

2021

## Strategies Used by Healthcare Managers to Promote Employee Engagement

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Peter Green

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Walden University  
2021

Abstract

Strategies Used by Healthcare Managers to Promote Employee Engagement

by

Peter Green

MHA, Walden University, 2015

MS, Walden University, 2014

BS, Strayer University, 2011

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

May 2021

## Abstract

Employee disengagement in the healthcare industry negatively affects individual and organizational outcomes. Grounded in the transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies healthcare managers used to promote employee engagement. Participants comprised six healthcare managers in New Jersey, who successfully used employee engagement strategies to increase organizational productivity and growth. Data were collected from semistructured interviews and company documents. Yin's 5-step thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Three themes emerged: organizational culture strategy, development strategy, and communication strategy. A key recommendation involves communicating employee engagement initiatives in the strategic objectives of healthcare organizations. The implications for positive social change include the potential for healthcare managers to expand support to local community institutions and create jobs within the regional communities served by healthcare organizations.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my wife, Julian and my nephews and nieces. My wife is my biggest cheerleader and supporter, and I would not be where I am today without her encouragement, friendship, and love throughout our life journey together. To my nephews and nieces, this accomplishment is proof that no matter where you are from you can achieve anything you set out to do with determination, commitment, and resilience to persevere through to the end. Dare to dream. Dreams do not have expiration dates.

This doctoral study is also dedicated to my late parents, Lenomie Green and Gilbert Green. Outside of your love and support, you taught me the importance of perseverance and that success comes through discipline and hard work. I am always reminded to strive for excellence and remain humble from the wonderful moments and memories shared with you. Your teachings have kept me grounded. You are not here physically but will always be with me in spirit.

## Acknowledgments

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A special thank you to Dr. Marcia Adams and Dr. Joyce Conner-Boyd, who I met while pursuing doctoral study completion courses. You spent numerous hours guiding me with each stage of the study and being my editors. More importantly, you kept me focused and accountable. Thank you for allowing me to share my ideas and concerns. No matter what I was going through, you always understood. This journey has taught me that no person truly walks alone; it takes a village. I will never be able to repay you for what you have done for me. The best that I can do is to pay it forward.

Finally, I acknowledge and want to specially thank the healthcare managers who I was privileged to interview as study participants. Your insights and input were invaluable for my study and added to the body of knowledge on employee engagement.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Since 1992 there has been increasing interest in employee engagement (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Stoyanova & Iliev, 2017). Employee disengagement results in an annual output decrease to organizations in the United States of \$400 billion (Rashidin et al., 2019). Disengaged employees slowly and continuously detach themselves physically, emotionally, and cognitively from their work roles (Kahn, 1990). Without engaged employees, organizations are unable to accomplish strategic objectives including profitability and sustainability (Anaza et al., 2016). According to Eldor (2016), energy, commitment, and enthusiasm are at the core of the employee engagement concept. Employee engagement is positively associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior (Collini et al., 2015). Improved organizational performance is also positively associated with employee engagement (Shen & Jiang, 2019). Engaged employees perform their jobs in a state of mind characterized by energy, involvement, efficiency, attention, and absorption (Imperatori, 2017). The ability to implement effective employee engagement strategies is essential to organizational success and sustainability.

### **Background of the Problem**

Healthcare spending as a proportion of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the United States of America is expected to increase to 19.9% by 2022 (Geyman, 2015). In response to rising healthcare costs without corresponding improvements in patient outcomes, many attempts have been made to change the model of healthcare delivery in the United States. The most recent legislative healthcare reform measures have created

reimbursement models based on quality outcomes instead of payments tied to the volume of services provided (Blumenthal et al., 2015).

In the face of increased competition and amplified demands for transparency in healthcare, managers must focus on the delivery of superior patient care and service (Prottas & Nummelin, 2018; Saratun, 2016). Ancarani et al. (2018) and Kartal (2018) suggested employee engagement is positively associated with many organizational outcomes, including productivity, profitability, job satisfaction, patient satisfaction, patient safety, and organizational citizenship behavior. Despite research findings showing positive outcomes associated with employee engagement, data indicate that disengagement is a significant challenge facing organizations (Imperatori, 2017). The prevalence of employee disengagement indicates additional research is needed to understand what can be done to promote employee engagement in organizations (Menguc et al., 2017).

### **Problem Statement**

Employee disengagement negatively affects individual and organizational outcomes (Rastogi et al., 2018). Sixty-nine percent of psychological wellbeing practitioners in England experience burnout (Westwood et al., 2017). The general business problem is that organizations may experience significant financial losses from the adverse performance outcomes associated with disengaged employees. The specific business problem is that some healthcare managers lack strategies to promote employee engagement.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies healthcare managers used to promote employee engagement. The target population was six healthcare managers from one organization in New Jersey who used successful strategies for employee engagement. The results of this study may provide healthcare managers with practical strategies for promoting employee engagement, leading to improved organizational performance, patient care outcomes, and economic stability within communities and regions served by healthcare organizations.

### **Nature of the Study**

I considered qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research approaches for this study. The qualitative research approach is used by researchers to explore a phenomenon from the perspective of participants (Neuman, 2014). Researchers employ the quantitative research method to examine statistical relationships between variables or compare group differences (Serrador & Pinto, 2015). The quantitative approach was inappropriate for this study because I did not examine relationships between variables. Mixed methods is appropriate when qualitative and quantitative methodologies are combined within the same study by researchers (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015). Researchers who use mixed methods are also required to perform complex analyses of qualitative and quantitative data, which is costly and time-consuming. I did not choose mixed methods because there was no quantitative component in this study.

Ridder (2017) described case study research as a form of in-depth inquiry into a real-life phenomenon. The objective of case study researchers is to gain a better

understanding of how and why events occur (Ridder, 2017). The case study design was the most appropriate qualitative strategy because I sought to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon of interest. The case study approach can enhance credibility and validity of research results (Singh, 2014; Yin, 2018).

Other designs considered for the study were the phenomenological and ethnographic approaches. Phenomenological designs are appropriate for researchers to explore the lives of people and meanings these experiences have for individuals regarding a common phenomenon (Willis et al., 2016). The goal of this study was to explore and analyze strategies healthcare managers use to promote employee engagement. Phenomenology involves exploring the meanings of human experiences (Willis et al., 2016). I eliminated the phenomenological approach because the focus of the study was not on human experiences involving employee engagement as lived by participants. Instead, the intent of this study was to explore strategies participants use to promote employee engagement successfully. Researchers use ethnographic design to understand people and cultures and their social and work practices (Sharp et al., 2016). The ethnographic design was inappropriate for this study because the focus was not on the unique group, cultural, or tribal traditions. Instead, the objective was to explore participants' experiences regarding successfully using strategies to address the phenomenon of interest.

### **Research Question**

What strategies do healthcare managers use to promote employee engagement?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What strategies have you utilized to promote employee engagement?
2. How do employees respond to your different engagement techniques?
3. What specific strategies were effective in improving employee engagement?
4. How did you address the key challenges of implementing your strategies to improve employee engagement?
5. How do you support, motivate, and effectively influence employees in your organization?
6. How does your organization assess the effectiveness of your employee engagement strategies?
7. How does transformational leadership help your organization to overcome the challenges of disengaged employees?
8. What additional information would you like to share regarding your experiences with employee engagement strategies?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Transformational leadership theory became widely accepted after being introduced by Burns (1978) and was further refined by Bass (1985) to develop significant components of the concept. Fundamental tenets of the transformational leadership theory are (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration (Hentrich et al., 2017). Transformational leaders exert a positive influence on the values, beliefs, and attitudes of followers, which results in the accomplishment of goals that go beyond expectations (Zhu & Akhtar, 2014).

Transformational leadership positively influences employee job satisfaction, which results in improved organizational outcomes (Choi et al., 2016). Transformational leaders support, motivate, and effectively manage followers, which results in subordinates feeling challenged, involved, and satisfied; this promotes workforce engagement (Choi et al., 2016). The transformational leadership constructs, as applied to this study, were expected to help to enrich and refine the literature regarding strategies healthcare managers utilize to promote employee engagement. In previous studies, researchers showed significant positive relationships between the transformational leadership style and workforce engagement (Hayati et al., 2014).

### **Operational Definitions**

*Employee disengagement:* Employee disengagement is physical, cognitive, and emotional detachment from work roles (Scanlan & Still, 2019).

*Employee engagement:* Employee engagement involves positive psychological behavior directed by an employee toward beneficial organizational outcomes (Hanaysha, 2016).

*Job satisfaction:* Job satisfaction refers to an individual's feelings, attitudes, and perceptions regarding his or her job, which influences the level of commitment to the organization (Choi et al., 2016; Tosun & Ulusoy, 2017).

*Motivation:* Motivation is the process that influences employee performance via goal-oriented behaviors (Locke & Schattke, 2019).

*Organizational commitment:* Organizational commitment influences the desire of an employee to remain with an organization based on the employee's belief and acceptance of goals and values of the organization (Hanaysha, 2016).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are what the researcher believes to be accurate but not verified (Cunningham, 2014). There were three assumptions for this study. The first was that the participants understood the interview questions and articulated their experiences. The second assumption was that participants had knowledge and perceptions regarding employee engagement questions and provided honest answers. The third assumption was that themes linked with the literature would emerge from analyzing responses of participants.

#### **Limitations**

All research studies contain limitations or known restraints at the beginning of the research, which can potentially weaken study results (Emanuel, 2013). Limitations are factors that are outside the control of researchers, which may adversely affect the validity of studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I recognized two limitations of this study. The first limitation was differing work schedules of participants because of vacation, unexpected work demands, and business travel during the research period. Work schedule variation may have prevented all interviews from being conducted in the established time frame. A second constraint was that some participants might have been reluctant to share their strategies for promoting employee engagement. Some participants

may have been unwilling to reveal, for instance, plans that did not align with the cultural expectations of their organizations.

### **Delimitations**

According to Yin (2018), delimitations refer to boundaries set by a researcher to restrict the scope of the study. The first delimitation was the use of purposeful sampling to select healthcare managers for the study who delivered successful employee engagement strategies. All participants were employed with a single corporate entity. Research participants were healthcare managers in the New Jersey region.

### **Significance of the Study**

#### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The resultant study data may be beneficial to business practice from the contribution to the knowledge capital of healthcare managers regarding employee engagement promotional strategies. Researchers have shown employee engagement has a positive relationship with business results, including profitability, efficiency, safety, and employee retention (Collini et al., 2015). A disengaged workforce might lead to emotionally exhausted employees who exhibit depressive symptoms, suffer from sleep disturbances, and have a weak commitment to the business, resulting in poor organizational outcomes (Aslam et al., 2018; Collini et al., 2015). The results of this exploratory study may provide managers of healthcare organizations with an improved understanding of employee engagement and its relationship with productivity and organizational performance. This may support healthcare managers in implementing practical employee engagement improvement strategies.

## **Implications for Social Change**

The resultant data from this study could also have potential implications for social change. Engaged employees lead to increased productivity and improved organizational performance (Othman et al., 2019). Positively engaged employees go beyond their required responsibilities to achieve shared organizational goals and visions (Eldor, 2016). A healthy work environment and good interpersonal relationships with coworkers are necessary for employees to be positively engaged (Collini et al., 2015). The results of this study might provide healthcare managers with an understanding of the contributory factors to employee engagement. Healthcare managers might also receive insights from the findings of this study regarding the strategic role of employee engagement in developing innovative solutions that contribute to improved quality of care and increased patient satisfaction. Improved healthcare organizational performance may contribute to the social well-being of patients and communities served by these institutions.

## **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies healthcare managers use to promote employee engagement. Productivity, profitability, job satisfaction, patient satisfaction, patient safety, and organizational citizenship behavior are some organizational outcomes associated with employee engagement (Ancarani et al., 2018; Kartal, 2018). While many researchers have produced findings showing the importance of employee engagement to organizational sustainability, there is also evidence of low engagement in the research literature. Memon et al. (2016) asserted that voluntary turnover is positively associated with low employee engagement.

Voluntary turnover is a significant global phenomenon that impedes accomplishment of organizational strategic objectives (Memon et al., 2016). Employee disengagement threatens the financial performance and sustainability of businesses, with annual output reductions to organizations in the United States of \$400 billion (Rashidin et al., 2019).

