ask questions and for me to validate their concurrence of the latest changes. You must allow employees to ask questions, especially when changes that can affect their engagement are made.

These findings are similar to Walden et al. (2017), who expressed that weekly meetings should be consistent, and employees should be able to provide feedback during each meeting. Each of the five participants indicated communication as a strategy to increase employee engagement. The findings in this study confirmed the results of Kostanek and Khoreva (2018), who shared that effective communication is a successful strategy implemented by leaders to increase employee engagement. Based on the results of this study, leaders who implement and enforce effective communication strategies witness an increase in employee engagement.

Theme 3: Affirmation from Leaders

The theme of affirmation from leaders arose from interview questions two and five. The comprehensive analysis of the company documents and participants' responses presented affirmation as a successful strategy used by retail leaders. M4 noted that positive affirmation towards the team for a job well-done increases employee engagement. The findings are consistent with Jiang (2018), who reported that affirmation for contribution to the organization is far more rewarding than a gift. M2 explained:

> Going above and beyond to acknowledge and thank employees for a job well done is one of the most effective strategies. Customer service in the retail industry is a thankless job. Working in the retail industry is not always smiles and happy vibes. There are times where my employees are being yelled at for things out of their control. Once the situation [is] deescalated, I usually pull the employee aside and thank them for how the situation was handled.

Yue, Fong, and Li (2019) also discovered that verbal affirmation promotes employee engagement and enhances morale in the workplace. M2 noted that employees were far more engaged when they were consistently being told how good a job they are doing. Findings on affirmation from leaders about increasing employee engagement were similar to research conducted by Lehmann and Chiu (2018), who found that employee engagement increases in organizations where leaders make their employees feel valued. All participants stated that words of affirmation towards employees keep their employees motivated, increasing employee engagement.

The results of my findings align with current literature recently published. The findings from Kuijpers, Kooij, and Van Woerkom (2020) showed that leaders who implement reward incentives show an increase in employee engagement. Adiguzel (2019) found that effective communication is a successful strategy leader used to increase employee engagement. Also, O'Connor and Crowley-Henry (2019) reported that affirmation to employees who perform well would have a positive effect on the organization, increasing employee engagement. The findings specified that leaders should consider strategies related to employee incentives, effective communication, and affirmation from leaders to increase employee engagement.

Relevancy to Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. I used Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies leaders use to increase employee engagement. Herzberg et al. (1959) confirmed that intrinsic factors, such as bonuses, recognition from strategies implemented, increase employee engagement. Delaney and Royal (2017) affirmed that leaders should focus on intrinsic factors to increase employee engagement. M2 asserted that effective communication in the workplace increases employee engagement when leaders provide clear guidance. In comparison, Bryant (2018) also noted that effective communication correlates with the intrinsic factors of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. Badubi (2017) hypothesized that incentives and employee affirmation could increase employee engagement and job satisfaction. Each participant's responses aligned with Herzberg's theory that intrinsic factors lead to satisfaction and that satisfied employees are more engaged.

The three themes identified in this study, employee incentives, effective communication, and affirmation from leaders, indicated a link to the conceptual framework of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. Herzberg et al. (1959) reported affirmation and incentive programs as success factors for improving employee engagement. Both M3 and M5's responses associated with Herzberg's research findings that using incentive programs as a strategy increased employee engagement. Andersson (2017) confirmed that incentive programs are a morale booster in the workplace, which supports M1’s claim that incentives in the workplace increase employee engagement and morale. Therefore, employee incentives, effective communication, and affirmation from leaders are strategies retail leaders may use to increase employee engagement.

Triangulation of Data Sources

I used methodological triangulation to gain an in-depth understanding of strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. Clark and Vealé (2018) acknowledged that researchers use methodological triangulation to compare transcribed interview data collected and company documents. To gain an in-depth understanding of the successful strategies used by leaders, I compared the transcribed interview data collected with the interview recordings, notes collected from the semi-structured interviews, and company documents. Methodological triangulation involves synthesizing several sources of data (Amankwaa, 2016). By synthesizing the interview data with the company documents, I was able to conduct methodological triangulation and align the information to support the research question.

I identified three themes from the triangulated data. The company documents, such as annual public reports, showed an increase in revenue over the past two to three years from leaders who implemented strategies to increase employee engagement. The senior leaders from company B and company E volunteered to share internal documents to support the strategies implemented. Results from company document D05 showed an increase in employee engagement during the closeout month before quarterly bonuses. Company document D02 disclosed employee engagement levels increased after leaders were required to attend company training seminars on ways to capitalize on the performance of employees. Jiang (2018) expressed how training seminars provide leaders with the necessary skills to improve the organization and maximize the performance of employees. Based on the results of methodological triangulation, both companies have implemented successful strategies to increase employee engagement.

Applications to Professional Practice

The findings of this study are critical for business leaders to refine business practices by implementing and developing employee engagement strategies. Business leaders should implement the practices of supplying employee incentives, effectively communicating with employees while affirming their good work. By implementing the strategies, retail leaders might decrease the gap in professional practice linking to the lack of employee engagement.

Theme 1 revealed that employee incentives improve employee engagement.

Rewarding employees through incentives to improve their engagement seemed to be an effective solution in the retail industry. Based on responses from the retail leaders, theme 2 provided evidence to show effective communication is a prime strategy to use to increase employee engagement. Leaders with effective communication skills provide clear guidance towards their employees, minimizing the chances of misinterpretation. The findings show that effective communication from leaders sets clear expectations enabling their employees to remain engaged and productive. Theme 3 revealed that affirmation from leaders is a morale booster, and employees feel valued. Leaders who provide affirmations towards their employees will create a positive environment and see an increase in employee engagement. The findings from this study contribute to existing and previous data regarding the importance of implementing strategies to increase employee engagement.

