

2021

Examining the Antecedents of Employee Engagement

Andrea E. Moore
Walden University

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Walden University

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Andrea E. Moore

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Examining the Antecedents of Employee Engagement

by

Andrea E. Moore

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

February 2021

Abstract

Highly engaged employees have a positive impact on organizational results, which means that understanding how to increase employee engagement is important. Performance management is one area that is believed to positively impact employee engagement, but current research is not conclusive as to how much individual performance management activities impact employee engagement. Using social exchange theory and self-determination theory as theoretical guides, this study examined if 5 performance management activities (goal setting, feedback, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust) are predictors of employee engagement. Using a cross-sectional survey design, full-time, U.S.-based employees at organizations with more than 1,000 employees completed the Utrecht Work Engagement Survey and questionnaires related to 5 performance management activities. Correlational analysis was used to examine the relationship between employee engagement and the performance management activities. All 5 performance management activities were significantly correlated with employee engagement. Developmental opportunities, setting goals, and a climate of trust were statistically significant, independent predictors of employee engagement when controlling for the other performance management activity variables. The implication for positive social change is that this knowledge can be used to guide organizational leaders as they adapt or create a performance management system to ensure that they are able to most effectively impact employee engagement. Ultimately, a more highly engaged workforce can have direct and indirect impacts on the local communities by increasing organizational stability and productivity.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Employee engagement is a significant topic for organizational leaders because the impact of disengaged employees includes lower productivity, higher rates of turnover, higher levels of performance, and increased absenteeism (Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Cesario & Chambel, 2017; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Wollard & Shuck, 2011). It is important to understand what can cause increased employee engagement or factors that decrease engagement. Many studies have addressed antecedents of engagement in order to address specific areas that can be modified if they are able to impact engagement (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010; Breevaart et al., 2014; Wang & Hsieh, 2013; Wollard & Shuck, 2011).

Performance management is one area that has been discussed in general but has not often been clearly defined and is not always studied with respect to employee engagement. Performance management activities involve setting goals, providing feedback, providing developmental opportunities, establishing a climate of trust, and holding annual performance appraisals. As a set of expected activities between management and employees, the overall goal should be to influence behavior. This includes employee engagement. However, researchers who have examined performance management and employee engagement have not looked at the entire set of activities as they relate to employee engagement (see Ali & Lodhi, 2018; Barrick, Thurgood, Smith, & Courtright, 2015; Birdi, Allan, & Warr, 1997; Chamberlain, 2011; Dewettinck & Vroonen, 2017; Hynes, 2012; Jha & Kumar, 2016; Kim, Kolb, & Kim, 2012; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Tate, 2015; Wollard & Shuck, 2011). Rather, these researchers have

found relationships between some, but not all, of the individual performance management activities and employee engagement. It is important to look at the performance management activities more broadly to learn how organizations can best manage these processes and have a positive influence on employee engagement. In this study, I evaluated the individual performance management activities and their relationship with employee engagement as well as the set of the five activities to determine how each may impact employee engagement when accounting for the others.

In this chapter, I provide additional information about employee engagement and performance management activities, along with current research regarding their relationships. The purpose of this study, along with the problem statement and research questions, are specified. In addition, I discuss the theoretical base for this research, define key terms, and provide some information about the study itself, including the scope and limitations of the study.

Background of the Study

Employee engagement has been defined by how psychologically safe and connected employees are to their work (Kahn, 1990) and is characterized by the amount of vigor, dedication, and absorption employees experience (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). Employee engagement is an important concept for organizations to consider because the benefits to having an engaged workforce include greater productivity, higher performance levels, lower absenteeism, and lower rates of turnover than organizations with lower employee engagement (Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Cesario & Chambel, 2017; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Wollard & Shuck, 2011). Activities related to performance management, such as setting performance goals, providing feedback/recognition,

providing developmental opportunities, conducting performance appraisals, and establishing a climate of trust, could be antecedents of employee engagement (Chamberlain, 2011; Davila & Pina-Ramirez, 2014; Mone, Eisinger, Guggenheim, Price, & Stine, 2011). Of these performance management activities, goal setting, feedback, developmental opportunities, and a climate of trust have been examined as antecedents of employee engagement. Recent research has been conducted to establish a relationship between performance appraisal ratings and employee engagement, but it should continue to be further examined (LeVan, 2017). Because these activities could have a relationship with employee engagement, researchers should continue to evaluate how the concepts are related. If performance management activities have a positive relationship with employee engagement, management could influence performance management activities in order to increase employee engagement. This could improve business outcomes, such as reduced absenteeism and turnover.

A limitation of the research on performance management activities and employee engagement is that, to date, no one has examined how these five activities—setting performance goals, providing feedback/recognition, providing developmental opportunities, conducting performance appraisals, and establishing a climate of trust—collectively affect employee engagement. Further, although Tate (2015) established a relationship between some performance management and employee engagement, she did not include annual performance appraisals nor did she evaluate the combined activities of performance management with respect to their impact on employee engagement. To support the assertions that performance management could have a positive impact on

employee engagement, the performance management activities each should be studied while controlling for the other activities.

Problem Statement

High levels of employee engagement can lead to greater productivity, higher performance levels, lower absenteeism, and lower rates of turnover than organizations with lower employee engagement (Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Cesario & Chambel, 2017; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Wollard & Shuck, 2011). There are several ways that employee engagement can be impacted, including several antecedents that can increase employee engagement (Wollard & Shuck, 2011). A specific set of potential antecedents that could impact employee engagement includes five performance management activities: setting performance goals, providing feedback/recognition, providing developmental opportunities, conducting performance appraisals, and establishing a climate of trust (Chamberlain, 2011; Davila & Pina-Ramirez, 2014; Mone et al., 2011). Tate (2015) found that, individually, three performance management activities were positively correlated with employee engagement in small businesses. Tate specifically included feedback, setting goals, and a climate of trust in her survey, leaving performance appraisals out of consideration and consolidating developmental and performance goals into one category. This leaves a gap in the literature to understand all five individual activities and their relationships with employee engagement.

A limitation of the research on performance management activities and employee engagement is that, to date, no one has examined how all five of these activities—setting performance goals, providing feedback/recognition, providing developmental opportunities, conducting performance appraisals, and establishing a climate of trust—

affect employee engagement collectively. To support the assertions that performance management could have a positive impact on employee engagement, the performance management activities each should be studied while controlling for the others. This would allow for a more complete set of data for management to consider when implementing or changing performance management activities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine whether performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, annual appraisals, and a climate of trust are independent antecedents of employee engagement. Understanding the relationship between employee engagement and performance management activities may provide human resources departments data to support existing methods used by organizations to manage performance or may provide data that would support implementing changes to organizational practices (Mone et al., 2011; Silverman, Pogson, & Cober, 2005; Stalinski & Downey, 2012). The predictor variables included the performance management activities of setting performance goals, providing feedback, establishing developmental opportunities, conducting annual appraisals, and having a climate of trust. The criterion variable was employee engagement.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: Will performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust each predict employee engagement?

- H_{01} : Performance goals will not predict employee engagement.

- H_{11_1} : Performance goals will predict employee engagement.
- H_{01_2} Feedback/recognition will not predict employee engagement.
- H_{11_2} : Feedback/recognition will predict employee engagement.
- H_{01_3} : Developmental opportunities will not predict employee engagement.
- H_{11_3} : Developmental opportunities will predict employee engagement.
- H_{01_4} : Performance appraisals will not predict employee engagement.
- H_{11_4} : Performance appraisals will predict employee engagement.
- H_{01_5} : A climate of trust will not predict employee engagement.
- H_{11_5} : A climate of trust will predict employee engagement.

Research Question 2: Are performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust each an independent predictor of employee engagement after controlling for the other four variables?

- H_{02_1} : Performance goals will not independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust.
- H_{12_1} : Performance goals will independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust.
- H_{02_2} : Feedback/recognition will not independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust.

- H_{12_2} : Feedback/recognition will independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust.
- H_{02_3} : Developmental opportunities will not independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, feedback/recognition, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust.
- H_{12_3} : Developmental opportunities will independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, feedback/recognition, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust.
- H_{02_4} : Performance appraisals will not independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, and a climate of trust.
- H_{12_4} : Performance appraisals will independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, and a climate of trust.
- H_{02_5} : A climate of trust will not independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, and performance appraisals.
- H_{12_5} : A climate of trust will independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, and performance appraisals.

Theoretical Base

The theoretical frameworks for this study were both the social exchange theory (SET), in part because of its focus on interdependent relationships (see Saks, 2006) and because it has been well established to explain workplace behaviors (see Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), and the self-determination theory (SDT) because it acknowledges both internal and external motivations (see Meyer & Gagne, 2008). SET is based on the premise that “social exchange involves a series of interactions that generate obligations” (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005, p. 874). Further, these interactions are based on the actions of others, so the relationship is seen as reciprocal (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). One example of this interdependent relationship could occur between employees and organizations, whereby a partnership is created due to the benefits gained from each other. The partnership is built upon mutual trust and reciprocity (Saks, 2006). In return for their loyalty and hard work, employees expect to gain something, such as a pay check and growth potential. The relationship between employees and their supervisors can also be explained by SET. Supervisors provide employees with the tools they need to do their job and treat them respectfully, for example, and, in turn, employees will complete tasks or projects that are important to the work group. If either party does not feel that expectations are being met and that the necessary reciprocity is being followed, then the relationship may suffer. Based on the concept of SET, increased levels of engagement would be the employees’ response to what they received from the organization (Saks, 2006; Slack, Corlett, & Morris, 2015).

SDT considers both intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation when considering how people behave. Intrinsic motivation occurs when someone does

something simply because he or she enjoys the activity, whereas extrinsic motivation occurs when someone does something for a reward, such as money or prestige (Meyer & Gagne, 2008). Employees could be motivated by just one or by both, and it is important for managers to understand how employees are motivated when they are conducting performance management activities. For example, if employees are motivated by completing their job successfully, then setting goals that can allow them to measure their success may be important to them. However, if they are motivated by something more external, then receiving feedback may be more important to them, as the feedback is coming from something external to them and could be done in a public way. SDT can provide some foundation for understanding how to set up performance management activities and how they relate to employee engagement (Fall & Roussel, 2014; Meyer & Gagne, 2008).

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a nonexperimental quantitative method. Quantitative research is appropriately used to objectively test the relationships between the antecedents of employee engagement per the research questions (Creswell, 2014). The design was a cross-sectional survey of employees at organizations in the United States. The target population for this survey included employees at U.S. organizations, and the sampling frame consisted of the employees at any U.S. organization with an employee-base greater than 1,000. Although a random sample design would have been ideal for this survey, it was an unrealistic goal as those who responded to the survey formed a self-selected sample.

The use of a survey design accomplishes the need for objective data that can be analyzed for trends and relationships, and it allows for quick turnaround and anonymity for participants, as they simply respond to an email survey link. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) was the primary survey to determine the level of employee engagement. The UWES measures employee engagement based on three concepts: (a) vigor is the amount of energy employees feel because of work, (b) dedication is how involved employees are in their work, and (c) absorption refers to how employees are so engrossed in their work that they do not notice the passage of time (pp. 4-5).

Participants were asked to respond to additional surveys to measure the performance management activities. Employee perception of development opportunities was measured using a 6-item scale created by Kraimer, Seibert, Wayne, Liden, and Bravo (2011). Specific feedback provided by leaders was measured using a 4-item scale created by Bezuijen, van Dam, van den Berg, and Thierry (2010). Goal specificity was measured using a 6-item scale created by Bezuijen et al. Employee reactions to employee appraisals were measured using a 5-item scale created by Volpone, Avery, and McKay (2012). Both affect-based and cognition-based trust were measured using an 11-item scale created by McAllister (1995).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined according to the way they are used in this study.

Climate of trust: A climate of trust exists when a manager's words and actions are consistent (Wang & Hsieh, 2013).

Employee development: Employee development refers to opportunities to expand an employee's knowledge and set of skills (Mone et al., 2011).

Employee engagement: Employee engagement refers to (a) vigor, the amount of energy employees feel because of work; (b) dedication, how involved employees are in their work; and (c) absorption, employees being so engrossed in their work that they do not notice the passage of time (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003, pp. 4-5).

Feedback: Feedback refers to a discussion during which the manager lets the employee know how he or she is performing (Mone et al., 2011).

Performance goals: Performance goals are what the employee hopes to accomplish throughout the course of the year (Mone et al., 2011).

Performance management activities: Performance management activities include setting performance goals, providing feedback/recognition, providing developmental opportunities, conducting performance appraisals, and establishing a climate of trust (Chamberlain, 2011; Davila & Pina-Ramirez, 2014; Mone et al., 2011).

Assumptions

In this study, I assumed that the participants in U.S. organizations answered the surveys honestly because the surveys were anonymous. The demographic characteristics requested were gender, age, education level, management role, and years with the organization. In this study, employees were provided several surveys with questions about employee engagement and performance management activities (specifically, setting performance goals, providing feedback/recognition, providing developmental opportunities, conducting performance appraisals, and establishing a climate of trust). I assumed that the participants responded honestly to the questions in the survey.

Scope and Delimitations

Five specific performance management activities were chosen for this study based on previous research identifying these common activities. Although other organizations may have additional performance management activities, these five were common in the research. Included populations were currently employed individuals, rather than unemployed individuals, in order to focus on performance management activities that were currently happening. Because of this population, it can be assumed that the results can be generalized across all aspects of U.S. organizations.

Limitations

Limitations to the study include that respondents did not use any of the specified performance management activities, that respondents were unaware of what performance management activities were used, and that the results of the responses were based on the reliability and validity of the instruments used. Respondents could also be biased about performance management activities, which may have influenced their responses. In addition, this was a self-selected sample rather than a random sample of the population. To address the limitations of the instruments used, I gave careful consideration to selecting each of the survey instruments based on their reliability and validity.

Significance of the Study

This project is significant because it addresses the relationships between performance management activities and employee engagement, including the relationship between each individual performance management activity and employee engagement. Employee engagement itself has been well studied and established, but there are still potential antecedents that have not been identified. Understanding the relationships

between employee engagement and a comprehensive set of performance management activities can allow organizations to establish practices that can aid their entire workforce and help encourage positive social change. Until human resources and organizational leaders know what the antecedents are that can bring out increased employee engagement, they are less likely to be able to impact engagement, which keeps them from achieving the benefits of increased engagement. These benefits include increasing employee productivity (Barrick et al., 2015) and reducing absenteeism and turnover (Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Markos & Sridevi, 2010). In turn, employees may experience less disruption that is caused by training new employees, and they will not have to pick up additional workload due to frequent absences. These benefits can also be expanded to include a broader social impact. For example, increased productivity could lead to greater profits, which could be returned to the local communities touched by employees.

Summary and Transition

Employee engagement can impact several aspects of a work environment, including absences, productivity, and turnover (Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Barrick et al., 2015; Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Learning what can influence employee engagement provides leaders tools that they can leverage when attempting to influence their employees. Performance management may be one such tool and learning more about the relationship between employee engagement and performance management may allow leaders to influence what activities take place within their organizations. In Chapter 2, there is an in-depth review of employee engagement, previously researched antecedents of employee engagement, and information on performance management activities. In

addition, I discuss current research on the relationship between the two variables as well as what future research should be considered.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine whether performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, annual appraisals, and a climate of trust are independent antecedents of employee engagement. In this chapter, I review the value of employee engagement and its impact on businesses. In addition, this chapter addresses a discussion of antecedents that have previously been established in research as well as potential antecedents of employee engagement. A review and evaluation of common performance management activities is included, and the relationship between those performance management activities and employee engagement is examined. There was much research on employee engagement and performance management activities over the past couple of decades to draw from in examining these constructs, but fewer studies have been published over the past 5 years. Given that organizations both globally and in the United States have been experiencing rapid changes, which may impact human resources practices, there is a continuing need for additional research on performance management and employee engagement. This is especially important in light of the shortage of recent research.

Employee engagement has been defined by how psychologically safe and connected employees are to their work (Kahn, 1990), and it is characterized by the amount of vigor, dedication, and absorption employees experience (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). Employee engagement is an important concept for organizations to consider because the benefits to having an engaged workforce include greater productivity, lower absenteeism, higher levels of performance, and lower rates of turnover than organizations

with lower employee engagement (Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Cesario & Chambel, 2017; Jha & Kumar, 2016; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Wollard & Shuck, 2011). For instance, Markos and Sridevi (2010) stated that employers with highly engaged employees have higher than average revenue in their industries (p. 92). Jha and Kumar (2016) found that highly engaged employees are more committed to their organizations and contribute to stronger business performance. In addition, Cesario and Chambel (2017) were able to determine that employee engagement is a predictor of employee performance.