This literature review includes a discussion of professional and academic literature examining transformational leadership, transactional leadership, employee engagement, organizational commitment, employee engagement levels, employee disengagement, organizational commitment, ethical leadership, job satisfaction, and mentorship. This review of academic and professional literature is comprised of peer-reviewed journal articles and books. Primary databases used via the Walden University Library were ABI/INFORM Collection, APA PsycInfo, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, Emerald Insight, MEDLINE, ProQuest Central, SAGE Journals, and ScienceDirect. Search terms to retrieve electronic sources were *employee productivity*, *employee engagement*, *employee retention*, *employee turnover*, *job satisfaction*, *employee disengagement*, *transformational leadership*, *transactional leadership theory*, *authentic leadership theory*, *organizational commitment*, and *mentorship*. Ulrich's Global Series Directory was used to cross-reference each source to ensure selected articles were peer-reviewed. I referenced 136 articles during the literature review, of which 134 were peer-reviewed, and 116 were published within the last 5 years. The literature review also incorporated information from two books. This study contains a total of 251 resources, which includes 238 peer-reviewed articles, seven non-peer reviewed sources, and six books (see Table 1).

**Table 1***Frequency and Percentage of Sources*

Sources	Less than 5 years	More than 5 years	Total
Books	4 (67%)	2 (33%)	6 (2%)
Peer-reviewed articles	200 (84%)	38 (16%)	238 (95%)
Other resources	2 (29%)	5 (71%)	7 (3%)
Total	206 (83%)	45 (18%)	251 (100%)

**Transformational Leadership**

The review of literature for this study begins with the transformational leadership theory as the foundation for understanding the importance of this leadership style in motivating, encouraging, and transforming employees to perform beyond their expectations. Transformational leadership involves change and improving performances collectively (Phaneuf et al., 2016). The objective of transformational leaders is to articulate a vision of the future and motivate employees to attain performance outcomes beyond the expectations of followers (Choi et al., 2016). Transformational leadership requires emotional commitments from employees; healthy relationships between leaders and their subordinates result in improved performance outcomes (Choi et al., 2016). Transformational leaders motivate followers to focus on a common objective and perform behaviors beyond their core tasks, which lead to improved organizational outcomes (Bottomley et al., 2016).

Leaders motivate and inspire followers to accomplish more than what is expected (Louw et al., 2017). Transformational leadership theory focuses on ways leaders motivate

their followers to be team-oriented in accomplishing objectives instead of being self-centered (Phaneuf et al., 2016). The focus of the transformational theory is on the development of members in maximizing their potential. Individuals are inspired, motivated, intellectually stimulated, and committed to tasks that lead to the accomplishment of objectives (Phaneuf et al., 2016). Attributes possessed by the transformational leader result in followers exceeding their expected performance outcomes. Transformational leaders positively impact organizations because these individuals create change through their strong convictions regarding the future and can express the vision to their followers in a compelling manner (Bottomley et al., 2016).

The four significant components of the transformational leadership theory are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass et al., 2003). Idealized influence refers to the emotional appeal to followers from leaders displaying trust and respect (Bottomley et al., 2016; Park & Pierce, 2020). Idealized influence involves the convictions of leaders in standing up for what they believe is ethically right. By exhibiting behaviors consistent with organizational values, missions, and goals, transformational leaders influence employees to be confident and proud of their organizations (Bottomley et al., 2016). Inspirational motivation refers to the ability of leaders to articulate an optimistic vision of shared organizational goals to followers and encouraging them to pursue tasks related to shared objectives instead of individual ambitions (Bottomley et al., 2016; Park & Pierce, 2020). Intellectual stimulation involves leaders encouraging followers to challenge the status quo and be open to change and new ideas (Bottomley et al., 2016; Park & Pierce, 2020).

Individualized consideration refers to empathy and support provided by leaders in terms of individual concerns and openness to new suggestions (Bottomley et al., 2016; Park & Pierce, 2020). Employees are coached, advised, given individual attention, and treated as individuals (Choi et al., 2016). Followers feel free to think in new ways, go beyond standard practices, and proceed with developing innovations without fear of penalties in these environments (Phaneuf et al., 2016).

Transformational leaders inspire, motivate, and encourage employees to be innovative in accomplishing goals by clearly articulating a desirable vision, expectations of high performance, and individualized support (Henker et al., 2015). In a study on transformational leadership, Henker et al. (2015) explored creativity. Henker et al. (2015) found a positive relationship exists between employee creativity and transformational leadership. Zhang et al. (2018) found that transformational leaders positively develop innovation climates and motivate followers' innovative behaviors. An innovation environment influences the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative behavior (Zhang et al., 2018). Zuraik and Kelly (2019) found a positive relationship between CEO transformational leadership and organizational innovation. Zuraik and Kelly (2019) also found that innovation climate influences the relationship between CEO transformational leadership and organizational innovation.

Transformational leadership establishes supportive organizational innovation climates that promote innovation in organizations (Zhang et al., 2018; Zuraik & Kelly, 2019).

Transformational leadership might improve employee and organizational performance. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) found that transformational leaders guide

people to align with the organizational values and objectives. Transformational leaders build trust, loyalty, and respect among followers and motivate them to perform at higher levels (Bass, 1985). Fernet et al. (2015) conducted research studies among nurses working in public healthcare and French-Canadian high school principals in Quebec, Canada, to understand the underlying factors that affect the relationship between transformational leadership and employee functioning. Fernet et al. (2015) found that transformational leaders directly impact employee performance. Transformational leadership contributes to favorable employee perceptions of job characteristics and work environments (Fernet et al., 2015). Buil et al. (2019), in agreement with Fernet et al. (2015), found that transformational leadership directly impacts job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors. Transformational leaders motivate employees to go outside their roles and accomplish outcomes beyond expectations by enhancing their engagement level (Buil et al., 2019). Louw et al. (2017) found a positive association between transformational leadership competencies and leadership effectiveness. Effective leaders can (a) intellectually stimulate and motivate followers, (b) provide individualized consideration to subordinates, and (c) display idealized influence (Louw et al., 2017). Transformational leadership competencies contribute to organizational success.

Transformational leaders engage in behaviors focused on influencing individual employees and groups. Herman and Chiu (2014) found a positive relationship between group-focused leadership and group identification. Individual differentiation is also positively associated with individual-focused leadership and creative behavior (Herman & Chiu, 2014). Herman and Chiu (2014) also found transformational leadership might

influence different work attitudes and behaviors. By understanding and adjusting their behaviors based on the identity orientation of their followers, transformational leaders may positively influence performance outcomes (Herman & Chiu, 2014). The individual components of transformational leadership may influence work attitudes and behaviors in different ways. Braun et al. (2013) investigated the relationships between transformational leadership, trust in supervisor and team, job satisfaction, and team performance. Braun et al. found transformational leadership had a positive relationship with the individual and team levels of job satisfaction. Trust in the supervisor and team influences the relationship between individual perceptions of transformational leadership and job satisfaction (Braun et al., 2013).

Transformational leadership may enhance employee commitment. Top et al. (2015) investigated the relationships between transformational leadership, organizational commitment, organizational trust, and job satisfaction for public sector employees and private sector employees. Top et al. found organizational trust and job satisfaction were significant predictors of organizational commitment. Transformational leadership behavior enables organizational leaders to have strong emotional connections with employees and enhance organizational commitment (Top et al., 2015). Transformational leaders influence employees to be more involved, satisfied, empowered, trusted, and committed to their organizations (Top et al., 2015). Deichmann and Stam (2015) investigated the moderating influence of leader organizational identification on the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership and the commitment of employees to generation and development of ideas that benefit their organizations. The

results of the study showed a significant positive correlation between organization-focused idea generation and commitment to the ideation program. Deichmann and Stam (2015) found transformational and transactional leadership play significant roles in the generation of ideas by employees. Participating in ideation programs that improve organizational processes could motivate employees and improve employee job satisfaction; the leadership styles and values of leaders drive employee engagement and commitment (Deichmann & Stam, 2015). Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016) presented the results of several research studies, which showed transformational leadership has a positive association with employee performance and organizational commitment. Transformational leaders might influence the attitudes and behaviors of employees to promote their commitment to organizations and maintain a competitive advantage in aggressive and continuously changing business environments (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016).

Transformational leaders might positively influence job satisfaction among employees. According to Aydogmus et al. (2018), job satisfaction is the gratifying feeling which results from employees' assessment of the content and context of their work. The psychological states that provide individuals with feelings of control and competency regarding their work describe psychological empowerment (Aydogmus et al., 2018). Aydogmus et al. found a positive association between transformational leadership and psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment influences perceived transformational leadership and job satisfaction (Aydogmus et al., 2018). Aydogmus et al. (2018) suggested transformational leadership positively influences employee job

satisfaction more than any other leadership approach. Bayram and Dinc (2015) found significant positive associations between the four transformational leadership dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and job satisfaction. The study results served to provide additional evidence to support the use of transformational leadership to enrich and increase employee job satisfaction. Employees also have a sense of involvement from the participative decision-making style of transformational leaders, which may contribute to increased organizational commitment and high levels of job satisfaction (Bayram & Dinc, 2015). Employees involved in making decisions regarding organizational objectives and strategies for accomplishing results may experience high job satisfaction levels.

When provided with opportunities to develop organizational processes and methods, employees feel empowered and motivated. Choi et al. (2016) found transformational leaders significantly impacted job satisfaction. Choi et al. also determined employee empowerment influences the relationship between job satisfaction and transformational leadership constructs. Transformational leadership and employee empowerment are essential components to consider in successfully addressing job satisfaction among employees (Choi et al., 2016). Yıldız and Şimşek (2016) asserted leadership trust and self-efficacy are mechanisms that impact employee satisfaction. Transformational leaders trust followers to accomplish tasks and motivate them to accomplish beyond expectations. Yıldız and Şimşek (2016) indicated employees would have confidence in their abilities to accomplish tasks from the support they receive from transformational leaders (Yıldız & Şimşek, 2016). When there is enhanced self-esteem

among followers, and they believe in their capabilities to improve their job performance, the result may be higher levels of employee satisfaction (Yıldız & Şimşek, 2016).

Transformational leaders might influence employee engagement. Gyensare et al. (2016) suggested visionary leadership is crucial to the success of organizations in the existing highly competitive business environments. This visionary leadership is formally known as transformational leadership. Employees are motivated to accomplish organizational goals, including productivity, provision of improved services, and devising solutions to societal dilemmas (Hayati et al., 2014). Hayati et al. (2014) investigated the relationships between the multidimensional constructs of transformational leadership and employee engagement among hospital nurses. The researchers collected data via questionnaires using stratified random sampling from 240 nurses in five public hospitals in the Iran province of Khuzestan. Hayati et al. found transformational leadership dimensions have a significant positive association with the work engagement components of absorption, vigor, and dedication.

Transformational leaders delegate tasks and provide employees with freedom in decision making that increases work engagement (Gözükara & Şimşek, 2015). Followers can gain personal experience in decision making regarding their work from the delegation of tasks by transformational leaders (Gözükara & Şimşek, 2015). Gözükara and Şimşek (2015) described job autonomy as the freedom and independence of employees in decision making regarding their work tasks. Gözükara and Şimşek (2015) found job autonomy was influential on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement. Job autonomy enhances the influence of transformational leaders

on employee engagement. Jain and Duggal (2018) found that job autonomy influences the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. Transformational leaders encourage employees to be innovative in problem-solving, enhancing the sense of control that employees feel regarding how they should perform their work tasks (Jain & Duggal, 2018). Amankwaa et al. (2019) found that job autonomy and supportive management influenced the relationship between transformational leadership and innovation. Transformational leaders create feelings of confidence and an attractive vision of the future among employees, making them engage in new ways of accomplishing their work tasks (Amankwaa et al., 2019). Transformational leaders may also provide employees with autonomy to empower and mentor them to be responsible and accountable for their decisions, contributing to employee engagement (Kahn, 1990).