Implications for Social Change

The results from this study may contribute to positive social change from leaders identifying how to keep employees engaged with the local community and by creating a humanized culture for employees to attract and retain local customers. An increase in employee engagement may fill the gap between the retail industry and the local community to raise revenue for future developments. By implementing engagement strategies, community developments may be able to offer residents with convenient services and products paramount to the quality of life (Lasrado & Pereira, 2018). Implications for social change through the execution of increased employee engagement may help to improve community engagement opportunities. For example, company leaders who actively support their local community experience higher levels of employee engagement because of effective communication and constant interaction with society (Howard & Gutworth, 2020). The social impact of increased employee engagement could provide more employment opportunities for surrounding residents. Retail leaders could use the results of this study to establish new strategies to increase employee engagement that could impact the people in the surrounding community.

Recommendations for Action

Retail leaders and supervisors in authoritative positions could use the recommendations, findings, and data collected in this study to implement strategies to increase employee engagement. The findings from this study illustrated that employee incentives, effective communication, and affirmation from leaders could increase employee engagement in the retail industry. Retail leaders across the world should consider the recommended strategies implemented from the data discovered from this study.

I identified three specific recommendations for action. First, leaders who work in the retail industry should implement incentive strategies that reward their employees for their productivity and positive attitude. Employees are more engaged when rewarded with cash incentives, such as bonuses. The second recommendation is for leaders to maintain effective communication in the workplace through frequent meetings. Employees are likely to stay engaged when they can communicate their concerns and share innovative ideas. Third, I would recommend that leaders attend quarterly or biannual training to understand how to thank their employees properly. Words of affirmation in the workplace is a morale booster, increasing employee engagement.

The results of this study could be valuable in future studies on employee engagement. Each participant will receive a copy of this study. I plan to use numerous methods to publish the results of this study to a wide range of audiences through seminars, training, and lectures. For future review and use, this study will be published in the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database.

Recommendations for Further Research

I used a qualitative multiple case study to explore strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. The study was specific to retail leaders in South Florida. Researchers could consider expanding the research outside the geographical location of South Florida. One limitation was finding retail leaders willing to participate during social distancing implemented because of COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. I would recommend that future researchers explore a multiple case study to understand how leaders kept their employees engaged during social distancing. Future researchers should consider conducting research on successful strategies used to increase employee engagement in other industries. I also recommend future researchers use a quantitative or mixed methods approach to gather additional findings regarding strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement.

Reflections

As I reflect upon my experience, all I can think about is how overwhelming and stressful it was during this entire process. I witnessed extensive barriers during the prospectus phase and even more during the proposal phase. During my attendance at residencies one and two, I met other classmates who were fighting the urge to disenroll from the program because of their failure to thrive in the program. I encountered countless rejections to proceed in the doctoral program further. Remaining in contact with my classmates helped me by motivating each other to remain focused and dedicated to our purpose of becoming a Doctor of Business Administration.

I started this doctoral program with minimal knowledge of strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. During the literature review process, I realized that I needed to improve my writing for my content to flow so that readers could clearly understand the information provided. During the interview process, I was also able to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies retail leaders used to increase employee engagement. The data collected allowed me the opportunity to present findings for retail leaders looking for strategies to increase employee engagement.

Conclusion

Retail leaders should focus on the importance of keeping employees engaged to improve organizational effectiveness and productivity. Some leaders require a better understanding of the strategies that other leaders used to increase engagement. The overarching research question in this study was: What strategies do retail leaders use to increase employee engagement?

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the company documents and participants' responses, three themes emerged from the data analysis: employee incentives, effective communication, and affirmation from leaders. The identified themes may be valuable to retail leaders looking for strategies influenced by intrinsic factors identified by Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. The results of this study contain conclusions that retail leaders who implement successful strategies can increase employee engagement.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date: ___________________________ Location: _________________________

Interviewer: ________________________Interviewee: _____________________

Instructions:

1) Enlighten the interviewee of the purpose of the study.

2) Ensure the interviewee consents to be interviewed and recorded. Collect company documents.

3) Watch my body language to avoid influencing any responses.

4) Each interview will be digitally recorded and assigned the company code label A, B, and so forth for the organizations, M1, M2 and so forth for leaders, and D01, D02 and so forth for the company documents with a consistent number in numerical order.

5) Each interview will be labeled on the top of the page next to their name with the interviewee's letter and number on top.

6) All interview questions will be asked in the same order.

7) Take notes regarding the interviewee’s responses.

8) I will let the participants know that once I transcribe the interview, the participant will conduct member checking.

9) Thank the interviewee for his/her participation.

Appendix B: Participant Invitation Email

Dear <Local Retail Leader>,

I am a doctoral candidate conducting research on strategies retail leaders use to increase employee engagement. I would greatly appreciate your participation in my study by participating in a short interview and providing company documents regarding strategies used to increase employee engagement. It will take about an hour of your time, and your personal information, such as your name, company, and provided documents will be coded for privacy and remain confidential. No additional personal information will be required during the interview process.

Your assistance in helping me complete my doctoral research is appreciated. The results of the research project will be available once the study is published. If you are interested in participating, refer to the attached consent form which provides more information about the study.

Thank you for your consideration,

Yvonne N. Crawford