Performance management is a set of activities that many organizations use to provide employees feedback on their performance (Dewettinck & Vroonen, 2017; Mone et al., 2011). Some common themes of performance management include setting performance goals, providing feedback/recognition, providing developmental opportunities, conducting performance appraisals, and establishing a climate of trust (Chamberlain, 2011; Davila & Pina-Ramirez, 2014; Mone et al., 2011). Some of these performance management activities have been examined as antecedents of employee engagement (Hynes, 2012; Kuvaas, 2006; Marrelli, 2011; Tate, 2015; Wing, 2000; Wollard & Shuck, 2011), but not all have been examined at this time. In addition, to date, no one has examined how these five activities—setting performance goals, providing feedback/recognition, providing developmental opportunities, conducting performance appraisals, and establishing a climate of trust—affect employee engagement collectively. To support the assertion that performance management could have a positive impact on employee engagement, the combined activities on performance management should be studied as a collective.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review for this study was conducted using multiple databases from Walden University's library, starting with a search on the Thoreau databases. These searches tended to pull most results from Business Source Complete and PsychINFO, so the focus of most searches started with those two databases. Key words used in the search included *employee engagement, performance management, performance goals, employee feedback, supervisor feedback, employee development, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, performance reviews, performance evaluations, employee evaluations, employee trust, organizational trust, organizational climate trust, engagement antecedents, small business, large business, social determination theory, and social exchange theory.*

Through this search, I identified multiple articles related to the keywords, some of which were not related to the overall topic. However, many were relevant, and those articles were evaluated to provide the background for this study and to determine limitations of previous research that could help identify the gaps in literature that were examined in this study.

Social Exchange Theory

The theoretical framework for this study was SET, in part because of its focus on interdependent relationships (see Saks, 2006) and also because it has been well established to explain workplace behaviors (see Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). SET is based on the premise that "social exchange involves a series of interactions that generate obligations" (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005, p. 874). Further, these interactions are based on the actions of others, so the relationship is seen as reciprocal (Cropanzano & Mitchell,

2005). Emerson (1976) focused on the rules of exchange, which imply a long-term relationship during which power is exchanged. In other words, neither party held all the power in the relationship, which allowed for an “exchange relation” (Emerson, 1976, p. 351). There are several types of exchange relationships, with reciprocity being the most commonly discussed (Covella, McCarthy, Kaifi, & Cocoran, 2017; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). One example of this interdependent relationship could occur between employees and organizations, whereby a partnership is created due to the benefits gained from each other. The partnership is built upon mutual trust and reciprocity (Covella et al., 2017; Saks, 2006). In return for their loyalty and hard work, employees expect to gain something, such as a paycheck and growth potential. The relationship between employees and their supervisors can also be explained by SET. Supervisors provide employees the tools they need to do their job and treat them respectfully, for example, and, in turn, employees will complete tasks or projects that are important to the work group. If either party does not feel that expectations are being met and that the necessary reciprocity is being followed, then the relationship may suffer.

Employee engagement is one such interdependency. Employees provide employers with benefits aimed at encouraging engagement. For example, researchers have found that employee autonomy is an antecedent to employee engagement (Freney & Fellenz, 2013). Therefore, the reciprocal relationship is defined by employees being more engaged at work when the supervisor supports them by providing engagement. The performance management process could also be described with SET. One example could be shown by using developmental opportunities. Employees who are motivated by

wanting to improve skillsets may be willing to exchange greater output for opportunities provided by supervisors. This is another way that a reciprocal relationship is established.

Negotiated rules are another set of guidelines that are part of SET. With negotiated rules, the exchange is more directly determined between the parties (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In the example above where employees expect a paycheck in return for their loyalty and hard work, the salary in the paycheck may be more explicitly negotiated. Negotiated rules tend to be less based on trust and mutual respect, due to the explicit nature of the exchange. Additionally, negotiated rules tend to be specific exchanges rather than exchanges that occur over time like reciprocal rules (Molm, Peterson, & Takahashi, 1999). Because there are no explicit exchanges determined with reciprocity, it is more likely that there could be situations where one party does not provide the expected exchange than with negotiated rules (Gouldner, 1960). However, all parties to the exchange are able to determine if there will be an exchange based on the behaviors of the other parties.

Performance management activities can also be part of a negotiated rules exchange. For example, employers may provide a salary increase during the annual performance evaluation. Employees will then work hard to meet certain objectives in order to receive that salary increase. Because the supervisor and employee may sit down to create goals that would then be linked to salary changes, this fits with the negotiated rules concept. In Dewettinck and Vroonen's (2017) study of performance management activities and employee engagement, they described the relationship between these as being consistent with SET because the performance management activities had positive effects on employee engagement. As described above, when employees have an outcome

that they are interested in, an exchange between the organization and the employee is created. In this case, the negotiated rules may be less tangible than a salary increase, but employee engagement is still of interest to most organizations.

With respect to employee engagement, the reciprocity rule of exchange would suggest that employees' level of engagement would be influenced in response to what they received or did not receive from the organization and their supervisors (Covella et al., 2017). This would vary over time as employees received more or less of what they expected in order to maintain their level of engagement. Negotiating engagement would be more difficult, although employers can provide an environment that favors engaged employees, such as by promoting a culture of trust and autonomy (Davila & Pina-Ramirez, 2014; Freney & Fellenz, 2013; Menguc, Auh, Fisher, & Haddad, 2013; Sarangi & Srivastava, 2012; Stander & Rothmann, 2010). Overall, though, employees' increased level of engagement is one half of an exchange between the employee and the company. The other half would be provided by the company in the form of an antecedent valued by the employee (such as autonomy). This creates the interdependent relationship described by SET.

Self-Determination Theory

Another theoretical framework important to this study is SDT. SDT acknowledges two types of motivation: internal and external (Meyer & Gagne, 2008; Travaglianti, Babic, & Hansez, 2016). Intrinsic motivation occurs when someone does something simply because he or she enjoys the activity, whereas extrinsic motivation occurs when someone does something for a reward, such as money or prestige (Meyer & Gagne, 2008). This is important in a business setting, where managers need to

understand what motivates and encourages employees to perform at an optimal level (Travaglianti et al., 2016). If managers assume that employees are only motivated by one thing, such as a larger salary, they may have less of an impact on other employees. Further, how a manager interacts with an employee may have a different impact on motivation (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989).

Engaged employees may be experiencing either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, depending on what is most important to that employee. For example, a paycheck or salary increase would be an external motivation that could help improve employee engagement if that is something that is important to that employee. Another example of extrinsic motivation could be public acknowledgement of a job well done. If this is motivating to an employee, it could lead to increased employee engagement. On the other hand, an employee may be motivated by his or her own sense of a job well done, thus having increased employee engagement when completing tasks on time or meeting his or her own quality standards. Understanding an employee's motivation allows managers to better determine how to increase employee engagement without having a negative impact, as trying to motivate with something that has the opposite impact could be detrimental (Meyer & Gagne, 2008).

Performance management activities could have an intrinsic or extrinsic motivational impact on employees. For example, setting goals has been found to be motivating to employees (Fall & Roussel, 2014). From the perspective of intrinsic motivation, employees who meet their goals may have a sense of accomplishment for having pushed themselves to meet these goals. From the perspective of extrinsic motivation, the acknowledgement or reaction from management or others in the

organization for reaching these goals may be what pushes an employee to do so. However, these goals need to appear attainable, and if there is a monetary reward for meeting the goals, that needs to appear to be fairly assessed at the organization (Fall & Roussel, 2014). Overall, SDT can provide some foundation for both performance management activities and employee engagement (Fall & Roussel, 2014; Meyer & Gagne, 2008).

Employee Engagement

Researchers have defined employee engagement in several different ways. Kahn (1990) started with a definition involving three psychological states (safety, meaningfulness, and availability), and Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) expanded the definition to how much vigor, dedication, and absorption that employees experience. Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) created the UWES as a way to measure employee engagement. Specifically, the UWES measures employee engagement based on these three concepts: (a) vigor is the amount of energy employees feel because of work; (b) dedication is how involved employees are in their work; and (c) absorption refers to employees being so engrossed in their work that they do not notice the passage of time (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003, pp. 4-5). Part of the rationale for the UWES was to acknowledge employee engagement as a concept separate from the idea of burnout. Maslach and Leiter (2008) described a continuum of employee engagement, with aspects of engagement, such as energy, on one end, and aspects of burnout, such as exhaustion, on the other end. This created a paradigm by which engagement was measured by an absence of burnout. However, when Schaufeli and Bakker created the UWES, they learned that some employees who experienced fatigue, which is a component of burnout,

were experiencing a positive fatigue and were in fact highly engaged. By focusing on vigor, dedication, and absorption, the creators of the UWES were able to look at the employees' experiences from a positive perspective rather than assuming a negative outlook (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

Importance of Employee Engagement

Organizations benefit from having highly engaged employees because they tend to have lower rates of turnover, higher rates of productivity, higher levels of performance, and lower rates of absenteeism (Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Cesario & Chambel, 2017; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Jha & Kumar, 2016; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Wollard & Shuck, 2011). Engaged employees generate higher than average revenue in their industries (Jha & Kumar, 2016; Markos & Sridevi, 2010), take fewer sick days per year than employees at non-engaged organizations (Marrelli, 2011), and have higher customer satisfaction results than their less engaged counterparts (Gill, Dugger, & Norton, 2014). These benefits include increasing employee productivity (Barrick et al., 2015; Cesario & Chambel, 2017), and reducing absenteeism and turnover (Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Cesario & Chambel, 2017; Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Alternatively, less engaged employees not only have lower productivity and higher absenteeism, but they also can have a less positive attitude (Marrelli, 2011; Saks & Gruman, 2011). In these situations, there is the danger that the lower levels of engagement and the resulting attitude by employees can impact others around them at work and at home (Saks & Gruman, 2014). When turnover is high, employees experience significant disruption that is caused by training new employees (Saks, 2006; Slack et al., 2015). In addition, the more frequent

absences experienced by less engaged employees can result in additional workload for remaining staff (Saks, 2006; Slack et al., 2015).

Harter et al. (2002) further found that when business units within an organization had high engagement, all factors tended to have positive results. That is, not only would employees have less frequent absences and be less likely to leave, they would also have higher customer satisfaction loyalty and better safety records. The authors demonstrated that higher engagement in a business unit correlated to overall better business outcomes within that business unit. As expressed by the authors, this can provide practical information that can be used to drive engagement within a business (Harter et al., 2002, p. 275). Barrick et al. (2015) also studied engagement at the organizational level, arguing that engagement can be measured across parts of an organization as well as at the individual level, and that such engagement will create a positive value to the business. In both cases, the results of the studies supported the ideas that engagement can be measured at a level higher than individuals, allowing organizations to use the data in different ways.

Measuring Employee Engagement

Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) created the UWES to help organizations measure levels of employee engagement. Previous to the UWES, employee engagement was measured as the opposite of employee burnout (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008). They defined the three components of employee engagement as (a) vigor is the amount of energy employees feel because of work, (b) dedication is how involved employees are in their work, and (c) absorption refers to employees being so engrossed in their work that

they do not notice the passage of time (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003, pp. 4-5), and created the UWES to specifically measure those aspects of employee engagement.

As Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) expanded the definition of employee engagement as more than simply the opposite of burnout, they also determined that a different survey would be necessary to measure it as such. The surveys available at the time assumed that if employees' scores indicated that they weren't burnt out, they must be engaged. However, establishing a survey that measured the three components of employee engagement required more than determining that the employee wasn't burnt out. Further, Schaufeli and Bakker argued that it was not possible to appropriately study the relationship between the two concepts if they were measured with the same survey. This led to the creation of the UWES, which specifically measures vigor, dedication, and absorption.

Antecedents of Employee Engagement

Researchers have been examining antecedents of employee engagement and have identified several possibilities, some of which have empirical evidence to support their relationship with employee engagement and others of which need to be further examined. Authors have discussed the disconnect between the research on employee engagement and the practical application of that research (Meng & Berger, 2019; Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010; Shuck, 2010). That is, they have focused on the need to identify antecedents of employee engagement so that leaders could work on creating employee engagement. Wollard and Shuck (2011) conducted a review of existing literature to establish a collection of antecedents of employee engagement and identified 24 antecedents of employee engagement that had empirical evidence reported. Further, they

identified an additional 18 potential antecedents that did not have empirical evidence, but that had been suggested by other researchers based on less direct connections between the variables (Wollard & Shuck, 2011).

Empirical Evidence

Several antecedents of employee engagement have empirical evidence supporting the relationships. One such antecedent of employee engagement that has empirical evidence to support it is employee trust (Meng & Berger, 2019; Wang & Hsieh, 2013). In one study, Wang and Hsieh (2013) were considering the relationships among authentic leadership, employee trust, and employee engagement. Using several surveys, they determined that not only was there a relationship among the three variables, but there was also a positive and significant correlation between employee trust and employee engagement (Wang & Hsieh, 2013, p. 618).

Leadership style is another antecedent with empirical evidence indicating that different styles of leadership were positively related to employee engagement. One such study focused on transactional versus transformational leadership. Transactional leaders tend to focus solely on results being accomplished, while transformational leaders motivate their employees to exceed expectations (Breevaart et al., 2014). This study found that transformational leadership correlated positively with employee engagement but that it did not have the same correlation with transactional leadership (Breevaart et al., 2014). Additionally, charismatic leadership was significantly positively related to employee engagement (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010). Charisma is one characteristic of transformational leaders, but can be a style of leadership by itself (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010). Charismatic leaders exhibit many specific

qualities, including instilling pride and providing a vision for success, that are a part of a transformational leader's qualities (Bass, 1990). However, in addition, they have even higher expectations, often take greater risks, and make more personal sacrifices than transformational leaders (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010). Further, Meng and Berger (2019) confirmed that a relationship existed more generally between leadership and employee engagement.

Related to leadership, and also an aspect of job characteristics, is supervisor support, which was found to have a positive relationship to employee engagement in one study (Sarti, 2014). Supervisor support included social support aspects as well as job-specific support of their work efforts (Sarti, 2014). In addition to supervisor support, job characteristics include autonomy, feedback, and prosocial impact of work, all three of which have been found to be antecedents of employee engagement. Freney and Fellenz (2013) specifically studied several job characteristics, including autonomy, supervisor support, and prosocial impact of work, and found that all three were antecedents of employee engagement. Further, Freney and Fellenz found that autonomy was a critical antecedent, which was supported by other research (Menguc et al., 2013; Sarangi & Srivastava, 2012; Stander & Rothmann, 2010). In addition to supporting autonomy as an antecedent of engagement, Sarangi and Srivastava (2012) found that feedback from supervisors was linked to high employee engagement.

Several researchers have found that providing employees developmental opportunities correlates positively with employee engagement (Hynes, 2012; Mone et al., 2011; Muthuveloo, Basbous, Ping, & Long, 2013). Hynes (2012) conducted a qualitative study following the roll-out of a communications training program for employees at one

company. Using pre- and post-surveys, as well as interviews with participants, Hynes found that employees indicated that the training was worthwhile and that they found it to be a positive experience. Although this does not translate directly to employee engagement, it does demonstrate that there was a positive relationship between offering the training opportunity and the impact on employees. Muthuveloo et al. (2013) conducted a two-part survey of 100 employees and determined that a positive relationship existed between employee engagement and developmental opportunities.

Other Antecedents

Not all theorized antecedents of employee engagement have been studied in order to include empirical evidence. In many cases, potential antecedents have been linked with similar constructs, such as job satisfaction (Wollard & Shuck, 2011), but a direct link between employee engagement and these theorized antecedents has not been established. For example, there is some discussion that personality traits, such as proactive personality and optimism, are antecedents of employee engagement (Wollard & Shuck, 2011). Further research would need to be conducted to determine if there is evidence to support this theory. Another potential antecedent of employee engagement could be different monetary awards or salary structures in general. However, there has not yet been research conducted specifically on the relationship between employee engagement and those constructs (Wollard & Shuck, 2011).

Annual performance appraisals have also been suggested as an antecedent of employee engagement (Kuvaas, 2006; Stalinski & Downey, 2012; Wing, 2000). Stalinski and Downey (2012) focused on the relationships between performance management activities and both business impact and business success. They found that

the connections between performance ratings and both business success and business impact was low. However, they did find that a review of recent accomplishments had high correlations to business impact and success. Much like the previous examples, this does not provide evidence of performance appraisals as an antecedent to employee engagement, since employee engagement was not studied, but it does suggest a connection may exist. Kuvaas (2006) found relationships between performance appraisal satisfaction and work performance, and performance appraisal satisfaction and turnover intention. Although that does not directly link to employee engagement, it could suggest that there is a relationship because high employee engagement has been found to increase work performance and decrease turnover intention.