Transformational leaders create environments where employees find meaning in their work. Researchers have found meaningful, fulfilling, and motivating work diminishes feelings of rejection, prejudice, and misunderstanding (Yasin Ghadi et al., 2013). Yasin Ghadi et al. (2013) investigated the influence of the meaning in work on the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement. Yasin Ghadi et al. (2013) found a direct relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement from their survey of 530 full-time employees who worked in various industries in Australia. Transformational leaders create meaning in work, which is done by followers, and meaning predicts employee engagement (Yasin Ghadi et al., 2013). Frieder et al. (2018) found transformational leadership can increase perceived meaningfulness. Transformational leaders may improve employee performance even

when their personality traits and jobs are not compatible (Frieder et al., 2018). Han and Oh (2020), in support of Frieder et al. (2018), found transformational leaders can support employees in finding meaning at work, and meaningfulness can lead to higher performance levels. Meaningfulness positively influences the relationship between transformational leadership and employee job performance (Han & Oh, 2020). Organizational leaders should consider job characteristics positively associated with employees' perception of the value of their work and create conditions that promote employee performance in their roles.

Transformational leaders might also influence employee turnover. Goal clarity is the clear expression of employees' expected behaviors in their roles and the performance of their tasks (Caillier, 2016). Caillier (2016) found that transformational leadership is negatively associated with turnover intentions from the mediating effects of goal clarity. Transformational leadership has a positive association with goal clarity, with several explanations posited for the positive relationship (Caillier, 2016). One elucidation is transformational leaders clearly articulate a vision and organizational goals. Another interpretation is employees are also encouraged by transformational leaders to challenge obstacles that may prevent them from attaining personal goals (Caillier, 2016; Sun & Wang, 2017). A third explanation is transformational leaders provide mentorship to employees and offer them opportunities for professional development (Caillier, 2016). Transformational leadership practices promote unambiguousness, which reduces job-related stress and emotional exhaustion in the workforce, and might lower employee turnover intentions (Caillier, 2016). Park and Pierce (2020) investigated the relationship

between the transformational leadership style and employee turnover intention through the mediating effects of organizational culture, climate, and commitment. Park and Pierce (2020) found that transformational leadership was negatively associated with employee turnover intentions.

A breakdown of the psychological contract between employees and their organizations often results in high workforce turnover intention rates (Chen & Wu, 2017). Chen and Wu (2017) suggested the psychological contract is employees' perceptions of unwritten promises or obligations in their work relationships. Employees' willingness to leave organizations increases when they perceive a break in the commitment between them and their employers. There is a reduction in employee job satisfaction, trust, and organizational commitment when there is a psychological contract breach, resulting in increased turnover intention (Chen & Wu, 2017). Transformational leadership improves the relationships between employees and organizations and reduces turnover intention (Caillier, 2016; Sun & Wang, 2017). Transformational leadership may foster a workplace culture that supports strong bonds between employees and enhances their commitment to organizational goals (Sun & Wang, 2017). According to Sun and Wang (2017), transformational leadership practices may reduce voluntary employee turnover by strengthening bonds between employees and their peers, supervisors, and organizations.

### **Alternate Theories**

**Transactional leadership.** Transactional leadership is different from transformational leadership, and it may negatively impact employee psychological

empowerment and creativity (Tung, 2016). Transactional leaders interact with individuals or groups and enter into agreements with subordinates to meet their demands and motives. By clearly articulating the demands of followers and the consequences for specific behaviors, transactional leaders provide incentives to encourage employees to perform activities to accomplish tasks and organizational goals (Popli & Rizvi, 2017). Followers understand the consequences of their specific behaviors because transactional leaders clarify the rules regarding the expectations of each subordinate at the beginning of the relationship (Popli & Rizvi, 2017). The followers accept roles and provide their labor in exchange for recognition, resources, financial incentives, and the avoidance of disciplinary actions (Popli & Rizvi, 2017).

Transactional leadership differs from transformational leadership because followers do not need to engage with organizations and their vision (Popli & Rizvi, 2017). With transactional leadership, followers are not motivated to exceed agreed performance expectations (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Instead, transactional leaders promote exchange-based relationships with subordinates, where the accomplishment of objectives provides incentives and failing to attain established targets results in punishments being carried out (Popli & Rizvi, 2017). A comparison of the transformational and transactional leadership styles shows transformational leadership motivates followers to be committed to accomplishing the goals and visions of organizations. In contrast, transactional leadership uses rewards and punishments to encourage followers to engage in behaviors that accomplish specific objectives (Tung, 2016). The focus of transactional leadership is on the completion of tasks from the use of punishments, including the denial of financial

incentives and organizational recognition to ensure compliance and promote acceptable behaviors from employees (Asencio, 2016). Asencio (2016) noted transformational leadership is more effective and results in higher employee satisfaction levels than transactional leadership.

Although the exchange of mutual benefits between leaders and followers occurs via transactional leadership, the relationship does not extend beyond meeting the needs of leaders and subordinates (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Transactional leadership does not result in bonds between leaders and followers in accomplishing collective organizational goals (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Followers are also unmotivated to engage in extra-role behaviors; the expectations of leaders and incentives followers will receive upon accomplishing the agreed upon objectives is the focus of transactional leadership (Deichmann & Stam, 2015; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016).

Transactional leadership differs from transformational leadership, because the focus of transactional leaders is on the extrinsic needs of individuals, while transformational leaders appeal to the intrinsic needs of followers (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Transformational leaders focus on the empowerment of followers by appealing to their emotions and display integrity and ethical behaviors. Followers are mentored, coached, encouraged, and supported by transformational leaders from their concern for the welfare and development of individuals (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Transformational leaders espouse the essential needs and empowerment of followers; this contrasts with the focus on the dependence of individuals promoted by transactional leaders (Asencio, 2016).

The focus of transactional leadership is also on the self-interest of individuals from the provision of rewards for meeting established objectives (Jensen et al., 2019). Conversely, transformational leadership promotes teamwork from the focus on selflessness to accomplish tasks (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Transactional leaders do not promote personal development and commitment (Jensen et al., 2019). Instead, subordinates complete tasks as agreed upon and receive incentives for meeting the productivity targets expected by leaders (Popli & Rizvi, 2016). Employees are also not motivated to accomplish organizational goals from transactional leadership, as the achievement of objectives occurs from the exertion of power by leaders to obtain compliance from followers (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). The transactional leadership theory was inappropriate as a conceptual framework for the study based on the literature review findings presented in this discussion.

**Authentic leadership.** In recent years the authentic leadership construct has received increased scholarly and practitioner interest (Banks et al., 2016). According to Johnson (2019), authentic leaders are enthusiastic about their purpose, consistently practice their values, and establish meaningful relationships. Banks et al. (2016) asserted authentic leaders are self-aware, open about who they are, and act according to their values, beliefs, and motives. The premise of the authentic leadership construct is one where leaders are open and honest about themselves, which will result in positive and ethical organizational outcomes (Hoch et al., 2018). The authentic leadership construct was proposed as a separate leadership form to explain how the high moral characters of

leaders help to improve employee engagement, organizational commitment, teamwork, and cohesion (Hoch et al., 2018; Sidani & Rowe, 2018).

While authentic leadership has been receiving increased attention as an ethical values-based leadership form, the contribution of this construct to the leadership literature remains elusive (Hoch et al., 2018). Concerns have been expressed by scholars regarding the distinction between the authentic leadership theory and the transformational leadership concept, with many researchers suggesting the authentic leadership ideology represents construct redundancy (Banks et al., 2016). Construct redundancy describes a lack of distinction and usefulness between new theories and behavioral constructs in comparison to existing leadership methodologies (Banks et al., 2016). According to Anderson and Sun (2017), transformational leadership has significantly influenced the development of the authentic leadership construct. Banks et al. (2016) used meta-analysis to compare authentic leadership and transformational leadership theories. The findings of Banks et al. (2016) indicated a significant correlation between both theories. In their study, Hoch et al. (2018) also used meta-analysis to compare authentic leadership with transformational leadership. Hoch et al. (2018) showed high correlations between authentic leadership and transformational leadership, and low amounts of incremental variance. The results of the studies by Banks et al. (2016) and Hoch et al. (2018) have bolstered the notion of construct redundancy.

The similarities between authentic leadership and transformational leadership outweigh their differences (Anderson & Sun, 2017). During the past four decades of its existence, transformational leadership has become dominant and widely accepted among

the leadership style theories (Anderson & Sun, 2017). Authentic leadership has been in existence for over a decade with no universal agreement on its discriminant validity relative to other positive leader constructs, including transformational leadership (Sidani & Rowe, 2018). Researchers have shown construct overlap between authentic leadership and transformational leadership, with both constructs often being indistinguishable (Anderson & Sun, 2017). The empirical evidence from previous research studies does not show the authentic leadership constructs offering more to the leadership literature than what is already available from transformational leadership (Hoch et al., 2018). Additional research is needed to clearly distinguish authentic leadership from transformational leadership (Banks et al., 2016; Sidani & Rowe, 2018). The authentic leadership theory was deemed inappropriate as a conceptual framework for this study since it is a new construct that demands more research as its influence continues to be questioned by scholars.

### **Employee Engagement**

Kahn (1990) first presented the personal engagement concept, which became the foundation for defining the topic of employee engagement. Kahn (1990) asserted engaged employees invest cognitive, emotional, and physical energies into their job roles. The description of employee engagement has many distinct definitions. Eldor and Vigoda-Gadot (2017) described employee engagement as the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy directed to positive organizational results. Shuck, Adelson et al. (2017) defined engagement as the active motivational state that manifests itself in the commitment and involvement levels of employees to their job, team, and organization.

Keyko et al. (2016) suggested work engagement is a psychological state toward the job; employee engagement extends beyond personal or immediate situations.

The optimistic and satisfactory work-related employee engagement construct comprises three dimensions; vigor, absorption, and dedication (Hanaysha, 2016). Vigor describes high levels of energy, psychological resilience, persistence, and willingness to devote effort and time to the job (Eldor, 2016; Keyko et al., 2016). Dedication refers to the extent of time and effort an employee is willing to invest in the job, and the sense of enthusiasm, pride, inspiration, and challenges derived from the job (Keyko et al., 2016). Absorption refers to being intensely and happily immersed in one's work and not easily detached from the job (Eldor, 2016; Keyko et al., 2016).

There has been increasing interest in the construct of employee engagement during the past two decades (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Stoyanova & Iliev, 2017). At the core of the employee engagement concept is energy, commitment, and enthusiasm (Eldor, 2016). Bailey et al. (2017) found employee engagement to be positively associated with organizational performance. Employee engagement is an outcome that is dependent on creating a workplace environment to support this phenomenon and is a critical component of organizational competitive advantage in business environments (Lee et al., 2017; Sekhar et al., 2018). Kang and Sung (2019) found that high perceptions of organizational justice were positively related to employee engagement and negatively influenced turnover intention. The findings of the study by Kang and Sung (2019) also indicated the perception of the employee-organization relationship influences employee engagement and turnover intention. Highly engaged employees will be less likely to

contemplate leaving their organizations (Kang & Sung, 2019). Collini et al. (2015) discovered employee engagement is positively associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and negatively related to turnover intent.

Eldor (2016) argued managers who aspire to improve the competitive advantage of their organizations should cultivate and adopt employee engagement. According to Eldor (2016), job resources promote work engagement via intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, which encourage employees to accomplish personal growth and work objectives. Moss et al. (2017) asserted employee empowerment, innovation, evidence-based practices, and alignment to organizational strategies are significantly impacted by culture in healthcare settings. Moss et al. (2017) also posited low job satisfaction, high burnout rates, and increased rates of turnover could result from poor organizational culture. Eldor (2016) suggested engaged employees display innovation, welcome change, and want to share their knowledge with others. It is these characteristics that other competitors will not be able to replicate easily (Eldor, 2016; Stoyanova & Iliev, 2017). Shen and Jiang (2019) found that organization-initiated engagement strategies positively influenced employee engagement. Shen and Jiang (2019) posited employees become highly engaged when organizations use strategies involving openness, networking, and assurances of legitimacy. Engaged employees will be advocates of their organizations and engage in activities to improve organizational outcomes (Shen & Jiang, 2019). Organizational leaders should facilitate employee performance by promoting employee engagement; this not only increases organizational performance and profitability but also

enriches the lives of employees and positively impacts their communities (Eldor, 2016; Moss et al., 2017).