Performance Management Activities

Performance management is an avenue for organizations to provide feedback to employees on their performance. Generally speaking, performance management often involves several activities to achieve that result. These involve setting goals, providing feedback, having developmental conversations, and giving an annual performance evaluation. However, performance management is handled differently by different organizations, and is used for a variety of reasons. Some employers use performance management as a tool to determine annual salary changes, whereas others use performance management as a method to rank employees against each other and encourage competition (Pulakos, Hanson, Arad, & Moye, 2015). Oftentimes, performance management is synonymous with an annual performance review and, for some companies, that is all that it is. However, performance management is more than just a single evaluation that is conducted per company guidelines once a year at a specific

time. For example, employees should know what they are being measured on, so setting performance goals is an important activity connected to performance management (Pulakos et al., 2015). Other important activities include providing feedback, providing developmental opportunities, conducting a performance appraisal, and establishing a climate of trust (Mone et al., 2011; Pulakos et al., 2015; Stalinski & Downey, 2012).

Importance of Performance Management

Stalinski and Downey (2012) summarized the evidence of the relationships between the performance management activities and business success. Although their summary did not include specific employee engagement measures, they did discuss the impact on business success. Employee engagement is important for increased employee productivity, which should then positive impact the success of the business. Stalinski and Downey highlighted that four of the five previously identified activities (setting performance goals, providing feedback, providing developmental opportunities, and conducting a performance appraisal) all had medium to high correlations with business success. That is, organizations that conducted those four activities had higher levels of performance than those who either did not conduct the activities or who did not emphasize their importance (Stalinski & Downey, 2012). Silverman et al. (2005) also found that feedback and developmental opportunities could improve business performance if the discussion between the employee and the manager was open and honest. Although business performance is a different construct than employee engagement, both of these articles illustrate that performance management activities can impact organizations.

The performance management activity of setting goals provides alignment between organizations and its employees, ensuring that employees are focused on work behaviors that are important to the company (Davila & Pina-Ramirez, 2014). Beyond setting performance goals, employees should receive feedback throughout the year (Menguc et al., 2013). Receiving regular feedback allows employees to validate that their work was being done as expected and can reduce insecurities about how they are performing (Barrick et al., 2015; LeVan, 2017). In addition to setting performance goals, employees' developmental opportunities can be part of a performance management process. Mone et al. (2011) identify developmental opportunities as useful both to the employees' growth within a company and to the company's future effectiveness. Although an annual performance appraisal can sometimes be the only activity conducted by organizations, if it is part of a larger process it can help manage employees' performance (Mone et al., 2011). An overall climate of trust brings these activities together to ensure that employees are open to receiving feedback, that the performance appraisal has a positive impact on the employees, and that goals and developmental opportunities are received with a positive outcome to both the employees and the organization (Mone et al., 2011).

Setting Goals

Following goal-setting theory, goals that are the most impactful to performance are specific and difficult (Locke & Latham, 2002). That is, employees perform better when they are clear about what they should be doing and when they are challenged than when they receive easy, vague goals (Locke & Latham, 2002). In addition to understanding the type of goal that employees tend to perform better with, goal-setting

theory also addresses how performance may be impacted. For instance, the importance of the goal and the commitment to the goal are two critical moderators of the effects of the goal (Locke & Latham, 2002). An employee's self-confidence also can increase the likelihood of completing the goal (Buchner, 2007). Setting goals as an activity within performance management is more than simply listing goals. Managers should be thoughtful to ensure that the goals meet the elements of goal-setting theory to have the desired impact on the organization.

Pulakos et al. (2015) argued that although setting performance goals is important, the method in which it is often done may be more complicated than is necessary. For example, several organizations cascade goals, a process that starts at the highest level of the organization and then as it flows down to lower levels, employees create goals in support of their supervisors' goals. In theory, this should align employee goals with that of the organizations. However, as Pulakos et al. pointed out, this sometimes takes several months during which time priorities may change. Having goals set at the top of the organization without input from the employees can also have an impact on how employees react to the goals. Locke and Latham (2002) identify several ways that goals should be set, including assigned, self-set, and participatively-set goals (p. 714). Finding the appropriate mix of goals can lead to more successful outcomes. Ultimately, setting goals is still important to the performance management process as it allows employees to know what they are expected to accomplish (Chamberlain, 2011; Rashid, Asad, & Ashraf, 2011; Shumi & Begum, 2017), but the goal-setting process must be done thoughtfully.

When employees and supervisors work together to establish performance goals, they tend to be more engaged and the result tends to include higher organizational success (Mone et al., 2011). Davila and Pina-Ramirez (2014) identified goal setting as an important part of employee engagement, as employees who were working towards goals that would improve organizational success tended to be more connected to their organizations. Researchers have found that setting performance goals is directly related to higher levels of employee engagement (Medlin & Green, 2014). Employees who had performance goals identified and who connected their goals to the organization tended to have higher levels of engagement than those who did not (Marrelli, 2011).

Providing Feedback

Locke and Latham (2002) identify feedback as a critical component to setting goals. If employees do not receive feedback on how they are progressing with their goals, they are unable to adapt their behaviors to meet expectations (Locke & Latham, 2002). Additionally, Oldham, Hackman, and Pearce (1976) identified feedback as one of five characteristics that improve job performance. In both cases, employees tend to respond positively to feedback that is based on their performance against specific goals (Locke & Latham, 2002; Oldham et al., 1976). Much like setting goals reduces ambiguity in employee's roles, feedback can also provide clarification to employees. Providing feedback should be a regular activity where managers and employees meet to discuss progress against goals or other work activities (Chamberlain, 2011; Pulakos et al., 2015). This allows employees to change their goals or how they are accomplishing those goals in a timely manner, ultimately helping the organization reach its goals. Further,

regular updates could help increase an employee's commitment to his or her organization (LeVan, 2017; Rashid et al., 2011).

Feedback can take several forms, including recognition as positive reinforcement, or constructive feedback to address diminished performance (Mone et al., 2011). In addition, feedback does not have to come from supervisors. Using 360-degree assessments can allow employees to receive feedback from multiple sources, including peers, supervisors, direct reports, and customers (Chamberlain, 2011; DeNisi & Kluger, 2000). This tends to be a more formal feedback process than supervisors providing verbal feedback to employees on a semi-regular basis and can allow employees to understand how their work is seen from multiple points of view (DeNisi & Kluger, 2000). Although feedback is not always taken positively (Silverman et al., 2005), it is necessary for employees to know to change behaviors in order to improve performance or to continue working in an effective manner.

Providing feedback to employees is about more than an annual performance evaluation. It is about managers meeting regularly with their employees to both provide feedback on their performance and also to hear feedback from their employees. Coaching is one such method to provide some constructive feedback and can be done in a way that is supportive (Ali & Lodhi, 2018). When using a coaching method, employees tend to feel more supported by their organization (Ali & Lodhi, 2018). Establishing a habit of meeting on a consistent basis allows employees to know how their performance is progressing and allows them to correct any deficiencies in a timely manner (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Menguc et al. (2013) found that supervisory feedback is positively and significantly related to employee engagement in a study of employees at a large retail

chain. Employees who received clear expectations and regular communication had higher levels of engagement than those who did not (Menguc et al., 2013).

Providing Developmental Opportunities

Organizations offer developmental opportunities to their employees to improve business outcomes and to continuously improve (Pierce & Maurer, 2009). Providing developmental opportunities to employees is a significant investment, with U.S. companies spending roughly \$134.1 billion in 2008 (Kraimer et al., 2011). Employers can use several methods to develop their employees including both informal on-the-job learning and formal training programs (Birdi et al., 1997; Mone et al., 2011). Larger corporations are more likely to be in a position to offer formal training programs to their employees than small business. However, that does not mean that small business can't develop their employees. They may simply need to be more creative with how they approach developmental opportunities (Lorenzet, Cook, & Ozeki, 2006).

These developmental opportunities also allow employees to improve their skillsets or to gain new skills, and possibly to advance their career. Developmental opportunities that benefit both organizations and employees then lead to the strengthening of the reciprocal relationship described in SET and employee loyalty can increase based on this reciprocity (Davila & Pina-Ramirez, 2014; Pierce & Maurer, 2009).

Marrelli (2011) found that employees at highly engaged organizations had more positive perceptions of developmental opportunities than those at organizations with low levels of engagement. Other researchers have also found that developmental opportunities are an important part of employee engagement (Birdi et al., 1997; Hynes,

2012; Muthuveloo et al., 2013). Employees who are continually challenged at work and who feel supported by leaders in developing their career and learning new skills that can further their career tend to have higher levels of engagement than those who do not feel the organization is investing in them and in their future (Andrew & Sofian, 2011).

Conducting Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisals are a specific method of providing employees feedback (Pearce & Porter, 1986). In some organizations, performance appraisals are the only aspect of the performance management process that exist and can leave both managers and employees with negative experiences (Wing, 2000). Mone et al. (2011) argued that performance appraisals are important, as they encourage transparency in the performance management process. A critical element in a performance appraisal that has a positive impact on employees is the use of a rating system that is understood by employees and managers and that is perceived as fair (LeVan, 2017; Mone et al., 2011). As part of the performance management process, the performance appraisal should be a collection of the feedback provided to employees throughout the year (Simoneaux & Stroud, 2012; Singh, 2013; Trosten-Bloom, Deines, & Carsten, 2014). If performance appraisals are conducted in a vacuum, neither employees nor supervisors gain much from the experience.

Kuvaas (2006) found that there were positive work outcomes if employees were satisfied with the performance appraisal process. Further, Mone et al. (2011) identified transparency and objectivity in the performance appraisals as critical to a positive outcome (p. 209). Langan-Fox, Waycott, Morizzi, and McDonald (1998) identified several positive outcomes of performance appraisals, including increased productivity,

satisfaction with performance, and improved work performance (p. 249). Smaller businesses can also benefit from these formal appraisals if they are done correctly (Lorenzet et al., 2006). One aspect that increases the likelihood of positive outcomes is if employees perceive that the appraisals are fair (LeVan, 2017; Mone et al., 2011; Wing, 2000).

This is an area that needs further research. Most of the existing research about performance appraisals focuses on their relationships with outcomes other than employee engagement. For example, Kuvaas (2006) found that there is a relationship between performance appraisal satisfaction and both commitment and turnover intention. Although highly engaged employees tend to have lower levels of turnover, this study did not look directly at performance appraisals and employee engagement, so that relationship was not established. Mone et al. (2011) argued that creating an appraisal system that is viewed as fair by the employees will improve the performance management process but their theorized argument needs to be studied for confirmation. LeVan (2017) has recently established that there is a positive relationship between the performance appraisal rating and employee engagement. That is, he found that the process of receiving a performance rating had a positive correlation to employee engagement, and that employees with higher ratings were significantly more engaged than those with average or lower ratings (p. 74). Wing (2000) argued that performance appraisals are typically not pleasant for either employees or managers but has not provided research to either identify why or discuss solutions. With many organizations conducting regular performance evaluations, having a greater understanding of the

connection between employee engagement and these formal documents could be useful in establishing a more effective process.

Establishing Trust

Establishing a climate of trust benefits organizations because when employees trust their supervisors, they are more invested in the relationship (McAllister, 1995). Trust relationships can be both personally based and professionally based and are created based on interactions over time (McAllister, 1995). Once a trust relationship has been formed, managers are able to influence their employees more than if there is no trust relationship and this improves the working relationship. When senior managers establish a level of trust within an organization, they can help encourage a fully engaged workforce (Haynie, Mossholder, & Harris, 2016). This, in turn, can help build employee confidence in systems and processes, such as performance management, that the leadership team supports (Haynie et al., 2016). Wing (2000) pointed out that neither employees nor managers look forward to the annual performance evaluations, which could be attributed to a lack of trust between managers and employees. This is especially true when the manager is giving negative feedback and if the employee has not heard the feedback previously. If managers establish a climate of trust by communicating more regularly with their employees and by working with employees to help meet their needs, then both parties can feel more positively about the performance appraisal conversation (Mone et al., 2011).

Wang and Hsieh (2013) argued that a connection exists among authentic leadership, employee trust, and employee engagement. They surveyed over 300 employees and found that there was a positive relationship between a climate of trust and

employee engagement (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Mone et al. (2011) argued that having a climate of trust is critical to having highly engaged employees, citing several studies that considered different characteristics of trust with employee engagement. For example, Mone et al. defined a climate of trust as including things such as a leader valuing employees' opinions and listening to their concerns (p. 207). A performance management process that does not include trust between employees and their supervisors would not likely benefit the organization nor would it improve employee engagement. Marrelli's (2011) research found that when managers' actions were consistent with their words and that when they were honest with employees, employees had higher levels of engagement.

PM Activities as Antecedents of Employee Engagement

Knowing the importance of both performance management and employee engagement to organizations leads to the need to determine the relationship between these activities and employee engagement. Researchers have found that relationships exist between business success and several of the performance management activities (Stalinski & Downey, 2012). Davila and Pina-Ramirez (2014) identified that establishing employee goals helps align work with the objectives of the organization. Leaders should consider the importance of each of the activities both individually and collectively as they determine which combination is best able to support the organization and encourage employee engagement. Learning more about which activities have been established as antecedents of employee engagement, and how they work in combination, is the next step to helping organizational leadership determine how to incorporate performance management at their organizations.

As discussed in this chapter, four of the five performance management activities have empirical evidence that support the hypotheses that they are antecedents of employee engagement (Hynes, 2012; Kuvaas, 2006; Marrelli, 2011; Tate, 2015; Wing, 2000; Wollard & Shuck, 2011). For example, having a climate of trust in an organization is an antecedent to employee engagement in a study by Wang and Hsieh (2013). In their study of the relationships among authentic leadership, employee trust, and employee engagement, they specifically found a positive and significant relationship between trust and engagement (p. 618). Haynie et al. (2016) found that senior management trust was related as moderating factor to employee engagement and supported business activities (such as performance management) and decisions. The direct relationship between trust and performance management activities was not included in the study. Another positive relationship that has been identified includes developmental opportunities. Hynes (2012) found an indirect positive relationship between training and development programs and positive employee experience. Muthuveloo et al. (2013) found a more direct link between developmental opportunities and employee engagement. Additional research that has been conducted has established positive relationships between employee engagement and both feedback and goal setting (Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Medlin & Green, 2014; Menguc et al., 2013). Further research should be focused on the connection among these activities and specifically the relationship between annual performance appraisals and employee engagement.

Table 1 provides a summary of those articles that have specifically examined performance management activities as predictors of employee engagement. Of the five performance management activities being studied (setting performance goals, providing

feedback, providing developmental opportunities, conducting performance appraisals, and establishing a climate of trust), four (setting performance goals, providing feedback, providing developmental opportunities, and establishing a climate of trust) have been found to be individual antecedents of employee engagement, with studies conducted in the United States, Canada, Malaysia, and Taiwan specifically discussed in this table.

Table 1

Empirical Research on Performance Management Activities as Predictors of Employee Engagement

Authors	Population sample	Predictor variable(s)	Criterion variable	Instrument used	Findings
Ali & Lodhi (2018)	183 community-based motivators in Punjab, Pakistan	Managerial coaching (employee development)	Employee engagement	Park et al. (2008) managerial coaching scale; UWES	Managerial coaching positively predicted employee engagement, $r = .501, p < .01$
Andrew & Sofian, 2011	104 HR offices with the Inland Revenue Board of Malaysia	Employee development	Employee engagement	Author created survey	Providing developmental opportunities correlated positively with employee engagement, $r = .252, p < .01$
LeVan, 2017	433 full-time U.S. employees; sample found via online research panel	Performance appraisal reactions	Employee engagement	Keeping & Levy (2000) performance appraisal reaction survey; Rich et al. (2010) engagement scale	The relationship between performance appraisal reactions and employee engagement was positive and significant, $r = .43, p < .001$
Medlin & Green, 2014	166 full-time U.S. employees; convenience sample selected from business classes	Management processes: setting performance goals and providing feedback	Employee engagement	Buckingham & Coffman (1999) engagement scale	The measure of management processes, which included goal setting and feedback, correlated positively with employee engagement, $r = .39, p < .01$
Menguc, Auh, Fisher, & Haddad, 2013	Canadian retail employees, 47% response rate from all employees of a retail company	Providing feedback	Employee engagement	Salanova, Agut, & Peiro (2005) Spanish version of Work Engagement Survey	Supervisor feedback correlated positively with employee engagement, $r = .18, p < .001$
Muthuveloo, Basbous, Ping, & Long, 2013	100 employees at organizations around Penang, Malaysia	Employee development	Employee engagement	Authors created a questionnaire, which was tested with a pilot study	Employee development correlated positively with employee engagement.
Tate, 2015	121 employees at small businesses in the United States	Performance management (performance goals and development, climate of trust, feedback and recognition)	Employee engagement	Mone et al. (2011) questionnaires related to performance management as a driver of employee engagement; UWES	Performance management (specifically goals and development, climate of trust, and feedback and recognition) correlated positively with employee engagement.
Wang & Hsieh, 2013	386 employees at top Taiwan organizations	Climate of trust	Employee engagement	Utrecht Work Engagement Survey (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003)	Trust correlated positively with employee engagement, $r = .64, p < .01$

These studies provide support that some performance management activities were found to be antecedents of employee engagement. Of the seven studies in the table, only one addressed the annual performance appraisal as an antecedent of employee engagement. They also addressed other performance management activities in some detail with some overlap of activities among the studies. For example, Andrew and Sofian (2011) specifically focused on HR officers in Malaysia, using a self-created survey that identified employee development opportunities as one potential antecedent of employee engagement and found that the developmental opportunities correlated positively with employee engagement. Muthuveloo et al. (2013) also examined the relationship between employee development and employee engagement, finding that developmental opportunities correlated positively with employee engagement. Their sample was drawn for the manufacturing sector in Malaysia, and they received 100 responses out of 150 requests to complete the survey. Three studies demonstrated that providing developmental opportunities to employees could positively impact employee engagement: Ali and Lodhi (2018), Andrew and Sofian, and Muthuveloo et al. Two of those studies were conducted in Malaysia and the other in Pakistan, but Tate (2015) was able to further expand on the relationship between employee engagement and employee development in the United States. Employee development was one of the three components of performance management that Tate studied, and it was coupled with performance goals. The results of her study did show that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between engagement and performance goals and development (Tate, 2015, p. 133) but did not differentiate between performance and developmental goals. Medlin and Green (2014) also found that scores on a measure of

management processes, which included items involving supervisors who (a) set goals and (b) provided feedback to employees, correlated positively to employee engagement. This provides additional support to the hypothesis that setting goals is an antecedent of employee engagement, but does not further distinguish between goals and developmental opportunities.