### **Drivers of Employee Engagement**

Othman et al. (2019) sought to identify significant determinants of employee engagement. Othman et al. identified the following factors as significant contributors to employee engagement (a) leadership, (b) compensation, and (c) organizational culture. The findings by Othman et al. showed organizational culture as the most significant determinant of employee engagement. The results of the study also showed that employee performance is highly dependent on employee engagement. The results of the study done by Martin (2020) supported the findings of Othman et al. (2019). Martin (2020) found workload, work fit, work expectations, recognition, culture, leadership, health (mental and physical), and work meaning influenced workplace engagement. Lee et al. (2017) examined the influence of hierarchical culture and empowering leadership on employee engagement. The findings of Lee et al. showed that only empowering leadership influenced employee engagement. The results of the study also showed that a supportive organizational climate might promote employee engagement. The study findings also showed the importance of understanding leadership styles in devising strategies to stimulate employee engagement. Empowering leadership promotes employee engagement via the provision of organizational support (Lee et al., 2017).

Collini et al. (2015) sought to understand the interactions between interpersonal respect, diversity climate, mission fulfillment, and employee engagement to forecast employee turnover in healthcare organizations more accurately. The study findings

showed engagement affected the effect of interpersonal relationships on turnover. The results also showed engagement influenced the relationship between respect and the relationship between mission fulfillment and turnover. Reina et al. (2018) investigated the influence of pressure tactics and inspirational appeals by managers on employee turnover and if emotional engagement and job satisfaction mediated the relationship. The study findings showed that inspirational appeal was positively associated with job satisfaction and emotional engagement and negatively related to voluntary turnover. Pressure tactics were also found to be negatively associated with job satisfaction and emotional engagement, and positively related to voluntary turnover. Reina et al. suggested inspirational appeals may promote employee loyalty from increased emotional engagement while pressure tactics may increase employees' desire to leave organizations from decreased emotional engagement. According to Reina et al., emotional connections are created between employees and their jobs by managers who inspire, which results in better employee retention rates. The behaviors of managers shape employees' perceptions and experiences of their work environments and turnover decisions. By focusing on improving interpersonal relationships and engaging in behaviors that display organizational values congruent with those of employees, managers may reduce turnover rates (Collini et al., 2015; Reina et al., 2018).

An organizational climate that promotes learning may enhance employee engagement. Eldor and Harpaz (2016) focused on the learning climate as an organizational resource that enhances workforce engagement. Employee engagement played a mediating role in the relationship between perceived learning climate and

behaviors, including proactivity, knowledge sharing, creativity, and adaptivity (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016). Eldor and Harpaz (2016) determined a significant, positive relationship between perceived learning climate and employee engagement. A learning climate may promote a sense of challenge, meaningfulness, and purpose in employees, motivating them to invest their physical and cognitive resources in extra-role behaviors (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016). Hanaysha (2016) investigated the effects of employee engagement, work environment, and organizational learning on organizational commitment. The findings of the study indicated that employee engagement has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment. Hanaysha (2016) found organizational learning was positively associated with organizational commitment. Organizational culture and work environment are essential in enhancing organizational commitment (Hanaysha, 2016). Leaders should encourage learning environments where employees can collaborate and be architects of organizational vision (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016). The development of strategies is essential to help employees to adapt to organizational environments that are continually changing. The learning climate of organizations should be enhanced to ensure employees are more engaged and adjust to changes effectively (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016; Hanaysha, 2016). Leaders need to focus on a continuous learning culture in organizations to promote employee commitment, improve organizational performance, and enhance organizational success (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016; Hanaysha, 2016).

Communication may also promote employee engagement. Verčič and Vokić (2017) investigated the relationship between internal communication satisfaction and employee engagement. Verčič and Vokić (2017) found a significant positive relationship

between internal communication satisfaction and employee engagement. Effective internal communication strategies may facilitate favorable relationships between employees and organizations, leading to enhanced employee engagement and positive performance outcomes (Verčič & Vokić, 2017). From their study of the associations between internal communication and organizational engagement, Ruck et al. (2017) found a strong relationship between upward employee voice and organizational engagement. Ruck et al. (2017) also found a positive relationship between senior manager receptiveness and organizational engagement. Ruck et al. also highlighted the need for organizations to incorporate specific employee and management communication objectives in their strategic plans. It is essential for managers to effectively listen and respond to employees' views and suggestions (Ruck et al., 2017). Walden et al. (2017) found that communication elements of information flow, information adequacy, and interaction support predicted engagement, which influenced millennials' organizational commitment. The results of an organizational culture that fosters open communication may result in highly engaged and committed employees, leading to lasting and mutually beneficial relationships (Walden et al., 2017).

### **Employee Engagement Levels**

There are three levels of engagement (a) cognitive, (b) emotional, and (c) behavioral engagement (Kahn, 1990; Schneider et al., 2018; Shuck, Adelson et al., 2017). Cognitive engagement develops from an employee's assessment of whether work is meaningful, safe, and access to supportive job resources is available (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). The interpretation by an employee of the work environment in which a

specific situation is experienced influences cognitive engagement (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). Employees who are cognitively engaged will invest in behavior that contributes to the accomplishment of organizational goals because they have a favorable psychological interpretation of their work environment (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). How employees interpret their work environment, and the tasks they perform may impact their cognitive engagement.

Emotional engagement is an association arising from the cognitive decision of employees to invest their resources, including pride, trust, and knowledge in an organization (Jena et al., 2018; Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). Emotionally engaged employees feel connected to their organizations; they are proud and trust their work environment (Jena et al., 2018; Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). Employees who experience these positive feelings make personal decisions to invest in behavior that is productive and aligned with organizational objectives (Jena et al., 2018; Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010).

Behavioral engagement describes observable expressions of cognitive and emotional engagement, including organizational citizenship behavior, proactive behavior, and displaying individual initiative (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). The outcomes of this type of engagement display in discernible behavior directed to organizational objectives. (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). Behavioral engagement involves employees making physical efforts in their tasks to contribute to organizational goals (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). The investment of physical efforts in accomplishing tasks that meet the expected results of work roles might contribute positively to organizations.

## **Employee Disengagement**

Kahn (1990) first postulated the employee disengagement theory. Findings showed disengaged employees consciously make choices to detach themselves physically, emotionally, and cognitively slowly and continuously from their work roles. Anaza et al. (2016) showed there is increasing disengagement in the American workforce, and this poses significant challenges for managers. In the United States of America, employee disengagement results in an annual output decrease to organizations of \$400 billion (Rashidin et al., 2019). Disengaged employees look at their work as stressful and demanding; they are exhausted and disconnected from their work roles and ineffective in their tasks (Al Mehrzi & Singh, 2016). Employee disengagement is physical and psychological (Travis et al., 2016). Some characteristics of disengaged employees include (a) lack of commitment and enhanced turnover intention, (b) dissatisfaction, (c) poor work performance, (d) withdrawal, and (e) uncertainty (Aslam et al., 2018; Rastogi et al., 2018).

Several factors may contribute to employee disengagement. According to Al Mehrzi and Singh (2016), financial reasons, difficulties in working with managers, lack of career development, colleague cooperation, and role ambiguity are some factors that lead to declining employee engagement levels. A lack of trust or confidence in leaders from their actions, including a lack of appreciation, recognition, or feedback, was also shown to be a factor that may contribute to employee disengagement (Al Mehrzi & Singh, 2016). Organizational culture also has a significant influence on employee engagement. An uncooperative organizational culture might lead to low employee

engagement levels, resulting in low job satisfaction and work performance (Al Mehrzi & Singh, 2016). Allam (2017) also found a lack of job autonomy, opportunities for advancement, and mentorship may lead to disengagement. Anthony-McMann et al. (2017) suggested the three psychological requirements of engagement (meaningfulness, safety, and availability) are threatened by workplace stress and lead to employee disengagement. Aslam et al. (2018) found that employee disengagement is positively associated with organizational injustice, negative political influence, and work overload. The findings by Aslam et al. also showed organizational injustice as the strongest predictor of disengagement. According to Aslam et al., disengaged employees have less interest in their jobs, have lower commitment levels to their organizations, and are less productive. Rastogi et al. (2018) stated a lack of job security might also lead to employee disengagement because of the fear of losing the job. The uncertainty of having a job is perceived as a threat to job security and can result in individuals seeking employment in environments elsewhere where they feel secure.

Employees may perceive the lack of supportive resources from organizations as a breach of the psychological contract and lead to disengagement (Vander Elst et al., 2016). The psychological contract construct refers to the beliefs of individuals regarding their expected job behaviors and the expectations from organizations in return for these actions (Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017; Vander Elst et al., 2016). A perceived breach can have adverse effects on the emotions, attitudes, and behaviors of employees (Gupta et al., 2016). Employees who perceive a breach of contract may experience feelings of betrayal, anger, and a sense of injustice. Employees see contract fulfillment as a resource; they

expect to be rewarded by the employer for their work and preserve associations that nurture engagement (Bal et al., 2017).

Disengagement has many ramifications for individuals and organizations. Managers are challenged to motivate, influence, and inspire disengaged employees (Allam, 2017). Organizations are unable to accomplish strategic objectives, including profitability and sustainability, without engaged employees (Anaza et al., 2016). Disengaged employees are threats to organizations because these individuals lack the motivation to be committed, interested, or enthusiastic about their work roles (Allam, 2017). Low productivity, increased employee turnover, and financial losses may result from employee disengagement. In healthcare, there is a positive association between the engagement levels of nurses and their turnover intention (Collini et al., 2015). According to Collini et al. (2015), there are direct and indirect costs of nursing turnover. Direct costs are associated with selection, replacement, separation, training, and vacancies (Abou Hashish, 2017; Collini et al., 2015). Indirect costs from nursing turnover include increased workloads for the remaining employees and adverse publicity, productivity, and effectiveness of organizations (Abou Hashish, 2017; Collini et al., 2015). Disengaged employees may exhibit some counterproductive behaviors, including intentionally working slowly, taking breaks beyond their allotted times, and using social media to present a negative public image of their organizations (Rastogi et al., 2018).

Disengagement has also been found by researchers to be a component of burnout (Rogala et al., 2016). Freudenberger (1974) first described the burnout construct. The concept describes a physical and mental state of exhaustion resulting from work roles,

leading to reduced motivation and depletion of emotional resources (Anthony-McMann et al., 2017; Fragoso et al., 2016). When there is conflict, ambiguity, or work overload in job roles, individuals experience occupational stress (Travis et al., 2016). Researchers have posited the burnout construct as the psychological response to chronic stress that manifests in the form of exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced personal accomplishment (Fragoso et al., 2016; Maricuțoiu et al., 2017; Scanlan & Still, 2019). In healthcare, burnout has been chronicled by researchers as a common occurrence when individuals experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of incompetence, inefficiency, and inadequacy (Fragoso et al., 2016; Kumar, 2016). Physicians, nurses, and emergency technicians are three groups of healthcare professionals whose job demands are often uncontrollable and unfavorable, which can result in chronic stress and burnout (Fragoso et al., 2016; Kumar, 2016). Burnout harms individuals and organizations (Lin & Liu, 2017). Among healthcare professionals, some undesirable outcomes associated with burnout include insomnia, poor decision making, hostility towards patients, medical errors, poor relationships with coworkers, depression, anxiety, fatigue, alcohol abuse, and cardiovascular disorders (Kumar, 2016; Mikalauskas et al., 2018).

Job demands and resources impact the levels of stress experienced by employees, which affect their engagement and performance (Mackay et al., 2017; McKinley et al., 2017). Burnout can result from excessive job demands and inadequate organizational resources to successfully address them (Mackay et al., 2017; McKinley et al., 2017). Employee well-being and organizational outcomes are negatively affected by burnout; this contrasts with employee engagement, which leads to positive individual and

organizational outcomes (Stoyanova & Iliev, 2017; Travis et al., 2016). Managers should recognize the significance of devising organizational strategies that promote employee engagement and thwart burnout (Travis et al., 2016). Managers need to understand the factors which can lead to disengagement and burnout, and the associated positive consequences of developing strategies that promote employee engagement (Travis et al., 2016). The development of strategies to create positive work environments that provide employees with supportive job resources may prevent burnout (Travis et al., 2016). By identifying the potential causes of employee disengagement and devising strategies to eliminate these factors, managers can protect individuals and organizations from the substantial human and financial costs of this phenomenon (Reina et al., 2018; Verčič & Vokić, 2017; Walden et al., 2017).