Another process that Medlin and Green's (2014) study included was feedback to employees. This study supported the hypothesis that providing feedback to employees is an antecedent of employee engagement. Medlin and Green's study included 166 full-time employees in the southern United States, who were identified by students in a business class (p. 27). These employees covered several industries and levels within the organization. Menguc et al. (2013) focused on a large retail organization in Canada. They received survey responses from almost 500 employees at all levels across the different stores and also found that supervisory feedback correlated positively to employee engagement. Tate (2015) also found that feedback from a supervisor correlated positively to employee engagement, although she combined both informal feedback from a supervisor with formal annual appraisals. Her study focused specifically on small business across the U.S. and consisted of 121 participants.

Another factor important to performance management is having a culture of trust. Wang and Hsieh (2013) focused on leaders' impact on employee engagement, specifically examining if a culture of trust was an antecedent of employment engagement. Wang and Hsieh distributed questionnaires to almost 1,000 employees in manufacturing and service companies in Taiwan, with 386 responses (p. 617). They found that a climate of trust correlated positively with employee engagement. Tate (2015) included the

climate of trust in her study and found that although there was a positive relationship, it had the least correlation among the variables she included. Her study focused on small business, though, which could explain the results relative to other studies.

Tate (2015) conducted a study of performance management activities and employee engagement that examined a portion of the five performance management activities (setting performance goals, providing feedback, providing developmental opportunities, conducting performance appraisals, and establishing a climate of trust) discussed in this chapter. Although she was able to find a correlation between employee engagement and many of those activities, the results were focused specifically on small businesses and she did not directly examine the relationship between annual performance appraisals and employee engagement. As described in the table above and throughout this chapter, four of the five activities associated with performance management have evidence demonstrating their relationship with employee engagement. Annual performance appraisals continue to be included as a performance management activity that can be positively correlated with employee engagement (LeVan, 2017; Mone et al., 2011; Tate, 2015), but only LeVan (2017) has provided evidence of the relationship, specifically between performance appraisal reactions and employee engagement. Further research should be conducted to further establish the relationships and to account for other aspects of the performance management process.

Summary and Conclusions

Of the five performance management activities discussed throughout this chapter, four have been identified as antecedents of employee engagement. The studies listed in the table above provide evidence of the relationship between the performance

management activities of setting performance goals, providing feedback, providing developmental opportunities, and establishing a climate of trust, and employee engagement. However, there are two significant limitations to what has been examined to date. One limitation with previous studies is that documented annual performance appraisals were not examined as a predictor of employee engagement. Although there is some ancillary support that performance appraisals as a form of feedback may have a positive relationship with employee engagement, the difference between the formalized annual performance appraisal process that many organizations experience and regular supervisory feedback should be studied to better understand the relationship. A second limitation is that no studies, to date, have examined the distinct relationship each of these five performance management activities has with employee engagement when controlling for the others, nor have the five activities been studied as part of the performance management process.

The purpose of this study was to examine whether performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, annual appraisals, and a climate of trust are independent antecedents of employee engagement. As discussed, the relationship between several performance management activities and employee engagement has been studied, and relationships exist between four of those activities and employee engagement. However, there are no studies that establish a relationship between performance appraisals and employee engagement. Further, the combination of these activities and the relationship with employee engagement has not yet been studied. Understanding how the combination of these performance management activities can relate to employee engagement provides management with tools to help improve

employee engagement and the performance management process at their organization. This, in turn, provides organizations with the benefits of highly engaged employees, such as decreased absenteeism and increased productivity.

Tate (2015) found that a relationship existed between some performance management activities and employee engagement at small businesses but did not expand her study to incorporate larger organizations. Additionally, Tate did not include the annual performance appraisal as part of her study, and this continues to be a gap in the research involving performance management and employee engagement. Mone et al. (2011) argued that the five performance management activities discussed in this chapter drive employee engagement, yet these authors did not provide empirical evidence supporting that assertion and connecting the five activities in a way that demonstrates how they interact to drive engagement. This study examined those potential antecedents individually and as a collective set of activities to determine their impact on employee engagement.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to examine whether performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, annual appraisals, and a climate of trust are independent antecedents of employee engagement. The questions answered in this research study are as follows: (a) Will performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust each predict employee engagement? and (b) Are performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust each an independent predictor of employee engagement after controlling for the other four variables? In this chapter, I provide a review of the research design associated with this study, including sections on the model for the research design, the sample size and properties, and the instruments used.

Research Design and Approach

In this quantitative study, I used a cross-sectional survey design and sampled employees at organizations in the United States. Quantitative research is appropriately used to objectively test the relationships between the antecedents of employee engagement per the research questions (Creswell, 2014). The target population for this survey included employees at U.S. organizations, and the sampling frame consisted of employees at any U.S. organization with more than 1,000 employees. Although a random sample design would have been ideal for this survey, it was an unrealistic goal as those who responded to the survey formed a self-selected sample. This is an acknowledged limitation to this study.

Participants were asked to respond to several surveys to measure employee engagement and the five performance management activities: employee development opportunities, feedback, goal setting, annual appraisals, and a climate of trust. Employee engagement was measured with the UWES-9. Employee perception of employee development opportunities was measured using a 6-item scale created by Kraimer et al. (2011). Feedback was measured using a 4-item scale created by Bezuijen et al. (2010). Goal specificity was measured using a 6-item scale created by Bezuijen et al. Employee reactions to employee appraisals were measured using a 5-item scale created by Volpone et al. (2012). Both affect-based and cognition-based trust were measured using an 11-item scale created by McAllister (1995).

Setting and Sample

Survey Research

The relationships explored were best answered by surveys for several reasons. Survey research was appropriate because the use of surveys allows me to gather a larger amount of data in a relatively short amount of time (see Groves et al., 2009). All of the surveys used were rated on a Likert-type scale, so respondents needed only to select a level of agreement with statements, rather than having to write answers to questions. Because the surveys were web based, employees were able to participate without incurring high costs (see Ahern, 2005). Finally, using the Internet to solicit participation in surveys provided participants with some level of anonymity when responding (see Ahern, 2005). The anonymity may have encouraged greater participation because the participants were not worried that their responses could harm them and their careers. An important consideration when deciding to use the Internet for these surveys is the concern

of selection bias, which could occur because not everyone has access to the Internet (see Ahern, 2005). However, all participants had Internet access at their place of employment.

Sampling Method

Selecting the correct method for sample selection is a critical step in the research process. Survey methodology is used to gather data that can be evaluated in a quantitative research design (Groves et al., 2009). This was an appropriate method to test the variables of employee engagement and the performance management activities because the surveys provided data on those variables that could then be analyzed (see Groves et al., 2009). Working with a research company allowed a diverse set of employees to be invited to participate in the study. Emails were sent to qualified participants (full-time, U.S.-based employees at organizations with more than 1,000 employees), at which time they could elect to complete the study if they were interested. Once the target sample size was reached, the survey was closed. This provided a self-selected sample of employees, which is not as ideal as a random sample. However, it is a limitation to this study that still allowed me to collect the data. Although all employees who are invited had an equal likelihood of participating, there may have been a slight bias in that those who answered the survey more quickly may have had an unknown motivation for doing so.

Sample Size

There are several factors I considered when determining the sample size for this study. Based on an alpha value of .01, which was appropriate because I used a Bonferroni correction to test five independent variables, and a power level of 80% to

detect a medium correlation (using $r = .3$) as statistically significant (see Burkholder, n.d.; Wuensch, 2009), I needed a minimum sample size of 122 individuals (see Burkholder, n.d., p. 3). Tate (2015) conducted a study on the relationship between some performance management activities and employee engagement at small business. Her sample size was 121 individuals, although she had a minimum sample size of 116. When conducting surveys by mail, the response rate is typically between 20 to 40% (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Email surveys have lower response rates (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008), but the research company in this study was able to meet the participant expectation of 150 individuals due to its reach. For this study, the actual sample size was 181 participants.

Instrumentation

Utrecht Work Engagement Survey (U-WES)

To measure the level of employee engagement, I used the UWES (see Mills, Culbertson, & Fullagar, 2012). The UWES measures three specific aspects of employee engagement: vigor, which is intended to measure the level of energy felt by employees; dedication, which is intended to measure how involved employees are in their work; and absorption which is intended to measure if there is a “sense of time passing quickly” (Mills et al., 2012, p. 520). These three measures combine to establish the employee engagement levels. The UWES uses a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 (*Always*) and 7 (*Never*) anchors, with a lower number suggesting a more highly engaged workforce (Mills et al., 2012, p. 523). The results are calculated by averaging the responses across each of the three subscales, and then again for the total score, with a range between 1 (minimum) and 7 (maximum). There are two versions of the UWES, one of which asks

17 questions, and the other of which asks only nine of those questions. Questions include “I feel strong and vigorous” and “I am very resilient, mentally” (Mills et al., 2012, p. 526). In this study, I used the 9-item version of the UWES.

The UWES-9 has high levels of reliability with the true score variance to total variance, averaging a .92 (Mills et al., 2012, p. 523) and has been found to have high levels of empirical validity, even when measured against other scales that focus on academic populations. Of the three areas that are measured, the scale has also been found to have high content validity. The Cronbach coefficient alpha estimate of reliability for the 9-item version of the scale (UWES-9) has been reported as .90 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003, p. 26).

Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) also compared the UWES with both the Utrecht Burnout Scale and the Maslach Burnout Inventory, expecting to see a negative correlation between the scales. Across the board, they found that the negative correlation did exist with a wide range of correlations, but all negative and mostly all significant (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003, p. 18, 31). Additional research has demonstrated a correlation between engagement and other job performance related activities. For example, Kim et al. (2012) discussed multiple studies that used the UWES as an instrument when looking at the relationship between engagement and job performance. In one study, Gorgievski, Bakker, and Schaufeli (2010) used the UWES-9 to examine the relationship that employee engagement had with job performance. They found that employee engagement had a positive relationship with job performance (Gorgievski et al., 2010). Another study addressed the relationship that weekly employee engagement had on job performance using the UWES-9 and found that there was a positive

relationship between the two (Bakker & Bal, 2010). Of the 18 studies that Kim et al. reviewed, all but three used the UWES to measure employee engagement. The UWES has been used effectively to demonstrate the relationships between employee engagement and performance related measures.

Employee Development Opportunities

To measure employee development opportunities, I used a 6-item survey created by Kraimer et al. (2011) that specifically focuses on organizational support of development, which is premised on the employees' perceptions of how well the organization supports developmental opportunities. Permission to use this scale was granted by the authors via email (see Appendix A). This survey uses a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) and 7 (*Agree*) anchors, with a higher number suggesting that employees have a more positive perception of organizational support for developmental opportunities (Kraimer et al., 2011, p. 492). This survey asks questions focused on both specialized technical development, such as "My organization has programs and policies that help employees to advance in their functional specialization," and managerial development, such as "My organization provides opportunities for employees to develop their managerial skills" (Kraimer et al., 2011, p. 491). The results are calculated by averaging the scores to the six questions with a range between 1 (minimum) and 7 (maximum). The Cronbach coefficient alpha estimate of reliability for scores on this scale has been reported as .92 (Kraimer et al., 2011, p. 490).

Feedback

Bezuijen et al. (2010) used a 4-item scale to determine leader feedback with respect to employee learning. Permission to use this scale was granted by the authors via

email (see Appendix A). The scale measures task-detail feedback and learning processes. This survey uses a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) and 5 (*Strongly Agree*) anchors, with a higher number suggesting that employees receive more task-specific feedback (Bezuijen et al., 2010, p. 680). Questions include “My supervisor informs me of how I should perform specific tasks if something goes wrong” and “My supervisor informs me of whether it will benefit my career to follow a specific course of training program.” The results are calculated by averaging the scores to the four questions with a range between 1 (minimum) and 5 (maximum). The Cronbach coefficient alpha estimate of reliability for scores on this scale has been reported as .87 (Bezuijen et al., 2010, p. 680).

Goal Specificity

Bezuijen et al. (2010) used a 6-item scale that measures goal specificity (Bezuijen et al., 2010). Permission to use this scale was granted by the authors via email (see Appendix A). This measure verifies the value of the goals that managers and employees created. This survey uses a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 (*Very Vague Goals*) and 5 (*Very Specific Goals*) anchors, with the higher number indicating more specific goals. Questions include “Have you set clear goals, together with your supervisor, for your performance levels in your current job” and “Have you set clear goals, together with your supervisor, for your performance of learning tasks within the function.” The results are calculated by averaging the scores to the six questions with a range between 1 (minimum) and 5 (maximum). The Cronbach coefficient alpha estimate of reliability for scores on this scale has been reported as .93 (Bezuijen et al., 2010, p. 680).

Performance Appraisals

Volpone et al. (2012) used a five-item scale to measure employees' reactions to annual performance appraisals. Permission to use this scale was granted by the authors via email (see Appendix A). This scale is similar to previous studies and the authors acknowledged that the "items assess accuracy, utility, and fairness to some extent" (p. 257), but that these items combined would account for reactions to employee appraisals. This survey uses a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) and 5 (*Strongly Agree*) anchors, with a higher number suggesting that employees perceive that the appraisals are fair (Volpone et al., 2012, p. 270). Questions include "I understand how my performance is evaluated" and "The results of performance appraisal are accurate." The results are calculated by averaging the scores to the five questions with a range between 1 (minimum) and 5 (maximum). The Cronbach coefficient alpha estimate of reliability for scores on this scale has been reported as .83 (Volpone et al., 2012, p. 257).

Organizational Trust

McAllister (1995) created an 11-item scale to assess both affect- and cognition-based trust levels. Permission to use this scale was granted by the author via email (see Appendix A). Affect-based trust is based on emotional connections between individuals whereas cognition-based trust is based more on specific interactions or experiences with another person, such as demonstrated reliability or competence (McAllister, 1995). This survey uses a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) and 7 (*Strongly Agree*) anchors, with a higher number suggesting that there are higher levels of trust (McAllister, 1995, p. 35). Questions include "I can talk freely to this individual about difficulties I am having at work and know that (s)he will want to listen" and "I can rely on this person not

to make my job more difficult by careless work.” The results are calculated by averaging the scores to the 11 questions with a range between 1 (minimum) and 7 (maximum). The Cronbach coefficient alpha estimate of reliability for scores on this scale have been reported as .89 and .91, respectively (McAllister, 1995, p. 36).

Data Collection

Data was collected via online survey from a research company. This company was able to reach a large number of participants based on information they had already gathered. Participants were invited to complete the survey if they were full-time, U.S.-based employees at companies with more than 1,000 employees. This is because this study was focused on U.S. employees, and also addressed that Tate (2015) focused only on small businesses; thus, the sample was U.S. employees at medium to large companies. The author contracted with the research company for the sole purpose of receiving responses for 150 participants. The author had no affiliation with the research company beyond that arrangement.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions are as follows:

Research Question 1: Will performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust each predict employee engagement?

- H_{01_1} : Performance goals will not predict employee engagement.
- H_{11_1} : Performance goals will predict employee engagement.
- H_{01_2} Feedback/recognition will not predict employee engagement.

- H_{112} : Feedback/recognition will predict employee engagement.
- H_{013} : Developmental opportunities will not predict employee engagement.
- H_{113} : Developmental opportunities will predict employee engagement.
- H_{014} : Performance appraisals will not predict employee engagement.
- H_{114} : Performance appraisals will predict employee engagement.
- H_{015} : A climate of trust will not predict employee engagement.
- H_{115} : A climate of trust will predict employee engagement.

Research Question 2: Are performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust each an independent predictor of employee engagement after controlling for the other four variables?

- H_{021} : Performance goals will not independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust.
- H_{121} : Performance goals will independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust.
- H_{022} : Feedback/recognition will not independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust.

- H_{12_2} : Feedback/recognition will independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust.
- H_{02_3} : Developmental opportunities will not independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, feedback/recognition, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust.
- H_{12_3} : Developmental opportunities will independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, feedback/recognition, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust.
- H_{02_4} : Performance appraisals will not independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, and a climate of trust.
- H_{12_4} : Performance appraisals will independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, and a climate of trust.
- H_{02_5} : A climate of trust will not independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, and performance appraisals.
- H_{12_5} : A climate of trust will independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, and performance appraisals.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1 concerned whether performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust will each correlate with employee engagement. Employee engagement was the criterion variable for this study with performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust each being a predictor variable. I tested Hypotheses 1 using a linear regression, with a Bonferroni correction. The Bonferroni correction was appropriate to determine the correct sample size in order to test the correlation between sets of variables and to control for potential errors (Green & Salkind, 2014). Because there were five predictor variables, the Bonferroni correction was calculated by using the .01 significance level divided by 5, which resulted in a significance level of .05. Applying the Bonferroni correction controlled the level of type 1 error associated with testing multiple hypotheses pertaining to each research question.

To test research question 2, a multiple regression analysis was used. The predictor and criterion variables were the same as for research question 1, except that all predictor variables were entered simultaneously in the regression analysis. The statistical significance of each predictor variable indicated whether it was an independent predictor of employee engagement while statistically controlling for effects of the other four predictor variables.

Additional data that was collected included gender, age, education level, management role, and years with the organization. This data could provide additional insight into the results. Sample characteristics was reported for the demographic variables, predictor variables, and criterion variable. Descriptive statistics that were

reported for quantitative variables included means, SD, skewness, kurtosis, and intercorrelations among variables. For categorical variables, frequencies and percentages were reported. Cronbach's alpha values were reported for the independent variables, and dependent variable. All data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) statistical software.

Data Assumptions

When determining that a quantitative analysis was the appropriate method to use, there were assumptions that must have been met regarding the data (Creswell, 2014). These assumptions included both validity of the survey scores and reliability of the survey instrument (Creswell, 2014). As discussed above, each of the instruments used for this study met both validity and reliability expectations. Each research question was analyzed using a different quantitative technique. These techniques relied on additional assumptions regarding the data that was analyzed. In addition, in quantitative techniques involving Pearson correlations and linear regression analysis, data assumptions included linearity, homoskedasticity, and normality. Univariate normality of the independent variables and dependent variable were examined by inspecting histograms, Q-Q plots and skewness and kurtosis values. Linearity and homoskedasticity were examined by inspecting bivariate scatterplots of the criterion variable versus each predictor variable. If these assumptions were violated, then an appropriate data transformation was applied.

Ethical Considerations

Conducting an ethical study was a critical component to consider. This study did not include any minors, so there was no issue with that component of ethics. Other ethical considerations included the participants' understanding of consent, volunteering

and withdrawing, anonymity, and debriefing. To ensure that participants were willing to participate and they understood the risks of participation, they were each given the opportunity to decline involvement with the survey and any risks that may have come with participating were clearly spelled out. They were also informed that they could withdraw from participation at any point if they wished to do so (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). However, as Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008) further pointed out, there could have been a point at which informing participants of the purpose may have invalidated the results (p. 75). For example, if participants were aware that one of the purposes was to determine what performance management activities most significantly predicted engagement, they may have been more likely to alter their results if they had a predetermined idea of what those may have been. Because the risk to participation was minimal in this survey, the amount of information that was shared with the participants was less than in a highly risky experiment. What was made clear, though, was that their participation was voluntary and that if they wished to withdraw at any point, they were able to do so.

For the purposes of this study, anonymity was provided to participants. The difference between anonymity and confidentiality is the ability to connect the data collected to the specific participants (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Because there was no need to connect the data, participants were assured that their responses were considered anonymous. It was unnecessary for the purposes of this survey to collect any identification data, although accounting for gender, age, education level, management role, and years with the organization may have provided interesting information. That

information was not required but was requested. Therefore, anonymity was the appropriate level to consider.

Finally, participants should have access to the data after the study was complete. The American Psychological Association's (2014) expectation of debriefing is that the researcher provide the information as soon as is reasonably possible. However, in this case, there was no way to reach the participants after the data was collected because it was done anonymously. The participants were provided the researcher's name and University affiliation and could find this dissertation if they so chose once it was published. The collected data could support changes to performance management systems in order to have a more positive impact on the employee population. Increased employee engagement has had additional organizational impacts, such as decreased turnover and increased productivity (Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Wollard & Shuck, 2011). These positive changes can also impact the areas where organizations operate by offering more stable employment and a thriving business with employees who are involved in their communities.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I discussed the methodology used in this study. The purpose of this study was to examine whether five performance management activities (setting performance goals, providing feedback and recognition, providing developmental opportunities, having annual performance appraisals, and establishing a climate of trust) are each independent antecedents of employee engagement. Tate (2015) conducted a study examining some of the same performance management activities and their relationship to employee engagement specifically at small businesses. She did not

include annual performance appraisals, and she measured performance and developmental goals as one variable, so her study did not address some aspects of performance management that could be considered important. Six short scales were used to examine these variables independently and as a group. The sample consisted of participants from U.S.-based companies via survey. Results of the study were included in Chapter 4, and additional information about future studies and limitations of this study were included in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Employee engagement is a topic that organizational leaders are interested in because the cost of disengaged employees includes lower productivity, higher rates of turnover, and increased absenteeism (Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Cesario & Chambel, 2017; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Wollard & Shuck, 2011). Understanding the antecedents of employee engagement provides leaders with tools they can use to impact engagement. One set of antecedents includes performance management activities, such as goal setting, feedback, providing developmental opportunities, holding annual performance appraisals, and establishing a climate of trust. The purpose of this quantitative research study was to examine whether performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, annual appraisals, and a climate of trust are independent antecedents of employee engagement. Employee engagement was measured using the UWES (see; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The performance management activities were measured using five different scales. Employee perception of development opportunities was measured using a 6-item scale created by Kraimer et al. (2011). Specific feedback provided by leaders was measured using a 4-item scale created by Bezuijen et al. (2010). Goal specificity was measured using a 6-item scale created by Bezuijen et al. Employee reactions to employee appraisals was measured using a 5-item scale created by Volpone et al. (2012). Both affect-based and cognition-based trust was measured using an 11-item scale created by McAllister (1995). The sample consisted of full-time, U.S.-based employees who worked for companies with at least 1,000 employees. Statistical analyses of the data were conducted. The research questions were as follows:

Research Question 1: Will performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust each predict employee engagement?

Research Question 2: Are performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust each an independent predictor of employee engagement after controlling for the other four variables?

This chapter begins with how I collected the data, followed by the sample demographics, descriptive statistics for each of the variables, and statistical analyses to examine the two research questions.

Data Collection

Data were collected over a 1-day period, using the data collection company, Centiment, Co., after receiving approval from Walden University's IRB (12-24-19-0449394). Respondents who worked full-time for U.S.-based organizations who employed more than 1,000 employees were considered eligible to complete the survey. Data collection started on the morning of January 21, 2020 and was completed that same afternoon. The total number of responses obtained was 181. This exceeded the target sample size of 150, which was determined by considering the 80% statistical power for the analyses of the research questions, and the sample size that Tate (2015) used in her research. There were no missing values in the dataset and eligible respondents were screened before starting the survey.

Sample Demographics

The sample ($N = 181$) included employees who self-identified as being full-time, U.S.-based employees who worked at a company with over 1,000 employees. Table 2 shows the frequency counts and percentages for the sample's characteristics.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 181)

Demographic characteristic	Percentage	Frequency
<i>Age</i>		
18-29	16.0%	29
30-39	37.0%	67
40-49	34.8%	63
50-59	10.5%	19
Over 60	1.7%	3
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	45.3%	82
Female	54.7%	99
<i>Education Level</i>		
High School Diploma	7.2%	13
Some College	18.2%	33
Bachelor's Degree	42.0%	76
Advanced Degree	32.6%	59
<i>Industry</i>		
Advertising / Marketing / Sales	1.7%	3
Accounts / Banking / Finance	16.6%	30
Education	8.3%	15
Healthcare	20.4%	37
Hotel / Hospitality	1.7%	3
Human Resources / Consulting	5.0%	9
Insurance	5.0%	9
Law / Legal	2.2%	4
Retail / Merchandise	9.4%	17
Transport / Logistics	1.7%	3
Other	28.2%	51
<i>Supervisor</i>		
Yes	63.5%	115
No	35.5%	66
<i>Years of employment</i>		
Less than 1	2.8%	5
1 - 5	34.3%	62
6 - 10	33.7%	61
More than 10	29.3%	53

Tests of Assumptions

In this study, I used correlational analysis to measure the relationship between employee engagement (the criterion variable) and each of five performance management activities (the predictor variables). Because correlational analysis based upon the Pearson correlation coefficient is equivalent to simple linear regression analysis, I examined whether the dataset collected for this study met the statistical assumptions required to apply simple linear regression analyses. These statistical assumptions included linearity, homoskedasticity, and normality. I examined histograms, Q-Q plots, and skewness and kurtosis values to determine normality. Linearity and homoskedasticity were examined by inspecting scatterplots of the criterion variable versus each predictor variable.

To assess whether the linearity assumption was met, I first examined the scatterplots of each of the criterion variables versus the predictor variable. The scatter plots included a locally weighted smoothing line to help better visualize the relationship between the variables. Each of the locally weighted smoothing curves (Appendix B) appeared to indicate moderate to strong curvature, which could indicate that the assumption of linearity was not met. This was confirmed by performing a series of regression analyses to examine whether the relationship of each predictor variable with employee engagement was nonlinear. To test for nonlinearity in the relationship, a quadratic term was incorporated into each regression model, as follows. In each regression analysis, the criterion variable was employee engagement, and the predictor variable was one of the five performance management activities and a quadratic term consisting of the same independent variable, centered by subtracting off its overall mean and then squaring the result. If the quadratic term is statistically significant, this would

indicate that the relationship between the predictor variable and employee engagement is nonlinear. For each of the five performance management activity variables, with the exception of the performance evaluations variable, the quadratic term was statistically significant in the regression model. This indicates that the relationship with employee engagement for four out of the five performance management activity variables cannot be adequately modeled using simple linear regression.

To determine if the normality assumption was met, I inspected quantile-quantile plots, or Q-Q plots (Appendix C), for each distribution within the study. In most cases, the data were not too far from a normal distribution, with the exception of the development opportunities variable. However, because the linearity assumptions had already been violated for four of the five performance management variables, the first research question was analyzed using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient rather than the Pearson's correlation. This was in order to use a consistent analysis for each of the five variables. The Spearman's rank correlation requires only a monotonic relationship between the variables, that is, the relationship is consistently in either the positive or negative direction, not U-shaped (Glen, 2017).

Results for Research Question 1

The first research question for this study was as follows: Will performance goals, feedback and recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust each predict employee engagement? The five null hypotheses stated that each of the performance management activities of (a) performance goals, (b) feedback, (c) developmental opportunities, (d) performance appraisals, and (e) climate of trust, would not predict employee engagement. Descriptive statistics, including means and

standard deviations, as well as the correlations coefficients using Spearman's Rho for the measured variables of employee engagement and the five performance management activities, are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Correlation Coefficients and Descriptive Statistics for Measured Variables (N = 181)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. UWES	4.16	1.08	(0.90)					
2. Developmental Opportunities	5.47	1.40	0.69**	(0.92)				
3. Feedback	3.96	0.85	0.62**	0.73**	(0.87)			
4. Goal Specificity	3.38	1.32	0.66**	0.74**	0.78**	(0.93)		
5. Performance Evaluations	4.18	0.71	0.57**	0.68**	0.75**	0.68**	(0.83)	
6. Organizational Trust	5.69	0.98	0.57**	0.59**	0.55**	0.56**	0.55**	(0.89)

Note. Numbers in parentheses in the diagonal are Cronbach's alpha coefficients
Correlation examined using Spearman's Rho

** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

The first null hypothesis for this research question stated: Performance goals will not predict employee engagement. Performance goals were measured with the goal specificity scale created by Bezuijen et al. (2010) and employee engagement was measured using the UWES-9 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The results of the test were statistically significant, $r_s(179) = .0.658, p < .001$, two-tailed. There is positive relationship between performance goals and employee engagement.

The second null hypothesis for this research question stated: Feedback will not predict employee engagement. Feedback was measured using a feedback scale created by Bezuijen et al. (2010) and employee engagement was measured using the UWES-9 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The results of this test were also statistically significant, r_s

(179) = 0.621, $p < .001$, two-tailed. There is a positive relationship between feedback and employee engagement.

The third null hypothesis for this research question stated: Developmental opportunities will not predict employee engagement. Development opportunities were measured using the employee development scale created by Kraimer et al. (2011) and employee engagement was measured using the UWES -9 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The results of this test were also statistically significant, $r_s (179) = 0.691$, $p < .001$, two-tailed. There is a positive relationship between developmental opportunities and employee engagement.

The fourth null hypothesis for this research question stated: Performance appraisals will not predict employee engagement. Performance appraisals was measured using the reaction to performance appraisals scale created by Volpone et al. (2012) and employee engagement was measured using the UWES -9 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The results of this test were also statistically significant, $r_s (179) = 0.565$, $p < .001$, two-tailed. There is a positive relationship between performance appraisals and employee engagement. The relationship between performance appraisals and employee engagement is the lowest of the five variables studied.

The fifth null hypothesis for this research question stated: A climate of trust will not predict employee engagement. A climate of trust was measured using the organizational trust scale created by McAllister (1995) and employee engagement was measured using the UWES-9 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). Once again, the results of the test were statistically significant $r_s (179) = 0.574$, $p < .001$, two-tailed. There is a positive relationship between a climate of trust and employee engagement.

Results for Research Question 2

The second research question for this study was as follows: Are performance goals, feedback and recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust each an independent predictor of employee engagement after controlling for the other four variables? The five null hypotheses stated that each of the performance management activities of (a) performance goals, (b) feedback, (c) developmental opportunities, (d) performance appraisals, and (e) climate of trust, would not independently predict employee engagement when controlling for the other four variables. Partial rank correlation coefficients were calculated using SPSS to examine this research questions. A partial rank correlation coefficient is a measure of the associate between variables while statistically controlling for the effects of one or more of the other variables and is calculated based on the rank ordering of scores for each variable, rather than the raw scores (Somers, 1974).

Table 4

*Partial Rank Correlations Between UWES and Performance Management Variables (N = 181)**

Performance Management Variables	UWES	<i>p</i>
	-	-
Developmental Opportunities	0.29	<.001*
Feedback	0.07	0.358
Goal Specificity	0.18	0.016*
Performance Evaluations	0.01	0.915
Organizational Trust	0.22	0.003*

* Partial rank correlations are between each performance management variable and UWES scores, statistically controlling for the other four performance management variables.

The first null hypothesis for this research question stated: Performance goals will not independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for feedback, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust. The results of this test were statistically significant, $r(175) = 0.181, p = .016$. There is a positive relationship between performance goals and employee engagement when controlling for the other variables.

The second null hypothesis for this research question stated: Feedback will not independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust. The results of this test were not statistically significant, $r(175) = 0.070, p = .358$. However, there is a small positive relationship between feedback and employee engagement when controlling for the other variables.

The third null hypothesis for this research question stated: Developmental opportunities will not independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, feedback, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust. The results of this test were statistically significant, $r(175) = 0.291, p < .001$. There is a small positive relationship between developmental opportunities and employee engagement when controlling for the other variables.

The fourth null hypothesis for this research question stated: Performance appraisals will not independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, feedback, developmental opportunities, and a climate of trust. The results of this test were not statistically significant, $r(175) = 0.008, p = .915$. There is not

a relationship between performance appraisals and employee engagement when controlling for the other variables.

The fifth null hypothesis for this research question stated: A climate of trust will not independently predict employee engagement, after controlling for performance goals, feedback, developmental opportunities, and performance appraisals. The results of this test were statistically significant, $r(175) = 0.222, p = .003$. There is a small positive relationship between a climate of trust and employee engagement when controlling for the other variables.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine whether performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, annual appraisals, and a climate of trust are independent antecedents of employee engagement. The correlation analysis with Spearman's rank correlation indicated that all five performance activity variables had a statistically significant positive relationship with employee engagement. Partial rank correlation analyses indicated that when controlling for the other variables, three out of five of the performance management variables (developmental opportunities, goal specificity, and organizational trust) were significant predictors of engagement independent of the other independent variables.