### **Organizational Commitment**

Han et al. (2016) asserted organizational commitment is the foundation of employee engagement in a work environment. Organizational commitment is the cognitive connection between an employee and a specific organization (Hanaysha, 2016). Hanaysha (2016) also describes organizational commitment as the level of attachment an employee has with a specific organization and how willing this individual is to expend his or her efforts in supporting the organization (Nazir & Islam, 2017). Hanaysha (2016) and Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016) suggested organizational commitment influences employee engagement, attendance, job satisfaction, productivity, work quality, and turnover. Committed employees believe and accept organizational values and objectives, focus their efforts on the attainment of organizational goals, and are loyal to their

organizations (Abou Hashish, 2017). Hanaysha (2016) suggested that job satisfaction influences organizational commitment, and both are associated with organizational profitability and competitiveness. There are three components of organizational commitment (a) affective commitment, (b) continuance commitment, and (c) normative commitment (Dhaenens et al., 2018; Sabella et al., 2016). For employees to be competent in organizations, they must exhibit the three components. Organizations thrive on the positive work behaviors of committed employees (Dhaenens et al., 2018; Sabella et al., 2016; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016).

The psychological attachment of employees to their organizations describes affective commitment (Sabella et al., 2016). Employees with robust affective commitments are loyal to their organizations because of their emotional bonds with these institutions. Individuals with high levels of affective commitment also display positive interpersonal and organizational citizenship behaviors (Sabella et al., 2016). Affective commitment can result in employee actions that expand upon their assigned job tasks. Affectively committed employees may protect the interests and objectives of organizations (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). According to Nichols et al. (2016), employee turnover has many negative impacts on organizations, including direct costs, which involve the exit and replacement of workers, and indirect costs, which include reduced organizational effectiveness and lower profitability. The most reliable predictor of employee turnover intent is affective commitment. Nichols et al. (2016) investigated the relationship between frontline supervisor support and turnover intent among hospital service workers and the influence of affective commitment on the relationship.

Supervisor support was the most significant predictor of turnover intent; employees with perceived lower levels of supervisor support had higher odds of leaving their organizations. Healthcare managers need to understand the challenges faced by the workforce and the solutions which can improve their jobs (Nichols et al., 2016). Providing organizational job resources to motivate employees and support affective commitment is vital (Nichols et al., 2016).

Continuance commitment defines the need for employees to remain with their organizations (Dhaenens et al., 2018). The basis of continuance commitment is employees' perceptions regarding related costs and risks of leaving their organizations (Dhaenens et al., 2018). Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016) argued employees who feel they may lose high salaries and benefits enjoyed in their current organizations if they move to another institution would display continuous commitment. Higher continuance commitment might also be displayed by employees when external employment opportunities are lacking, and the belief that other institutions will not employ them drives their decision to remain with organizations (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Leaders need to ensure employees remain with organizations because they are committed to their tasks and want to contribute to improved organizational performance.

The moral element of commitment is normative commitment (Sabella et al., 2016). With normative commitment, employees feel obligated to remain with their organizations because they feel this is the right course of action. Employees' beliefs that organizations expect loyalty from them may drive normative commitment (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). The belief in expectations of organizational loyalty may lead to

normative commitment among employees (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Organizations may also engage in activities that promote organizational pride in employees and their normative commitment. Researchers have found a positive relationship between normative commitment and organizational outcomes.

### **Ethical Leadership**

Bakker and Albrecht (2018) identified leadership as a significant contributor to employee engagement. Wang et al. (2017) asserted leadership is a precursor of employee engagement, which can result in positive organizational performances and the well-being of individuals. According to Strömgren et al. (2017), leaders' behaviors associate with engagement constructs, including motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, proactive behaviors, and organizational citizenship actions. Lin and Liu (2017) posited the enhancement of employee engagement in workers who perceive ethical principles and practices guide their organizations.

Transformational leadership has a moral dimension from creating and promoting ethical organizational climates that inspire followers to pursue collective goals actively (Burns, 1978). Behaviors of transformational leaders include acting ethically, performing actions beneficial to others, and promoting environments that encourage followers to question their values and beliefs (Besieux et al., 2018; Bottomley et al., 2016). Besieux et al. described perceived corporate social responsibility (CSR) as the cultural characteristics that determine the norms and values which shape organizations. Besieux et al. found a positive relationship between transformational leadership and perceived CSR and between perceived CSR and employee engagement. The findings by Besieux et al.

also showed that CSR influences the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement. The behaviors of transformational leaders influence CSR practices. Ethical behavior is a component of transformational leadership. Naber and Moffett (2017) suggested transformational leaders ethically influence followers by appealing to their moral values. Transformational leadership emphasizes ethical role modeling; followers perceive transformational leaders as having high levels of integrity and ethical behaviors (Bedi et al., 2016).

Ethical leadership may impact employee engagement. Sugianingrat et al. (2019) noted that ethical leadership is positively associated with employee engagement. Ethical leaders provide support in shaping the moral development of organizations (Sugianingrat et al., 2019). Sugianingrat et al. (2019) investigated the effect of ethical leadership on employee performance. The findings of the study by Sugianingrat et al. (2019) indicated that employee engagement facilitates the influence of ethical leadership on employee performance. Dust et al. (2018) found the empowering effects of ethical leadership motivated the performance of employees. The psychological empowerment from ethical leaders helps employees to recognize and understand the meaning and impact of their work (Dust et al., 2018). The findings by Dust et al. (2018) indicated that ethical leaders not only motivate followers to be ethical in their work, but they also motivate followers to succeed in their job roles. Engelbrecht et al. (2017) investigated the influence of leader integrity and ethical leadership on trust in the leader and work engagement. Engelbrecht et al. (2017) found positive associations between trust in the leader and employee engagement, ethical leadership and follower's work engagement, ethical leadership and

trust in the leader, leader integrity and trust in the leader, and leader integrity and ethical leadership. Employee engagement and mutual trust become more robust when the decisions of leaders display fairness and adherence to moral principles (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). Ethical leadership involves having healthy working relationships and promoting employee engagement resulting from the trust employees have in their leaders.

Kangas et al. (2017) explored the relationship between ethical organizational culture and employee sickness absence. An ethical organizational culture consists of moral values, assumptions, beliefs, structures, and organizational practices that affect workplace positions (Kangas et al., 2017). Kangas et al. (2017) found ethical culture promotes work engagement and is negatively associated with burnout and ethical strain. Kangas et al. found fewer days of individual sickness were associated with employees' perceptions of organizational ethics. The results of the study showed the importance of ethical culture in establishing norms and expectations for employees. Ethical organizational culture supports decision-making in morally distressing or stressful situations, enhancing employee well-being (Kangas et al., 2017). Zheng et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between ethical leadership and emotional exhaustion. Job performance, health, turnover, and citizenship behavior are affected by emotional exhaustion; burnout is a manifestation of emotional exhaustion (Zheng et al., 2015). Zheng et al. (2015), in agreement with Kangas et al. (2017), found ethical leadership reduced emotional exhaustion and promoted employee well-being. Dysfunctional and toxic work environments can adversely affect employees' health (Shuck, Alagaraja et al., 2017). Workplace stressors, including long hours, job insecurity, and poor work-life

balance, have also been identified as contributors to employee deaths (Shuck, Alagaraja et al., 2017). Shuck, Alagaraja et al. (2017) also found engaged employees have positive individual health outcomes and mental health levels. Leaders need to be cognizant of the impact of their decisions on employees' health and well-being.

Javed et al. (2017) explored the relationship between ethical leadership and creativity and the influence of psychological empowerment on this association. Creativity is essential for organizations to be successful in continually changing environments, with ethical leadership playing a crucial role in developing and sustaining a culture of innovation (Javed et al., 2017). Javed et al. found significant positive relationships between ethical leadership and employee creativity, ethical leadership and psychological empowerment, and psychological empowerment and creativity. Javed et al. indicated ethical leaders could influence employees to be creative by including them in decision making and allowing them to work autonomously. Ethical leadership nurtures respecting the rights and dignity of individuals and provides environments in which employees are encouraged to develop novel ideas (Javed et al., 2017). Wang et al. (2017), in agreement with Javed et al. (2017), found ethical leadership is positively associated with organizational outcomes. Wang et al. (2017) found that creating ethical workplace environments led to financial and social benefits to organizations. Treating employees with dignity, respect, and concern via a humane approach could enhance employee engagement and commitment (Wang et al., 2017). Engaged employees may invest psychological, cognitive, and emotional resources to accomplish strategic objectives, leading to improved financial and social organizational outcomes (Javed et al., 2017;

Wang et al., 2017). Huhtala and Feldt (2016) found a fit between individual and organizational values is positively associated with employee engagement and negatively related to turnover intentions. By fostering ethical virtues, organizations can attract employees who feel that their values align with those of the organization, leading to positive employee attitudes and behaviors (Huhtala & Feldt, 2016). Organizations can retain committed and motivated employees by fostering robust ethical cultures.

Ethical leadership may impact organizational deviance. In investigating the influence of moral attentiveness on the relationship between ethical leadership and follower organizational deviance, Gils et al. (2015) made several findings. One finding showed ethical leadership and moral attentiveness had a significant effect on organizational deviance. Another finding revealed followers showed higher levels of organizational deviance with lower ethical leadership (Gils et al., 2015). An additional finding by Gils et al. (2015) was a higher likelihood of organizational deviance among high morally attentive followers than in low, morally attentive followers with low ethical leadership. The results emphasize the importance of ethical leadership in creating and supporting ethical cultures and followers. Leaders need to motivate followers to reject engaging in deviant organizational behaviors by demonstrating the actions they want to promote as acceptable (Bedi et al., 2016). To discourage unethical organizational conduct, leaders should continuously strive to utilize ethical considerations to guide their actions. Mo and Shi (2017) investigated ethical leadership's influence on employee burnout, deviant behavior, and task performance. Mo and Shi (2017) found that trust in leaders influenced the relationships between ethical leadership and employees' work

outcomes. Ethical leadership has a significant impact on employees' attitudes and behaviors (Mo & Shi, 2017). Mo and Shi (2017) asserted leaders could be successful when employees genuinely trust them. Leaders need to be cognizant of the importance of creating an ethical climate that promotes trust and open communication.

Bonner et al. (2016) sought to understand perceptions of leaders as unethical and the impact of this discernment on the behavior of employees. The use of moral disengagement to rationalize unethical behavior includes mechanisms that fall into the following three groups (a) relabeling unethical or unjust behavior, (b) distancing and distorting the harmful effects of unethical or unjust behavior, and (c) reducing identification with victims. The mechanisms used in relabeling unethical behavior make the actions performed appear morally justified, less harmful, and acceptable, resulting in individuals being more comfortable carrying out the tasks involved (Bonner et al., 2016). The second group of mechanisms reduces the perpetrator's role in unethical behavior from the belief that others are responsible for the maltreatment and harmful consequences and ignore any potential harm (Bonner et al., 2016). Bonner et al. (2016) further asserted by reducing identification with victims, the perpetrators of unethical behaviors dehumanize the human characteristics of their prey and cast blame on the injured parties. Using the mechanism of reducing identification with victims makes the perpetrators feel justified with the harmful consequences of their behavior (Bonner et al., 2016). Bonner et al. (2016) found that moral disengagement was negatively related to employees' perceptions of ethical leadership. Erkutlu and Chafra (2018), in agreement with Bonner et al. (2016), found despotic leadership was positively associated with organizational

deviance. Employees perceive despotic leaders as lacking ethical values. A lack of ethical leadership is one of the main antecedents of employee organizational deviance (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2018). Lian et al. (2020) found that leaders' unethical behavior to benefit their organizations was positively associated with employee deviance. Employees model their behavior from observing leaders who practice unethical activities and apply learned moral disengagement to define their unethical actions (Lian et al., 2020). Unethical pro-organizational behaviors may harm organizations instead of helping them, as intended, by promoting employee deviance. Moral disengagement might lead to low productivity and organizational performance (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2018). Employees and leaders should receive ethics training to help them identify and avoid engaging in morally disengaging mechanisms (Bonner et al., 2016; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2018).

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is a happy emotional state resulting from an individual's feelings and thoughts regarding their job (Tosun & Ulusoy, 2017). The essential resources in organizations are employees (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2016). Organizational leaders have become increasingly aware that for employees to perform their tasks at high levels and maintain strong loyalty to their establishments, job satisfaction levels must remain high, and individuals must be motivated to accomplish organizational objectives (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2016). The success of organizations is highly dependent on employee satisfaction (Alegre et al., 2016). Employees want to work for organizations that encourage and recognize their achievement, offer challenging and exciting jobs, and provide career growth opportunities (Alegre et al., 2016; Choi et al., 2016). Employees want reassurance

that their jobs serve a useful purpose, have worth, and make a positive difference in the lives of other individuals (Choi et al., 2016).

Research studies have shown that employee dissatisfaction plays a significant role in high turnover rates among healthcare professionals, which results in high costs to healthcare organizations (Yarbrough et al., 2017). In the United States, the estimated hospital turnover rate of registered nurses is 16.5%, with replacement costs ranging from \$82,000 to \$88,000 per nurse (Yarbrough et al., 2017). Hospitals not only experience financial harm from the costs of replacing nurses, but knowledge and experience also leave when these employees depart from organizations prematurely (Yarbrough et al., 2017). In contrast, employees with high job satisfaction remain committed to their organizations, and the costs of recruitment are significantly reduced (Choi et al., 2016).

Based on the importance of satisfied employees to organizations, the leadership cadre must implement measures that promote satisfaction on the parts of workers. Job satisfaction is not only for the benefit of the employees, but also for the organizations because they gain from the results of satisfied employees (Shantz et al., 2016; Stoyanova & Iliev, 2017). According to Hanaysha and Tahir (2016), employee well-being and job satisfaction impact organizational performance. Employees with high levels of job satisfaction may display increased creativity, flexibility, innovation, and commitment (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2016). Employees with high levels of job satisfaction may also engage in activities that enhance their interactions with customers, leading to clients who promote the organizations to others by sharing these positive encounters, which leads to positive financial and social outcomes for these institutions (Shantz et al., 2016).

Several factors influence employee satisfaction, including the nature of the job, salary, stress levels, working environment, coworkers, supervisors, and workload (Bakotić, 2016; Tosun & Ulusoy, 2017). In healthcare organizations, compensation, which includes benefits, plays a significant role in job satisfaction for nurses (Boamah et al., 2018). Other factors affecting job satisfaction among employees are the opportunity for them to utilize their skills and career advancement. In healthcare, it has become increasingly challenging to recruit and retain registered nurses (Yarbrough et al., 2017). Many employees have skills they can use in higher positions within the organization, and the human resources department can collaborate with managers to train and promote these individuals for higher level jobs (Poghosyan et al., 2017). Job satisfaction contributors include opportunities for continued professional development, career advancement, increased responsibilities, and decision-making (Shantz et al., 2016).

Social capital may also contribute to job satisfaction (Strömgren et al., 2016). Hospital leaders face challenges with reducing healthcare costs while continuing to provide high-quality care without negatively impacting employee well-being (Strömgren et al., 2016). Strömgren et al. (2016) investigated the role played by social capital in influencing job satisfaction, work engagement, and engagement in improving clinical outcomes. The findings by Strömgren et al. (2016) showed social capital and job satisfaction have a positive association with employee engagement in healthcare. There is an association between social capital, employee well-being, and engagement in clinical improvements regarding patient safety. Social capital may foster trust and alliances among healthcare professionals, leading to improved employee well-being and promoting

the engagement of the workforce in enhancing clinical outcomes (Strömgren et al., 2016). Some social capital sources of job satisfaction include relationships with co-workers, managers, and recognition (Strömgren et al., 2016). Motlagh et al. (2020) investigated the relationship of moral intelligence and social capital with job satisfaction among nurses working in emergency departments. The researchers found a significant positive correlation between job satisfaction and social capital. Motlagh et al. (2020) stated social capital provides the foundation for nurses' satisfaction and improved performance. Increased job satisfaction leads to the delivery of improved health care services. Kong et al. (2018) found organizations significantly influence job satisfaction. Some social capital contributors to job satisfaction include working environments, training opportunities, organizational justice, empowerment (Kong et al., 2018). Managers should create organizational cultures and engage in practical support activities to enhance employee job satisfaction.

Alegre et al. (2016) examined the cumulative effects of three relationships on employee job satisfaction (a) employee-organization relationship, (b) employee-supervisor relationship, and (c) employee-coworker relationship. The researchers asserted job satisfaction as the positive psychological state ensuing from an assessment of work tasks and experienced by individuals. Alegre et al. suggested the commitment of employees to organizational strategies and objectives is an outcome that is dependent on the employee-organizational relationship. The perceptions, feelings, and thoughts employees have regarding their organizations impact how they identify with these entities. Employee organizational commitment and identity influence their job

satisfaction (Alegre et al., 2016). Strong positive relationships between employees and their organizations enhance their work engagement, leading to increased job satisfaction (Noblet et al., 2017). Alegre et al. also stated supervisor support and encouragement influenced employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The delegation of tasks and promotion of job autonomy by supervisors can positively impact the attitudes of employees regarding their jobs. A positive relationship between employees and their co-workers promotes teamwork, leading to job enrichment and satisfaction (Alegre et al., 2016).

Alegre et al. (2016) indicated high levels of teamwork, organizational identity, and commitment resulted in high levels of job satisfaction. Positive relationships with coworkers and identifying with organizational objectives and strategies may improve job satisfaction. Alegre et al. also found that job satisfaction was high when employees could make decisions independently regarding their work tasks, and supervisors are crucial in promoting job autonomy (Alegre et al., 2016). The promotion of teamwork in organizations enhances the relationships between employees and creates pleasant working environments (Alegre et al., 2016). Productivity and efficiency reductions occur when there is no teamwork (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2016). Organizations should devise strategies to promote relationships that improve organizational perceptions, job autonomy, supervisory support, and teamwork.

According to Teoh et al. (2016), the satisfaction of employees is the responsibility of managers. The work environment needs to be one that promotes teamwork, and constructive feedback from managers supports employees (Teoh et al., 2016). Managers

should respect the opinions and concerns of employees, articulate clear instructions, and play an active role in their well-being and growth (Teoh et al., 2016). A critical component of employee job satisfaction is presenting them with growth opportunities to enhance their critical thinking skills and increase their value to organizations (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2016). Employees should receive training opportunities to provide them with knowledge for their current roles and to equip them with skills for future increased responsibilities (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2016). From their findings, Teoh et al. (2016) determined social support is positively related to employee engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, and productivity.

High job satisfaction levels are manifested by employees who believe they contribute to organizational outcomes and receive fair treatment from their organizations (Choi et al., 2016). Employees with high levels of job satisfaction will display this positive feeling in many ways, including working beyond the scope of their assigned tasks, being innovative and loyal, and assisting co-workers and supervisors, with high levels of organizational trust and commitment displayed (Bakotić, 2016). Employee satisfaction is vital to companies because this impacts organizational performance and success (Bakotić, 2016). Organizations can utilize sound management decisions to eliminate any potential factors which can lead to job dissatisfaction (Bakotić, 2016). Satisfied workers will have increased levels of commitment to their employers, leading to improved productivity, profit, and customer satisfaction, and a reduction in employee turnover and accidents (Bakotić, 2016; Choi et al., 2016).

## **Mentorship**

The term and concept of *mentor* originated from Homer's *Odyssey*, an ancient Greek poem (Wan et al., 2018). In the story, Odysseus, the king, leaves to fight in the Trojan war and entrusts the education of his son to a reliable friend named Mentor while he is away (Hornstein, 2017). Mentor served in several roles while caring for Odysseus's son, including teacher, role model, advisor, counselor, and supporter (Hornstein, 2017).

Mentorship describes a relationship where guidance is provided by an experienced and influential individual (mentor) to a less experienced and skilled person (mentee) to facilitate and support the personal and professional growth of the mentee (Bang & Reio, 2017; Wan et al., 2018). Mentorship, viewed from a business perspective, is seen as a phenomenon which comprises of three relationships (a) mentor, (b) mentee, and (c) organization (Mylona et al., 2016). Each member of this triad mentoring relationship experiences positive outcomes. High levels of engagement, job satisfaction, and career growth interests are associated with mentored employees (Mylona et al., 2016). According to Mylona et al. (2016), mentees also have a favorable view of their roles and relationships with coworkers. Mentoring is also beneficial to organizations because this relationship promotes faster learning for mentees, which reduces the probability of employee turnover (Holt et al., 2016).

Creative self-efficacy and mentorship are positively associated; mentors enhance the belief of employees in their mastery of performing tasks that require creative efforts (Bang & Reio, 2017). According to Bang and Reio (2017), mentees can be encouraged to think proactively and create new ideas by observing and learning from mentors. The

innovative and creative skills of mentees are also improved from coaching, challenging assignments, and the encouragement of critical thinking by mentors, leading to enhanced task performance by mentees (Bang & Reio, 2017). Mentorship may support employees in optimizing their creative abilities to help organizations gain and maintain a competitive advantage in business environments, which are increasingly dynamic and aggressive (Bang & Reio, 2017).

Mentorship is a job resource that provides support for employee success, leading to increased job satisfaction and career development (Bang & Reio, 2017). According to Bang and Reio (2017), structured mentorship programs positively impact employee job satisfaction, quality of life, and stress. Advice, counseling, and developmental opportunities provided by the mentoring relationship shape the career experiences of mentees (Bang & Reio, 2017). In healthcare, researchers have found positive associations between mentorship and academic success, professional growth, job satisfaction, and development (Khan et al., 2017). Motivation and productivity among physicians have also been positively influenced by mentorship, while burnout and depression may be reduced (Khan et al., 2017).

Employees who perceive organizational support will have high levels of commitment to organizational objectives and remaining with their employers (Mylona et al., 2016). Mentees experience increased job satisfaction, increased promotional opportunities, higher wages, higher self-worth, and enhanced expertise (Curtis & Taylor, 2018; Taylor & Curtis, 2018). The development of mentees occurs via instrumental and psychological support provided by mentors (Bang & Reio, 2017). Instrumental support

designates the behavior of mentors and includes the provision of assistance related to tasks, sponsorship, exposure, and visibility, which focus on the accomplishment of goals by mentees (Bang & Reio, 2017). Mentor behaviors focused on the personal and emotional development of mentees, including counseling, acceptance, encouragement, and role modeling, describe psychological support (Bang & Reio, 2017).

Mentoring can enhance employee morale and the accomplishment of organizational objectives (Taylor & Curtis, 2018). Mentors may find their work meaningful, which enhances their levels of job satisfaction and generates feelings of wellbeing from a combination of self-determination and self-reflection (Jyoti & Sharma, 2017). The job roles of mentors provide them with the opportunity to use skills, talents, and activities which impact their coworkers or other individuals outside their organizations (Bang & Reio, 2017). When individuals consider a job to have a purpose, value, and significance, they may experience a sense of meaningfulness (Jyoti & Sharma, 2017; Taylor & Curtis, 2018). Increased cognizance by leaders regarding the benefits of mentoring has resulted in 71% of Fortune 500 companies implementing mentorship programs (Holt et al., 2016). Formal and informal mentoring relationships exist in organizations (Holt et al., 2016; Jyoti & Sharma, 2017). In recognized mentoring relationships, mentors are assigned to mentees in a structured manner by organizations. Informal mentorship associations develop naturally and voluntarily from mutual attractions between mentees and mentors (Holt et al., 2016; Jyoti & Sharma, 2017). Within informal mentor relationships, mentees are more satisfied with their mentors and have more enjoyable and beneficial interactions (Holt et al., 2016).

Mentors need to meet the expectations of mentees to promote a positive mentoring relationship (Bailey et al., 2016). The interactions between mentors and mentees influence mentoring relationships; the extent to which mentors can meet mentees' expectations impacts the relationship between mentors and mentees (Bailey et al., 2016). Respect is critical to mentoring relationships because mentees expect mentors to have the ability to assist in task and career guidance (Bang & Reio, 2017). If mentees perceive mentors negatively regarding expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, the influence of the mentoring relationship will get nullified from the failure of mentors to meet the expectations of mentees (Bailey et al., 2016; Bang & Reio, 2017).