In the next chapter, the study results are interpreted and discussed with reference to the research questions and previous research, as well as the methodological limitations of the present study. Implications of the results are considered, and recommendations for action and future study will be presented.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the summary and discussion of results, conclusions, and recommendations drawn from the study of the relationship between employee engagement and performance management activities. The purpose of this study was to examine whether performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, annual appraisals, and a climate of trust are independent antecedents of employee engagement. Employee engagement was measured using the UWES (see Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The performance management activities were measured using five different scales (see Bezuijen et al., 2010; Kraimer et al., 2011; McAllister, 1995; Volpone et al., 2012). The analysis was conducted on the responses from 181 full-time employees who worked at U.S.-based companies with more than 1,000 employees.

I begin this chapter with a summary of the findings presented in Chapter 4 and a discussion of interpretations based upon these findings. In the final section of this chapter, the results are related back to the concepts introduced in Chapter 1 and the review of literature in Chapter 2. I conclude the chapter with recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Research Findings

After the data were gathered, multiple statistical analyses were used for hypothesis testing. The first research question was analyzed using Spearman's rank correlation coefficients after assumption testing, and the second research question was analyzed using partial rank correlation coefficients. The research questions for this study were as follows:

Research Question 1: Will performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust each predict employee engagement?

Research Question 2: Are performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, performance appraisals, and a climate of trust each an independent predictor of employee engagement after controlling for the other four variables?

The target sample size was 150 full-time employees who worked at U.S.-based organizations with more than 1,000 employees. A total of 181 participants responded to the survey before it was closed. The final sample size of 181 participants, which exceeded the minimum required for adequate statistical power, was used as it allowed an increase in the statistical power to test the hypotheses. The ages of respondents ranged from 18 to over 60. There were slightly more female respondents (54.7%) than male respondents (45.3%) and roughly 75% of all respondents had a bachelor's degree or higher. A majority of respondents supervised others (63.5%).

For Research Question 1, correlations coefficients using Spearman's Rho were used to determine if the performance management activities each predicted employee engagement. For each of the five performance management variables, a statistically significant, positive relationship with employee engagement was found. The correlation values ranged from 0.565 to 0.691, suggesting a large positive relationship in each case. The smallest correlation was between employee engagement and performance evaluations, and the largest correlation was between employee engagement and developmental opportunities.

For Research Question 2, partial rank correlation coefficients were calculated in order to examine whether each of the five performance management activities was an independent predictor of employee engagement, while statistically controlling for the other four. In this case, although a positive relationship appeared to exist between each of the variables and employee engagement, only three of the five were independent predictors of engagement. Setting goals, having a climate of trust, and developmental opportunities all had statistically significant relationships with employee engagement when controlling for the other variables. Neither giving feedback nor annual performance appraisals were independent predictors of employee engagement.

Interpretation of Findings

The results of this study suggested that there is a significant relationship between employee engagement and the five performance management activities as a group of activities. Previous researchers (Ali & Lodhi, 2018; Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Muthuveloo et al., 2013) examined individual components of performance management rather than a collective of the five activities. Tate (2015) examined three of the five activities that I examined in this study, but she did not control for the other activities in her study.

The results of the first research question appear to confirm previous research that indicates four of the five performance management activities are antecedents of employee engagement. For example, Ali and Lodhi (2018), Andrew and Sofian (2011), and Muthuveloo et al. (2013) all found a positive relationship between development and employee engagement. Both Marrelli (2011) and Medlin and Green (2014) found a positive relationship between setting goals and employee engagement. Wang and Hsieh

(2013) found a positive relationship between trust and engagement. Menguc et al. (2013) found a positive relationship between feedback and employee engagement. My findings all support these studies and confirm the relationship that exists between each of these performance management activities individually with employee engagement.

One study that included more than one performance management activity was Tate's (2015) study of performance management activities as antecedents of employee engagement specific to small businesses. She found that the three activities she included in her study (feedback and recognition, climate of trust, and performance goals and development) all had positive relationships with employee engagement. However, she did not control for the other variables, nor did she include performance appraisals in her study. A significant gap in the literature has been around the relationship between performance appraisals and employee engagement. LeVan (2017) studied performance appraisal reactions and established a relationship between the reactions and employee engagement, but his was the only study that addressed performance evaluations.

These relationships were studied individually rather than as part of a performance management process and, therefore, it might be useful to look at these relationships with respect to the second research question. The second research question specifically looked at each individual activity while controlling for the others. In this study, I found that three of the five performance management activities (development, setting goals, and trust) had statistically significant and positive relationships to employee engagement, albeit to a smaller degree than when not controlling for the other variables. The relationship was strong when not controlling for the other activities, and there was a significant drop in the relationship once the other variables were controlled for. With the

other two variables (feedback and performance appraisals), the relationship was no longer statistically significant. This could indicate that if there are missing components of a performance management process, the remaining components are not as effective. The tendency to describe performance appraisals as performance management, for example, could skew the thought process of researchers and practitioners when evaluating overarching performance management processes, a concern also discussed by Sharma, Sharma, and Agarwal (2016). If researchers and practitioners are both more deliberate in their choice of language, it may help identify what aspects of a performance management process are actually beneficial for organizations. The results of my study suggest that all aspects should be used to have the most positive impact on employee engagement and that when some are not accounted for, there is a negative impact.

Menguc et al. (2013) and Tate (2015) both found that a positive relationship existed between feedback and employee engagement. However, neither of those studies were controlling for other variables. When considering Research Question 2 only, my study's results are in contrast to those findings. There was no statistically significant relationship between feedback and employee engagement. This may indicate that for feedback to have a positive impact on employee engagement, other factors, such as goal setting or developmental opportunities, must also be present. Feedback without a more robust system may not have the desired impact on employee engagement.

LeVan's (2017) survey included both small and large business, with 188 of his respondents at companies with 1,000 or more employees. He identified a positive relationship between a performance appraisal rating and employee engagement, and that employees with higher ratings were significantly more engaged than those with average

or lower ratings (LeVan, 2017). By contrast, my study did not look at what the ratings were but rather the general reactions to performance appraisals. LeVan also did not examine other performance management activities, which was a component of the current study. Unlike his findings, I did not find a statistically significant relationship between performance evaluations and employee engagement when the other factors were controlled for.

The results of my study have some similarities with Tate's (2015) study of small businesses. However, two significant differences exist between the studies. First, Tate's sample specifically consisted of employees at U.S. small businesses, which were defined as having 500 or fewer employees. In contrast, I required employees to work for U.S. businesses with 1,000 or more employees. Secondly, Tate's survey instrument combined performance management activities in two cases: Feedback and performance appraisals were one measure, and developmental and performance goals were another measure. Her third variable was organizational trust, which I also measured individually. Her results indicated that all three of her variables were positively correlated with employee engagement, with trust being the lowest of the variables. Unlike Tate's results, organizational trust in my study was not the lowest variable. However, further parallels cannot be established. In addition, the performance management process of small businesses is likely different from larger companies. Although LeVan (2017) had a mix of respondents from large and small businesses, he did not provide separate results for the two groups.

When controlling for the other performance management activities, the relationship between each activity and employee engagement is much lower. This

finding may indicate that the performance management process needs multiple activities to have a significant relationship with employee engagement and that removing aspects of the process will decrease that relationship. The results of my study suggest that there is a stronger relationship with employee engagement when all five performance management activities are included than when they are examined individually, controlling for the others.

The results of this study could be interpreted to support the SET if the exchange is between the performance management process and employee engagement. That is, organizations provide feedback, developmental opportunities, goals, formal evaluations, and a climate of trust, and, in exchange, employees are engaged and support the organization. As previously discussed, this leads to greater productivity, lower turnover, and other advantages that benefit both employee and employer (Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Cesario & Chambel, 2017; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Wollard & Shuck, 2011). Although the results cannot be dissected to determine if employees are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated, the relationship between the performance management activities and employee engagement indicates some level of motivation on the employee's part, further supporting the SDT.

Limitations

Participants were invited via a third-party vendor who regularly conducts research. These participants had previously indicated that they were available to take surveys, so they are motivated to respond, which limits the generalizability of the study. In addition, they self-identified that they met the criteria of full-time employees at U.S.-based organizations with 1,000 or more employees. There was no way to verify this

information, although the likelihood of inaccurate reporting is low. Overall, the findings of this study were generally consistent with previous studies that had examined the same constructs and provided some additional context and consideration for constructs that had not previously received much individual attention.

A limitation to my study that was discussed in Chapter 1 was a bias that respondents may have about performance management activities. Managers and employees do not always find value in a company's performance management process (see Mone et al., 2011; Pulakos et al., 2015). This impression about performance management could lead respondents to answer more negatively to the questions about the different activities associated with performance management. Another limitation was that respondents may not have been aware of what the performance management activities were, which could mean there was variation in the results. Oftentimes, employees consider performance management to be only the annual employee appraisal (Sharma et al., 2016). Providing specific definitions to respondents may have yielded more precise results allowing for nuance among the different performance management activities. One question in the feedback scale asked if the supervisor informed them of what skills could be improved (Bezuijen et al., 2009). Although that question specifically contributed to the feedback score, it is possible that the respondents thought of their performance evaluation when answering it. Other questions could have had similar ambiguity when the respondents answered the questions, which would limit the results of this study.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further studies could involve looking at the performance management activities in varying different combinations. With respect to Research Question 2, neither performance evaluations nor feedback were found to have a correlation with employee engagement. It might be appropriate to examine the other three activities as a collective to determine what their relationship to employee engagement would be without evaluations or feedback. There could also be additional research into feedback specifically. The frequency and regularity of feedback from a supervisor could change how the employee perceives the feedback. Future researchers could look into how often feedback is provided to see if there is any relationship to employee engagement based on frequency of the feedback. There also may be additional relationships among the five activities that make sense to examine in order to help HR and organizational leaders create a strong performance management process that has the most positive impact on employee engagement. My study also included both supervisors and non-supervisors. It may be that current supervisors have a better understanding of the performance management process and may have a more positive view of it. A study of only one group or the other may tell organizations more about different groups of individuals or may allow organizations to adapt training materials in order to bridge any gap that may exist. Although not specified in my study, there may also be a difference in how employees who work remotely view performance management activities versus employees who work in an office or work location. This is especially relevant currently, due to the pandemic that has changed how and where people work.

A limitation to my survey that was mentioned in Chapter 1 is that respondents may be unaware of what performance management activities are used, or that they may be biased about performance management activities. Future research could be conducted at a single company rather than gathering data from multiple businesses. This would allow the researcher to have a baseline understanding of how the performance management activities are used within the organization, and should provide consistency of the terms for the respondents. This can help address limitations about the awareness of performance management activities on the part of the respondents. In addition, both of these limitations could be addressed with a qualitative study to really understand what it is about the different activities that may not support higher employee engagement. This would allow the researcher to ask more nuanced questions to help understand lower scores for some of the activities. Davis (2015) conducted a qualitative study of performance management experts to better understand what aspects of performance management were important when creating a new performance management system. Having these discussions with a panel of experts allowed clarification and iteration over the course of three rounds. The survey information I used was a snapshot in time and may not have allowed for some of the gradation that one could receive via interviews or panel discussions. A qualitative study could include performance management experts, supervisors, and non-supervisory employees in order to learn even more about how different groups perceive performance management processes. This also allows the researcher to clarify different terms to ensure that all participants are using the same definitions. Khan, Hanif, and Amir (2018) conducted a case study of a performance management system at a pharmaceutical company. As expected, they were able to learn more

nuances about the challenges with the existing process and provide some recommendations to human resources. Their study wasn't specifically tied to employee engagement but demonstrates that much can be learned to complement the quantitative data that has been collected. Having some robust, qualitative data could support the quantitative data (such as was used in my survey or other surveys about performance management processes) with more specific information that organizations could use as they adapt their processes. In addition, during a qualitative interview future researchers may learn that employees do not know what performance management activities are used, which would provide valuable data to leaders in how they communicate and roll out any possible changes.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Organizations can consider using performance management activities to improve or sustain employee engagement. Although previous studies found that performance management activities were antecedents of employee engagement, they did not delve into the collective of the activities, nor did they consider how different activities may have different levels of a relationship with employee engagement. Understanding which of the activities have the strong relationship with employee engagement provides additional context to organizational leaders who wish to leverage a performance management process to support employee engagement goals. Based on the results of Research Question 2, three of the five variables (developmental opportunities, setting goals, and organizational trust) are independent predictors of employee engagement. This is important as leaders can focus on those three areas as they build or adapt their performance management processes.

Although the results for Research Question 1 of this study indicate that all five performance management activities contribute to enhanced employee engagement, results for Research Question 2 indicate that it may be especially beneficial for organizations to focus on providing developmental opportunities, setting goals, and establishing a climate of trust. By focusing on these three activities that are most strongly related to employee engagement, organizations can leverage valuable resources for maximum effect on individual and organizational performance. These three activities were identified by other studies (Ali & Lodhi, 2018; Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Marrelli, 2011; Medlin & Green, 2014; Muthuveloo et al., 2013; Wang & Hsieh, 2013) as having a positive relationship with employee engagement and confirmed with my study. They were further identified as independent predictors of employee engagement when controlling for the other performance management activities in my study. Having this data available when evaluating performance management processes will allow managers to make informed decisions about which aspects of performance management should be retained or added in order to increase employee engagement at their organization. The positive social implications of having increased employee engagement include positive impacts to productivity and employee morale. Organizations exist within communities, which are then positively impacted by changes made to processes that benefit employees. In this case, if performance management processes are changed in such a way as to improve employee engagement, the local community should also see positive impacts.

In summary, this study was able to show that there is a positive relationship between performance management activities and employee engagement when the performance management activities are used in conjunction with each other. As

organizations consider how to establish or reformat a performance management process, understanding the connectivity among the five activities is critical. Higher levels of employee engagement have been connected with business objectives, such as decreased turnover and increased productivity (Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Barrick et al., 2015; Markos & Sridevi, 2010). By working to increase employee engagement, or to maintain high levels of engagement, companies will provide more stable environments for employees and, by extension, communities. More stable environments with increased productivity can also increase revenue, which may be invested in local communities.

Recommendations for Action

The findings of this study confirm that the five performance management activities are antecedents of employee engagement. More specifically, this study found that three of the five activities (development opportunities, goal setting, and a climate of trust) are independent predictors of employee engagement and that the annual performance evaluation was not an independent predictor of employee engagement.

The performance appraisal is often an annual document that allows managers to formalize an employee's performance over the course of the year. Based on the results of this study, and in particular the results of question 1, it can be inferred that when companies continue to rely primarily on annual performance evaluations rather than on a combination of these five activities, the impact on employee engagement is not as effective as when all five activities are included in the process. The results of question 1 indicated that all five performance management activities were antecedents of employee engagement. When controlling for the other activities, the results of question 2 showed that only three of the five activities (developmental opportunities, goal setting, and a

climate of trust) are independent predictors of engagement. Therefore, based on the results of question 2, the recommendation is that organizations focus on the three areas that have independent relationships with employee engagement by providing developmental opportunities to employees, ensuring that a robust goal-setting process is followed, and fostering a climate of trust.

Management could ensure that they are providing developmental opportunities, such as conference attendance, training sessions, or on-the-job training, to employees in order to reinforce other aspects of the performance management process. Providing employees with opportunities to grow and develop could help increase the sense of trust between employees and management, which could improve their relationship. These opportunities also provide a natural mechanism for managers to give additional feedback to employees and can help employees feel more valued by the organization. Development opportunities are also linked to higher engagement (Birdi et al., 1997; Hynes, 2012; Muthuveloo et al., 2013), in part because employees may feel more valued when provided with these opportunities.

Another area to focus on is goal setting. Goal setting can be tied directly to some developmental opportunities, which ensures that employees understand what is expected of them to successfully achieve results. Managers could use a mix of goals that are both directly tied to an employee's current role and a development path. In both cases, providing feedback on a regular basis will ensure that employees are aware of how they are performing against both developmental and current role goals (Mone et al., 2011). When the performance appraisal is used in conjunction with the goals that were set earlier in the year as well as regular feedback throughout the year, the employee is not surprised

by the information in the performance appraisal (see Mone et al., 2011; Simoneaux & Stroud, 2012; Singh, 2013; Trosten-Bloom et al., 2014). Managers could also incorporate agreed upon developmental opportunities into the performance appraisal document so that employees are able to see how their efforts are viewed holistically over the course of the year.