Physical features and behaviors are two qualities mentees analyze regarding potential mentors. First impressions influence mentees based on their expectations of the physical attributes suitable mentors should possess (Bailey et al., 2016). Mentors who look older are expected by mentees to be more experienced and wiser than mentors who exhibit physical features considered as youthful (Bailey et al., 2016). Mentees also expect mentors to provide social and psychological support, serve as role models, and support career goals (Bailey et al., 2016). The expected behaviors of mentors in supporting the careers of mentees include the introduction of new job opportunities, providing challenging assignments, and serving as coaches; mentees value these roles of mentors highly (Bailey et al., 2016).

According to Kram (1983), mentoring relationships consist of four distinct phases (a) initiation, (b) cultivation, (c) separation, and (d) redefinition. The matching of mentors and mentees occurs during the initiation phase, which can span the first 6 to 12 months of

the relationship (Humberd & Rouse, 2016; Mohtady et al., 2016). In the initiation phase, negotiations occur between mentors and mentees regarding their relationship by clarifying expectations, identifying similarities, and recognizing differences in deciding to work together (Humberd & Rouse, 2016). The maturation of the relationship between mentor and mentee leads to the cultivation phase, which can have a duration of 2 to 5 years (Humberd & Rouse, 2016). Mentors and mentees learn more about each other and the benefits of the mentoring partnership during the cultivation phase; mentees are promoted and protected by mentors (Humberd & Rouse, 2016).

The cultivation phase is the segment in which mentor support to mentees is most significant, and success in this phase of mentorship depends on the skills of the mentor (Humberd & Rouse, 2016; Mohtady et al., 2016). There is a reduction in the support provided by the mentor, and the mentee becomes more independent during the separation phase (Humberd & Rouse, 2016). The duration of the separation phase spans 6 months to 2 years. The redefinition phase signifies the end of the mentorship, with the mentor and mentee relationship evolving into a professional, peer-like friendship characterized by casual contact and mutual support (Humberd & Rouse, 2016; Mohtady et al., 2016). The redefinition phase spans an indefinite length of time (Humberd & Rouse, 2016).

Employee commitment and retention are crucial for organizations to accomplish their strategic objectives. By promoting workplace climates that foster a culture of mentoring, organizational managers can enhance employee motivation, commitment, productivity, well-being, and health (Jyoti & Sharma, 2017). Managers should promote a

culture of mentoring based on the positive individual and organizational outcomes associated with this relationship (Jyoti & Sharma, 2017).

### **Transition**

The problem and purpose statements, conceptual framework, study significance, and literature review were introduced in Section 1. The literature review commenced with the transformational leadership theory as the foundation for understanding the importance of this leadership style in motivating individuals to perform beyond their expectations. The review also focused on other constructs, including transactional leadership, employee engagement, employee disengagement, organizational commitment, ethical leadership, job satisfaction, and mentorship. The transformational leadership constructs, as applied to this study, are expected to help to enrich and refine the literature regarding strategies healthcare managers utilize to promote employee engagement. The results of this exploratory study may be beneficial to business practice from the contribution to the knowledge capital of healthcare managers regarding employee engagement promotional strategies. Improved healthcare organizational performance may contribute to the social well-being of patients and communities served by these institutions.

The focus of section 2 is on the research project. Section 2 includes a description of the processes of seeking permission to conduct the study, contacting potential participants, and the use of an interview protocol to ensure the integrity of the study is protected. This section also includes a description of recruiting enough participants to

obtain sufficient information to ensure data saturation is achieved. The collecting and organizing of data are also discussed in section 2. The application of thematic data analysis to compile, disassemble, reassemble, and interpret the data, then report the findings is also described. Section 2 concludes with a description of the actions taken to ensure the findings of the study are reliable and valid. In Section 3, I present the findings of this study. The findings include a detailed description of the thematic analysis of the data collected from participants and themes which emerge in response to the research question. Section 3 also includes a discussion of the application of the study results to professional practice and their implications for social change. Section 3 also includes recommendations for further research, personal reflections of the study, and the study conclusion. I expect the findings will address a business challenge and provide meaningful insights to healthcare managers to promote employee engagement in their organizations.

## Section 2: The Project

In this single case, qualitative study, I explored strategies used by healthcare managers to promote employee engagement. This section begins with a restatement of the purpose of the study followed by descriptions of my role as the researcher, the qualitative research method, and the single case study design. I also include discussions regarding the number of study participants and the criteria for their selection, ethical research, data collection instruments and technique, data organization, and analysis. A description of the reliability and validity criteria for the study concludes this section.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies healthcare managers used to promote employee engagement. The target population was six healthcare managers from one organization in New Jersey who used successful strategies for employee engagement. The results of this study may provide healthcare managers with practical strategies for promoting employee engagement, leading to improved organizational performance, patient care outcomes, and economic stability within communities and regions served by healthcare organizations.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I served as the primary data collection instrument during my research study in New Jersey. Rigorous data collection is central to qualitative research. Participant interviews provide researchers with detailed qualitative data (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Data allow researchers to understand, describe, and make meanings from the experiences of participants (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). In qualitative research, data

collection is accomplished via the semistructured interview technique because it facilitates conversation between interviewers and participants and allows contributors to speak freely (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; O'Keeffe et al., 2016). DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) argued open-ended questions allow researchers to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. Sanjari et al. (2014) stated researchers are involved in all aspects of qualitative studies. In qualitative research, the researcher is integral to the process, which involves developing interview questions, conducting semistructured interviews, recording data provided by participants, transcribing recorded data, analyzing data, performing member-checking, and interpreting (Sanjari et al., 2014).

I became interested in the topic of employee engagement after receiving surveys on the subject from my employer and reading articles about nursing turnover and burnout in healthcare. I researched Walden University's library and learned that employee engagement was a significant challenge in the healthcare sector. I do not have previous experiences with healthcare administration.

The need for researchers to protect the rights of humans in research resulted in the writing of *The Belmont Report*. The purpose of *The Belmont Report* is to provide an ethical framework for all research participants. The report consists of three moral principles: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 1979). Every participant was treated as an autonomous individual. I adhered to the ethical principle of beneficence by informing all

research participants in writing of the efforts to protect them from harm, including protecting their identities and securing data collected during the study.

All participants need to be made aware of any potential risks for them to make informed autonomous decisions (U.S. DHHS, 1979). As recommended by the U.S. DHHS, I provided informed consent forms to all participants, which served as another measure to protect them from potential harm. I adhered to the recommendations of the U.S. DHHS in exercising justice by treating all participants fairly. A summary of findings of the study was made available to any participant who requested it.

Before beginning the process of collecting data, I obtained approval for this study from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). After receiving IRB approval to conduct the study, I used purposeful sampling to identify potential participants. I sent emails to prospective participants inviting them to contribute to this study (see Appendix A). Each invitation was accompanied by an electronic version of the informed consent form. Upon receipt of the electronic signature to participate in the study, I confirmed interview dates and times with each contributor and provided the list of questions I would be asking during interviews. I provided each participant with the list of questions ahead of interviews to allow them enough time so they could supply accurate and comprehensive responses to each.

Yin (2018) noted an interview protocol helps to ensure objectivity and consistency during interviews. I adhered to the interview protocol by conducting semistructured interviews with all participants using matching open-ended questions in the same order to allow contributors to share their experiences regarding strategies that

were successfully used to promote employee engagement. Additionally, the interview protocol enhances the consistency, repeatability, and trustworthiness of the data collection process, and reduces the potential for interviewer bias (Yin, 2018). I used the interview protocol to also inform participants about what to expect during the interview process, which involved an introduction, overview of the goals of the study, recording of interviews, and the confidentiality of the information provided.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), in a qualitative study, the role of the researcher is to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of participants, which facilitates an extensive description of the phenomenon. Marshall and Rossman (2016) stated that the role of the researcher is to explore the phenomenon of interest while ensuring reliability and validity during the research process. McNarry et al. (2019) asserted researchers have biases due to socialization, which shapes assumptions, meanings, and interpretations of phenomena. I minimized bias and enhanced the rigor of the study using bracketing. According to Cypress (2017) and McNarry et al. (2019), bracketing allows researchers to identify and set aside their interests, experiences, assumptions, preconceptions, and knowledge regarding the investigated phenomenon. The objective of bracketing is to prevent researchers from imposing their biases on the research methods and processes (Ehsani et al., 2016). Analysis of data and interpretation of findings should reflect participants' experiences from their perspectives regarding the phenomenon, not the prejudices of researchers (Cypress, 2017).

To improve accuracy, credibility, and validity of the study, I used the member-checking technique. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the member-checking

technique ensures that researchers accurately describe participants' experiences. All study participants had the opportunity to review and confirm the accuracy of the interpretations of their interview responses. I corrected any errors identified by participants to ensure accurate representation of their responses. According to Joslin and Müller (2016), triangulation enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative studies. Methodological triangulation is a research strategy used by researchers to collect data from multiple sources to provide them with a deeper understanding of the studied phenomenon (Joslin & Müller, 2016). Yin (2018) articulated multiple sources of evidence allow for triangulation, which enhances the credibility of studies. I collected strategic planning information from the website of the organization regarding its mission and the services provided. The data in the study were triangulated using the interview transcripts and reviewing organizational documents.

### **Participants**

I conducted a single case study following Yin's guidelines on qualitative research in acquiring detailed information based on the how and why of participants' experiences with the studied phenomenon. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants who were employed with a healthcare organization in the New Jersey region of the northeastern United States. According to Yin (2018), in qualitative research, experiences of the phenomenon serve as a basis for selecting participants. Purposeful sampling is a nonrandom technique used by researchers in qualitative studies to identify and select participants who are knowledgeable and experienced regarding the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). According to Yin (2018), purposeful sampling enhances

credibility and certainty in selecting participants. Purposeful sampling ensured selected participants had experience with the phenomenon being studied to provide information relevant to the research topic (Palinkas et al., 2015; Robinson, 2014). The criteria for study participant eligibility were (a) must be a manager in the healthcare industry for at least 1 year, (b) must use employee engagement practices, and (c) must be a full-time employee with the healthcare organization. I used purposeful sampling to select six participants from the managerial population of the healthcare organization. Boddy (2016) and Hannum et al. (2019) noted the appropriate participants to provide enough data regarding the phenomenon of interest is more important than the sample size for qualitative case studies. Weller et al. (2018) indicated large sample sizes are not required to attain balance and thoroughness in a qualitative study. Of importance is the extent of the range of participant perspectives on the phenomenon and if a comprehensive interpretation is possible based on the data (Hannum et al., 2019).

According to Cunliffe and Alcadipani (2016), access is the process of obtaining permission to gain entry to an organization to conduct research and building relationships to establish contact with individuals to participate in the study. In qualitative studies, researchers may face challenges in establishing contacts and obtaining permission to access participants (Monahan & Fisher, 2015). Riese (2019) suggested the influence of power dynamics in shaping access continues to pose challenges for qualitative researchers. Some organizations may require researchers to obtain permission from authorized personnel to access information, space, and individuals (Monahan & Fisher, 2015; Riese, 2019). Access influences the research process and research results (Riese,

2019). I began the process of recruiting participants for this study upon receiving approval to collect data from the Walden University IRB. To access potential participants, I sent a letter electronically to the leader of a healthcare organization in New Jersey to request permission to interview contributors for this study (see Appendix A). Upon receipt of an electronic agreement from the organization to partner for this study, I provided the IRB with the electronic signature and letter of cooperation. When the IRB confirmed receipt of the partnership agreement documents and authorized me to proceed with the study data collection process, I requested the partner organization to provide me with a listing of potential healthcare managers, including their email addresses. I emailed potential participants and invited them to contribute to the study (see Appendix B). The informed consent was included in the introductory email to each potential participant to obtain their written agreement to contribute to the study. I asked each participant to indicate his or her consent by replying to my email with the words *I consent*. Informed consent provides participants with valuable information, including protecting their confidentiality and their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time, to allow individuals to make the best decision for themselves regarding their contribution to the research (Petrova et al., 2016). I allowed eligible participants 10 days to make their decision to contribute to the study or not.