Based on previous research, it would seem that focusing on the developmental goals and goal-setting process could then lead to an increased climate of trust (Birdi et al., 1997; Marrelli, 2011). Employees will be more aware of what to expect during an annual appraisal, which reinforces management's consistency and can therefore connect to higher levels of employee engagement (Marrelli, 2011). Previous researchers have also demonstrated a relationship between fairness and performance management processes (Feng, 2018; LeVan, 2017), which further builds the connection between consistent processes and actions. Employees will have greater trust in the performance appraisal if it is a result of a year-long discussion around goals and developmental opportunities and may better accept how the system works. By focusing on the three areas that were identified in question 2 as independent predictors of employee engagement, an organization can ultimately improve their entire performance management process, which should then increase employee engagement. Ultimately, all five activities should be implemented to ensure a well-rounded process, but leaders can prioritize the ones that are shown to be independent predictors of engagement as a starting point.

Conclusions

Chapter 5 presented a summary of the previous chapters in this study, the summary of the findings and conclusions, implications of results, and recommendations for future research. The purpose of this study was to examine whether performance goals, feedback/recognition, developmental opportunities, annual appraisals, and a climate of trust are independent antecedents of employee engagement. The results of this study provided evidence that all five performance management activities had positive, statistically significant relationships with employee engagement. However, after controlling for the other four variables, the relationships were smaller with all variables, and not statistically significant in at least one variable. If organizational leaders intend to impact employee engagement by using performance management activities as a tool to do so, they should consider how best to incorporate all five activities for the most effective results.

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Appendix A: Permission to Use Scales

Development Opportunities Scale (Kraimer et al., 2011, p. 491)

Permission granted via email July 21, 2019

11/22/2020

Mail - Andrea Moore - Outlook

Re: Permission for use of scale for dissertation

Maria Kraimer [REDACTED]

Wed 7/17/2019 7:09 AM

To: Andrea Moore [REDACTED]

Dear Andrea,

Yes, you have permission to use this scale. Are all the items reported in the JAP article? If not, let me know which scale you are interested in (using the variable name in the paper).

Thanks,

Maria

Maria Kraimer, PhD
 Editor-in-Chief, Personnel Psychology
 Professor of HRM
 School of Management & Labor Relations
 Rutgers University

From: Andrea Moore [REDACTED]

Sent: Tuesday, July 16, 2019 7:43 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: Maxwell V. Rainforth

Subject: Permission for use of scale for dissertation

Dr. Kraimer

I am requesting your permission to use the Development Opportunities Scale from the article "Antecedents and outcomes of organizational support for development: The critical role of career opportunities" for which you are listed as the contact. I am currently working on my dissertation and am proposing to test whether five performance management activities (performance goals, feedback, developmental opportunities, annual appraisals, and a climate of trust) are independent antecedents of employee engagement. My research is being supervised by Dr. Maxwell Rainforth at Walden University. I will ensure proper citations for your work and thank you for your help.

Andrea Moore

Leader Feedback (Bezuijen et al., 2009, p. 693)

Goal Specificity (Bezuijen et al., 2009, p. 693)

Permission granted via email August 6, 2019

11/22/2020

Mail - Andrea Moore - Outlook

RE: Permission for use of scale for dissertation

Dam, Karen van [REDACTED]

Tue 8/6/2019 12:24 AM

To: Andrea Moore [REDACTED]

Cc: Maxwell V. Rainforth [REDACTED]

Hallo Andrea,

Great that you are taking an interest in our work.

Ofcourse you can use these scales.

Success with your research!

Karen

Prof. dr. Karen van Dam | Hoogleraar A&O psychologie
Open Universiteit | Faculteit Psychologie en onderwijswetenschappen



Van: Andrea Moore [REDACTED]

Verzonden: zondag 21 juli 2019 00:48

Aan: Dam, Karen van [REDACTED]

CC: Maxwell V. Rainforth [REDACTED]

Onderwerp: Fw: Permission for use of scale for dissertation

Dr. van Dam

I am requesting your permission to use the Leader Feedback and Goal Specificity Scales from the article "How leaders stimulate employee learning: A leader-member exchange approach" for which you are listed as the contact. I am currently working on my dissertation and am proposing to test whether five performance management activities (performance goals, feedback, developmental opportunities, annual appraisals, and a climate of trust) are independent antecedents of employee engagement. My research is being supervised by Dr. Maxwell Rainforth at Walden University. I will ensure proper citations for your work and thank you for your help.

Andrea Moore

Employees' Reactions to Annual Performance Appraisals (Volpone et al., 2012, p. 270)

Permission granted via email July 16, 2019

11/22/2020

Mail - Andrea Moore - Outlook

Re: Permission for use of scale for dissertation

Sabrina D Volpone [REDACTED]

Tue 7/16/2019 8:11 AM

To: Andrea Moore [REDACTED]

Cc: Maxwell V. Rainforth [REDACTED]

Hi, Andrea,

Yes, please feel free to use that scale/those items as part of your work.

The project sounds interesting and I wish you the best of luck with your dissertation!

Sabrina

Sabrina D. Volpone, Ph.D.
University of Colorado Boulder
Leeds School of Business
Director, [Diversity and Identity Management Lab](#)

On Jul 15, 2019, at 6:45 PM, Andrea Moore [REDACTED] wrote:

Dr. Volpone

I am requesting your permission to use the Employees' Reactions to Annual Performance Appraisals Scale from the article "Linkages between race/ethnicity, appraisal reactions, and employee engagement" for which you are listed as the contact. I am currently working on my dissertation and am proposing to test whether five performance management activities (performance goals, feedback, developmental opportunities, annual appraisals, and a climate of trust) are independent antecedents of employee engagement. My research is being supervised by Dr. Maxwell Rainforth at Walden University. I will ensure proper citations for your work and thank you for your help.

Andrea Moore

Organizational Trust (McAllister, 1995, p. 37)

Permission granted via email July 16, 2019

11/22/2020

Mail - Andrea Moore - Outlook

Re: Permission for use of scale for dissertation

Daniel J McAllister [REDACTED]

Tue 7/16/2019 11:36 PM

To: Andrea Moore [REDACTED]

Cc: Maxwell V. Rainforth [REDACTED]

Dear Andrea,

Thanks for your message. I'm happy to give you permission to adapt my trust measures for use in your dissertation research.

Best regards,

Dan

From: Andrea Moore [REDACTED]**Date:** Tuesday, 16 July 2019 at 4:43 PM**To:** "Daniel J McAllister (Office)" [REDACTED]**Cc:** "Maxwell V. Rainforth" [REDACTED]**Subject:** Permission for use of scale for dissertation

Dr. McAllister

I am requesting your permission to use the Organizational Trust Scale from the article "Affect- and cognition-based trust as foundations for interpersonal cooperation in organizations" for which you are listed as the contact. I am currently working on my dissertation and am proposing to test whether five performance management activities (performance goals, feedback, developmental opportunities, annual appraisals, and a climate of trust) are independent antecedents of employee engagement. My research is being supervised by Dr. Maxwell Rainforth at Walden University. I will ensure proper citations for your work and thank you for your help.

Andrea Moore

Important: This email is confidential and may be privileged. If you are not the intended recipient, please delete it and notify us immediately; you should not copy or use it for any purpose, nor disclose its contents to any other person. Thank you.

Appendix B: Scatterplots of Predictor Versus Criterion Variables

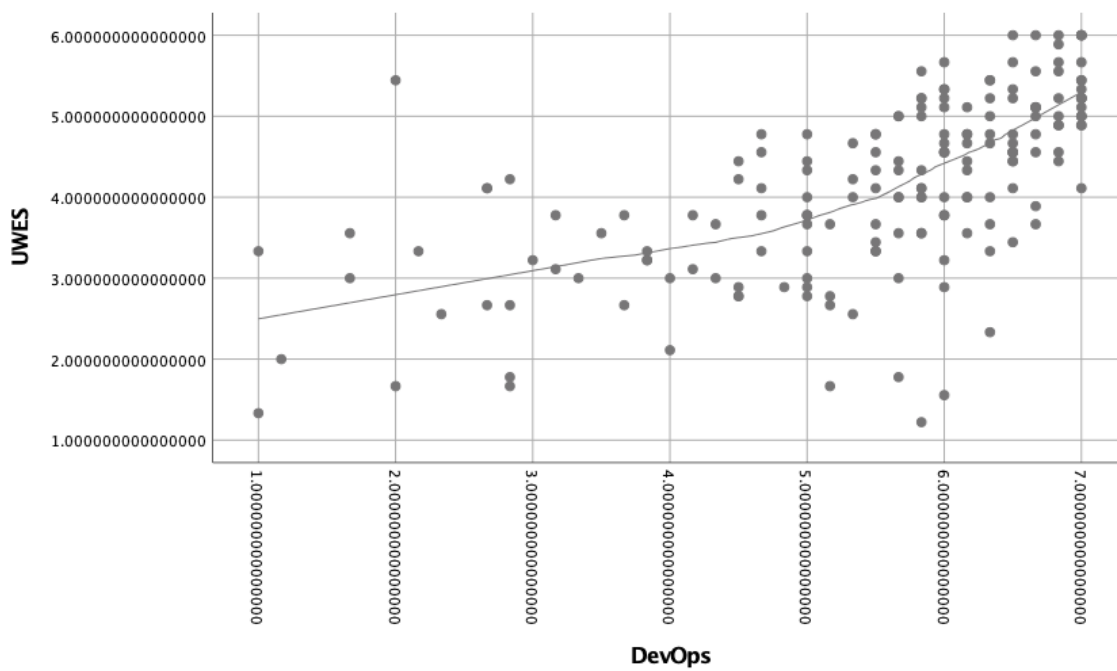


Figure B1. Scatterplot for UWES versus developmental opportunities.

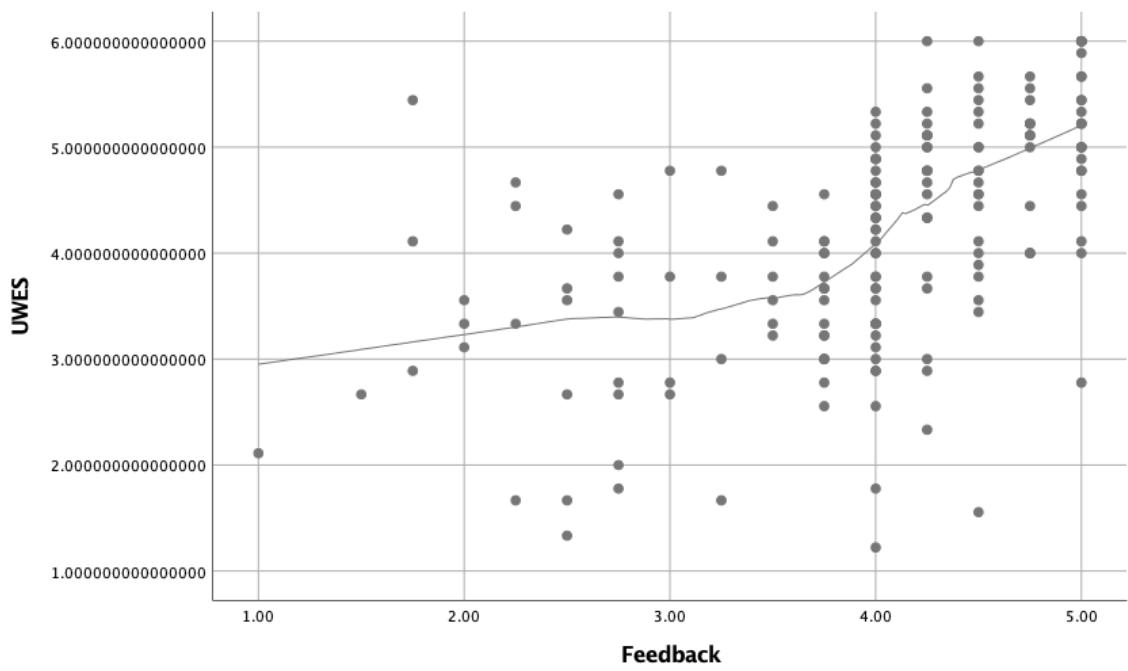


Figure B2. Scatterplot for UWES versus feedback.

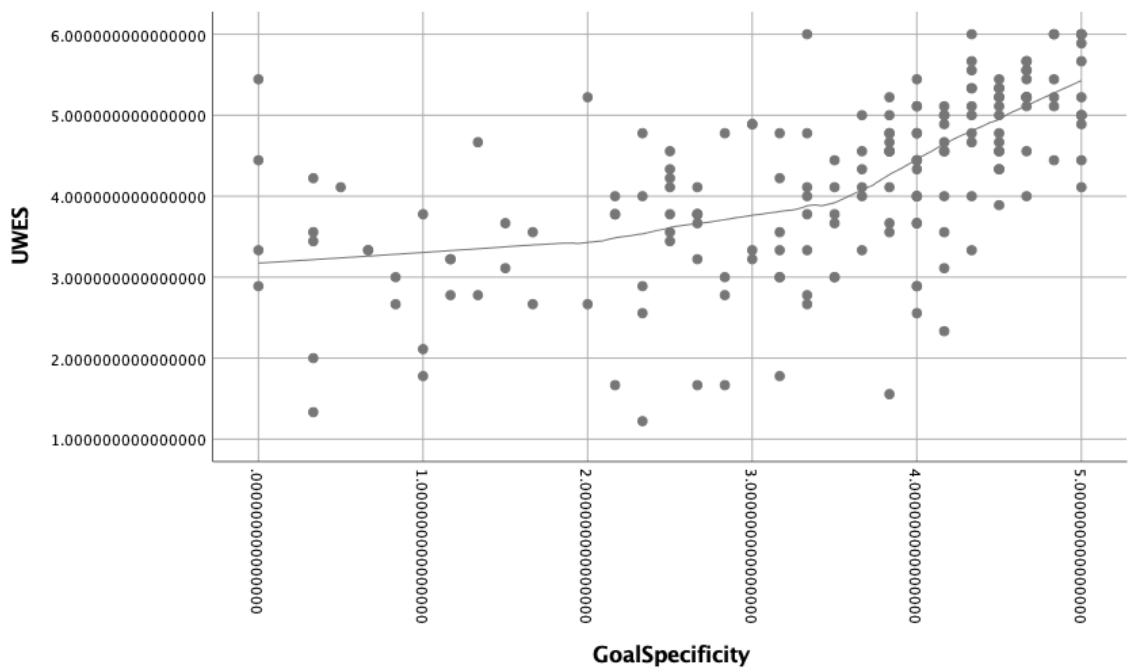


Figure B3. Scatterplot for UWES versus goal specificity.

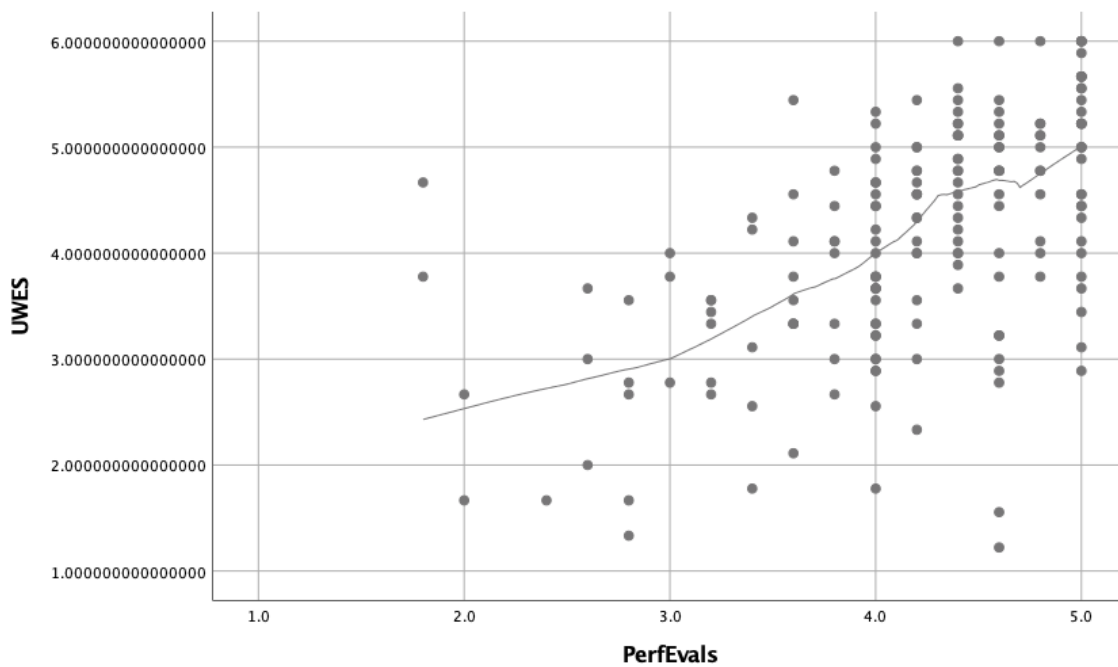


Figure B4. Scatterplot for UWES versus performance evaluations.

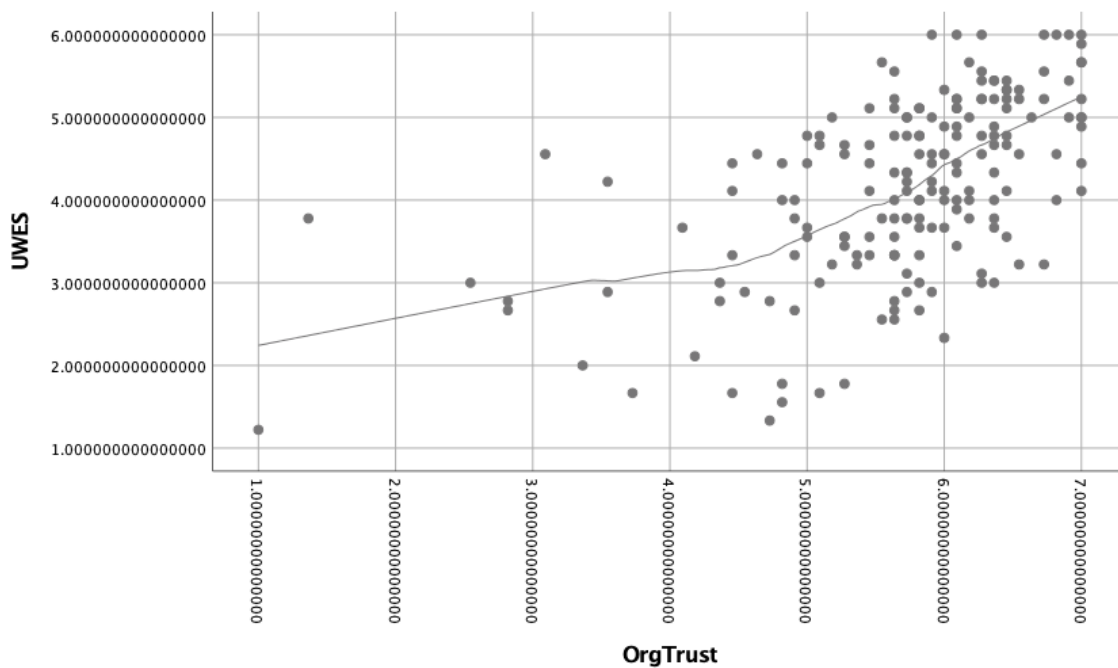


Figure B5. Scatterplot for UWES versus organizational trust.

Appendix C: Q-Q Plots of Predictor versus Criterion Variables

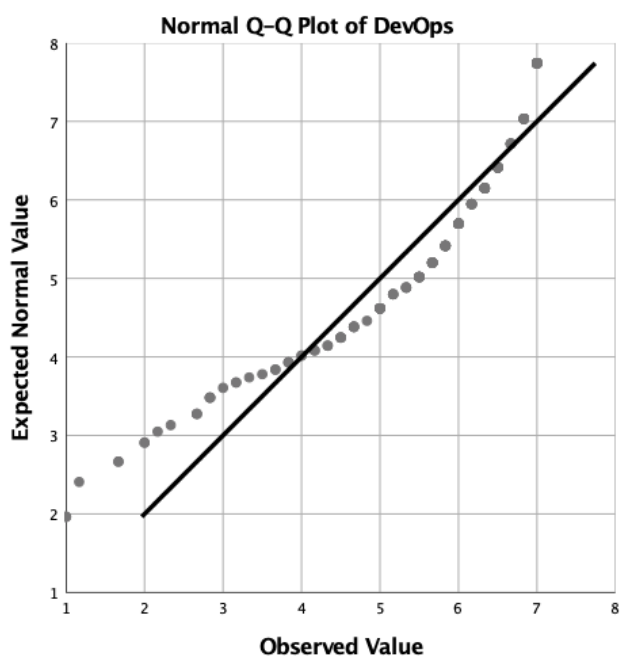


Figure C1. Normal Q-Q Plot for developmental opportunities.

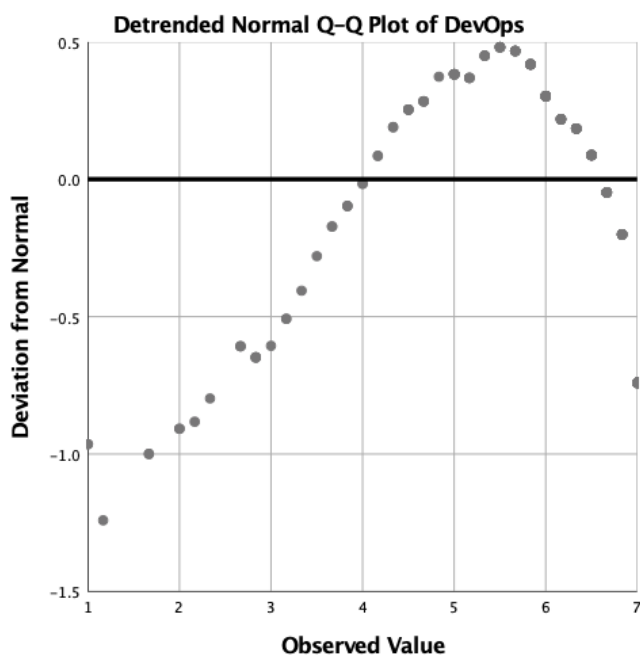


Figure C2. Detrended normal Q-Q plot for developmental opportunities.

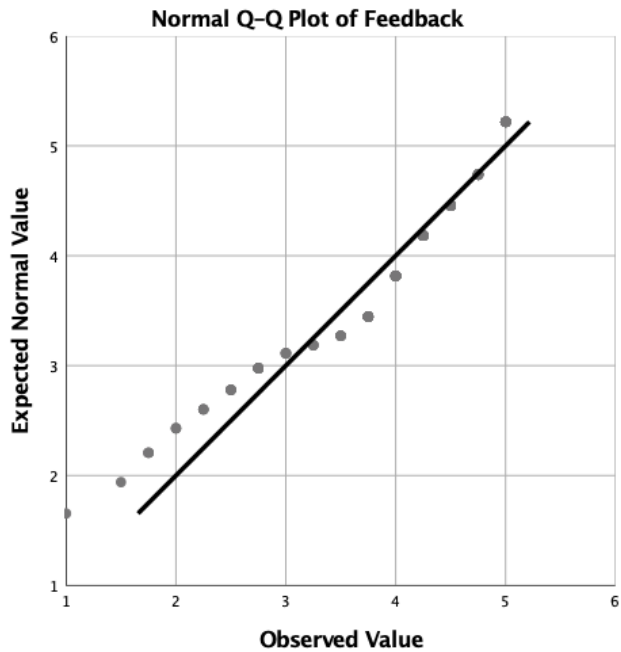


Figure C3. Normal Q-Q Plot for feedback.

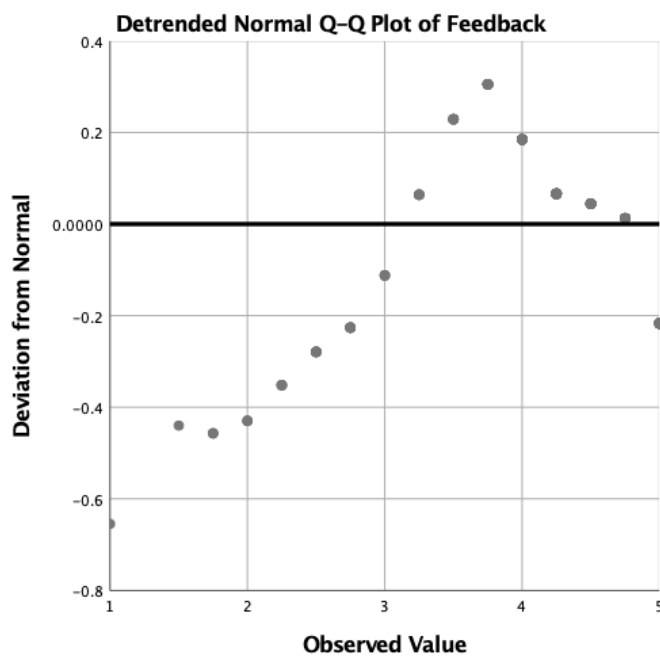


Figure C4. Detrended normal Q-Q plot for feedback.

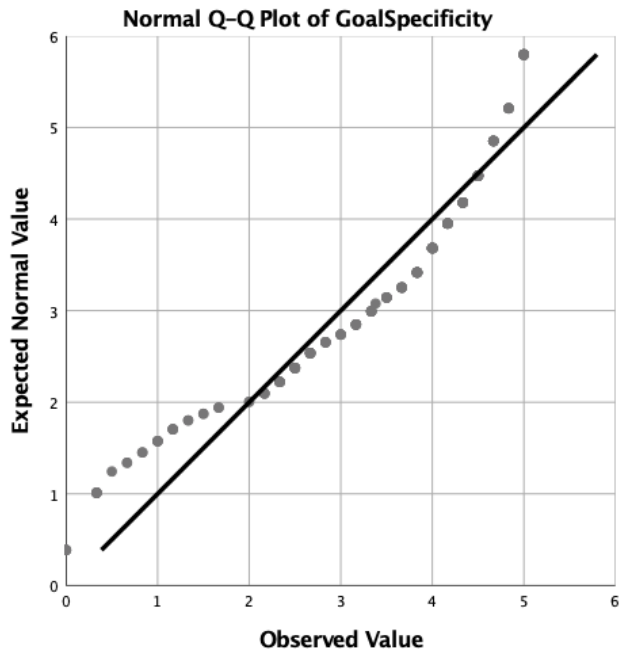


Figure C5. Normal Q-Q Plot for goal specificity.

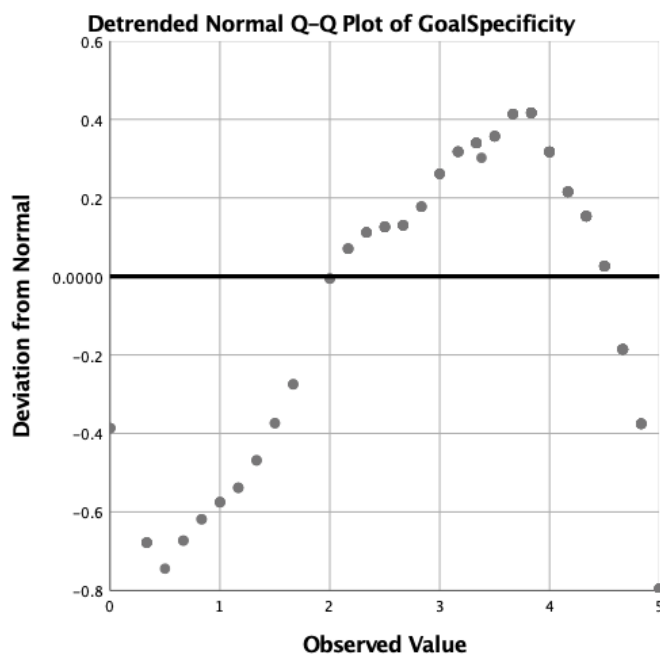


Figure C6. Detrended normal Q-Q plot for goal specificity.

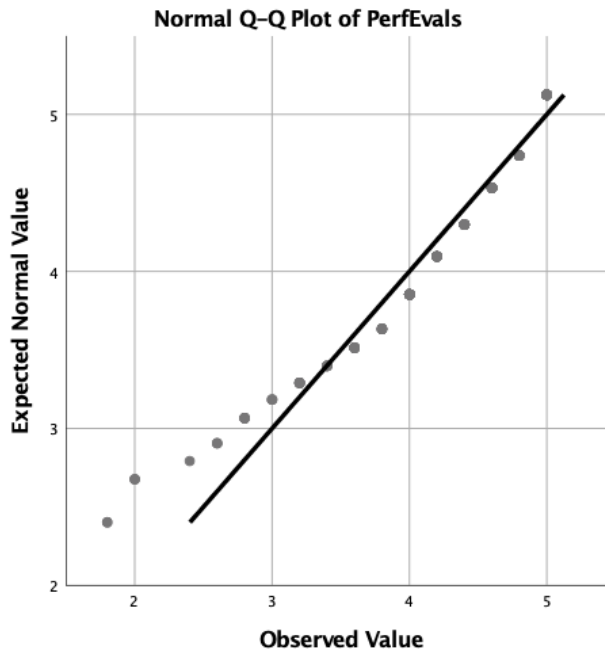


Figure C7. Normal Q-Q Plot for performance evaluations.

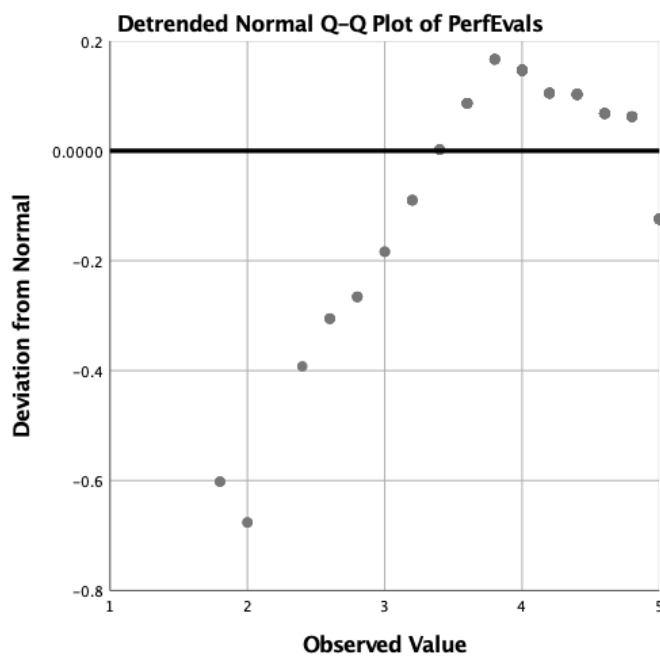


Figure C8. Detrended normal Q-Q plot for performance evaluations.

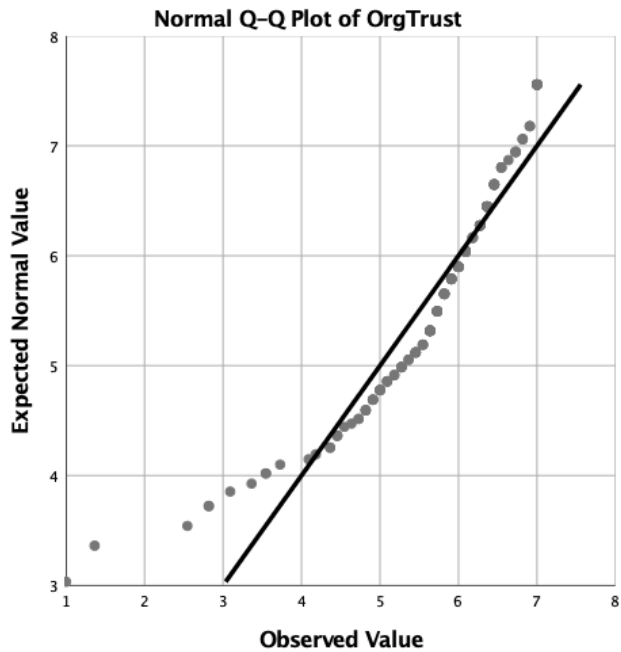


Figure C9. Normal Q-Q Plot for organizational trust.

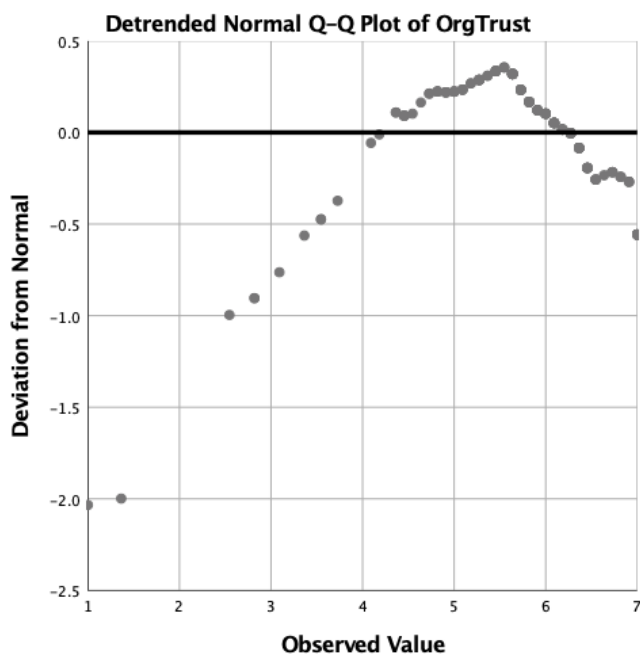


Figure C10. Detrended normal Q-Q plot for organizational trust.