Upon receipt of the consent email and confirmation of meeting the eligibility criteria from prospective candidates, I scheduled interviews. I interviewed eligible participants until I achieved data saturation. According to Braun and Clarke (2019), a sample size which is partly informed by pragmatic considerations can provide data of

adequate depth and perspectives to achieve data saturation in case studies. Braun and Clarke (2019) suggested decisions regarding sample sizes should be made during data collection and shaped by the adequacy of the data regarding the explored phenomenon. I intended to interview at least six participants and cease only upon achieving data saturation. Hennink et al. (2017) asserted case studies do not require a minimum number of participants to achieve data saturation. Data saturation in qualitative research is the point where no new codes or themes emerge from the collection of additional data (Constantinou et al., 2017). When information captured during participant interviews becomes repetitive, and the collection of additional data becomes redundant, this is an indication of data saturation (Hennink et al., 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The quality of the data collected is what matters and not the number of cases (Sim et al., 2018).

The use of open-ended interview questions by researchers facilitates the capturing of participants' experiences with the phenomenon of interest in their own words (Korstjens & Moser, 2018a). A good relationship must be established between researchers and participants to achieve successful and detailed qualitative interviews (Seitz, 2016). According to DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), qualitative researchers can understand the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of participants regarding a phenomenon from semistructured interviews by establishing rapport and trusting partnerships. I established and maintained relationships with the participants characterized by integrity, trust, and mutual respect. I also informed each participant of the nature and purpose of the study, and how the presentation of the collected data ensured contributors were unidentifiable. Verbal permission was sought from each

participant to make an audio recording of the interview to ensure accuracy. I also assured participants that all electronic and written interview information would be stored in my locked fireproof combination safe for 5 years following the study conclusion. At the end of the mandatory 5-year holding period, I will destroy all study data by shredding all paper archives and deleting all electronic records from storage media devices.

### **Research Method and Design**

Researchers use three methods to study phenomena: (a) qualitative, (b) quantitative, and (c) mixed methods. Design choices considered by researchers in qualitative studies are narrative, case study, phenomenological, and ethnography (Bristowe et al., 2015; Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Yin (2018) asserted the research method and design affect conclusions scholars can make about a phenomenon. Qualitative research methodology and case study design include collecting data via verbal interactions to obtain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the participants regarding the explored phenomenon (Yin, 2016, 2018). I chose the qualitative research method and case study research design for this study because the intent was to explore the experiences of participants to gain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon.

### **Research Method**

Researchers use the qualitative research method to answer questions about experience, meaning, and perspective from the viewpoint of participants regarding the investigated phenomenon (Hammarberg et al., 2016). The qualitative research method has an advantage over the quantitative method because researchers can produce detailed nonquantifiable information, including meanings, understandings, and experiences with

this approach (Bristowe et al., 2015). Methods of inquiry that produce nonnumerical data are used by qualitative researchers to explore, understand, describe, and explain phenomena (Bristowe et al., 2015). I chose the qualitative research method for this study because I planned to collect and analyze narrative data from participants to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon from the perspectives of the contributors. Researchers use the qualitative approach to capture the perspectives of individuals, understand how and why a phenomenon occurs, and participants' experiences and meanings associated with the occurrence (Alderfer & Sood, 2016; Bristowe et al., 2015).

Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry which involves exploring the experiences of participants to generate a rich understanding of a phenomenon (Hammarberg et al., 2016). In contrast, researchers use the quantitative research method to investigate events empirically by examining the relationships among variables and providing numerical descriptions of trends using statistical analysis (Babones, 2016). I chose to use the qualitative research method to explore the strategies used by participants. Researchers use the qualitative approach to seek to understand the experiences and circumstances of participants, and the meanings derived from contributors' perspectives (Florczak, 2017; Hammarberg et al., 2016).

Researchers using the quantitative method are required to collect structured numeric data, which allows for the statistical analysis of variables (Babones, 2016). The quantitative research method was not appropriate for this study because the objective was not to test relationships between variables. The mixed methods approach combines

qualitative and quantitative research techniques, methods, and data within a single study (McKim, 2017). Researchers use the mixed methods approach to provide nonquantifiable qualitative data and numeric, quantitative data (McKim, 2017). The mixed methods approach presents researchers with implementation challenges and limitations from the complexities associated with collecting and analyzing data for qualitative and quantitative paradigms (McLaughlin et al., 2016). The objective of this study was to explore the strategies healthcare managers use to promote employee engagement, not to test a theory or analyze relationships between variables. The mixed method approach, which includes a quantitative component, was not appropriate for this study.

### **Research Design**

I chose a single case study design for this qualitative study following Yin's (2018) guidelines. According to Yin (2018), a case study is the exploration of a phenomenon, which requires multiple sources of data collection. The qualitative case study design promotes the exploration of a phenomenon within its natural setting using data collected from multiple sources, which allows for a detailed description of the event to be captured by the researcher (Mostert, 2018). Yin (2018) asserted case studies are extensive investigations of phenomena to answer how and why questions. According to Yin (2018), researchers use the case study design to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon when uncertainty exists regarding its bounds. A single case study design was appropriate for this study because I intended to gain a holistic understanding of participants' experiences regarding the phenomenon by collecting information-rich and high-quality data.

Other research designs considered for this study included phenomenological, ethnographic, and narrative approaches. Phenomenological researchers aim to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon being explored by investigating the lived experiences of individuals (Willis et al., 2016). Researchers consider the phenomenological design as appropriate when their objective is to explore and understand the everyday lives of individuals and the meanings of their experiences (Hopkins et al., 2017). I did not choose the phenomenological design for this study because the purpose was not to observe the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals.

Researchers use the ethnographic design to explore interactions and meanings in the lives of a specific cultural group (Eisenhart, 2017). Ethnographic design requires researchers to live in the natural environment of the group being studied for an extended period to learn the feelings, beliefs, and meanings of relationships between individuals from their cultural interactions (Eisenhart, 2017; Sharp et al., 2016). The ethnographic approach was inappropriate for this study because I did not explore employee engagement strategies of healthcare managers from living with a group of participants and observing their behaviors, values, and social rules.

Researchers use the narrative design to formulate storytelling versions of the experiences of individuals and create narratives of the stories (Treloar et al., 2015). Narrative researchers explore the experiences and actions of participants in seeking to understand the reasons for the strategies used (Stapleton & Wilson, 2017). The intent of this study was not for the researcher to understand the reasons behind the strategies or to

tell a story. Instead, the focus was to discover how strategies influenced employee engagement. Based on this, the narrative design was inappropriate for this study.

Gentles et al. (2015) asserted that within the context of qualitative studies, data collection continues until data saturation occurs. The achievement of data saturation occurs when no new information emerges from participants' responses (Hennink et al., 2017). Sim et al. (2018) suggested that researchers should focus on the quality of the data rather than the quantity of the data. Constantinou et al. (2017) stated that saturation is an indication that data is valid and adequate for researchers to address the phenomenon of interest. I recognized the accomplishment of data saturation when no new information emerged from the responses of the participants.

### **Population and Sampling**

Researchers using the qualitative investigation approach should describe their sampling strategy and provide the rationale for the technique to preserve the credibility of studies (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2017; Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposive sampling, criterion sampling, theoretical sampling, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling are some commonly used sampling techniques (Korstjens & Moser, 2018a). According to Korstjens and Moser (2018a), the conceptual framework and research questions addressed by the study determine the most appropriate sampling technique.

The population for this single case study consisted of managers who have successfully used strategies to promote employee engagement within a healthcare organization in New Jersey. I selected participants for this study using the purposeful sampling strategy. Researchers use the purposeful sampling technique to deliberately

identify and select participants who are knowledgeable and experienced with the phenomenon under investigation (Bradshaw et al., 2017). The data collected by researchers should contribute to a better understanding of a phenomenon of interest (Gentles et al., 2015). According to Squires and Dorsen (2018), researchers need to identify and select appropriate participants to represent the phenomenon of interest. Without an adequate sample, researchers will not accomplish data saturation, meet the study objectives, or make meaningful literature contributions (Squires & Dorsen, 2018). I decided to use purposeful sampling to select participants whose experiences with the phenomenon investigated resulted in the generation of information-rich, high-quality data, which improved the likelihood of attaining data saturation.

This single case study included a purposeful sampling of six participants who were managers in a healthcare organization in New Jersey. Hennink et al. (2017) argued there is no clear answer regarding adequate sample sizes for qualitative studies. Many factors influence sample sizes for qualitative studies, including the study purpose, research design, and study population (Hennink et al., 2017). The focus of qualitative studies is on data quality and richness instead of the number of participants (Hennink et al., 2017). When deciding on sample sizes, researchers need to be cognizant of competing priorities of the need to present the sample size in advance while adopting a selection approach that is pertinent to the study (Sim et al., 2018).

There is no fixed number of required participants for case studies (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Boddy (2016) noted one participant might be adequate to generate an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Weller et al. (2018) asserted small sample

sizes are adequate for studies in which researchers aim to provide rich accounts of phenomena; the most salient ideas and themes are captured by probing and obtaining more responses from each participant. Hennink et al. (2017) indicated large sample sizes are not required for new insights and rich understandings in qualitative studies. I selected managers from one healthcare organization in New Jersey as the sample population for this study. I used the single case study design in seeking to discover and understand strategies healthcare managers use to promote employee engagement.

After obtaining IRB approval, I contacted the partner organization and requested their assistance in providing contact information for healthcare managers who were possibly interested in participating in the study. The partner organization was provided with a participation agreement. Upon receipt of the electronically signed partnership agreement, I sent invitations via email to each of the potential participants identified by the partner organization (see Appendix A). All invitations contained the informed consent form. Participants were requested to provide their agreement to contribute to the study via an email reply to me.

The most common qualitative data collection methods are in-person or telephonic interviews (Zhang & Guttormsen, 2016). Interviewing participants successfully requires meticulous planning on the part of researchers, and the location of interviews needs careful consideration (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Interviews provide researchers with detailed data (O'Keeffe et al., 2016). This information-rich data help researchers to understand the experiences of participants regarding the phenomenon of interest and the meanings contributors make of the experiences (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Semistructured

interviews consist of prepared questions designed to elicit substantive responses from participants (Tong & Dew, 2016). Researchers who use semistructured interviews may elicit valuable and often hidden facets of human and organizational behavior from participants (O'Keeffe et al., 2016). Participants can respond in their own words using semistructured interviews, which is essential for researchers to understand the contributors' perception of the phenomenon (Korstjens & Moser, 2018a). The semistructured interview allows participants to provide detailed responses to the questions, which increases reliability and validity from the depth of information and meanings provided (Yin, 2018).

According to Dempsey et al. (2016), interview settings for participants should be convenient, comfortable, quiet, and private. Fusch and Ness (2015) posited accurate data recording and collection should be facilitated by an interview location. Participants were interviewed via Zoom. Each semistructured interview was recorded with permission from the participants to facilitate the accurate collection and memory of information. Researchers conduct in-depth interviews with participants to enhance the breadth, depth, and richness of the explored phenomenon (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

A criterion for discontinuing data collection in qualitative research is data saturation (Gentles et al., 2015). No universal model exists for the data saturation process (Saunders et al., 2018). In qualitative research, saturation occurs when the collection of additional data becomes redundant, and information begins to repeat; no new codes or themes emerge from the data (Hennink et al., 2017). Saturation is an ongoing, cumulative judgment made by researchers rather than pinpointing the occurrence at a specific

junction (Braun & Clarke, 2019). According to Constantinou et al. (2017), saturation is the evidence that the data obtained contain enough information for researchers to address the phenomenon of interest. Fusch and Ness (2015) argued researchers should select a sample size that provides the best opportunity to accomplish data saturation. Boddy (2016) indicated that the accomplishment of saturation could occur with a sample size of one in case studies. With the achievement of data saturation, case studies do not require a minimum number of participants (Hennink et al., 2017). Instead, the achievement of data saturation in case studies occurs from the depth of data collected (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Sim et al. (2018) argued it is the quality of data that matters and not the sample size. I interviewed eligible participants until data saturation was attained.

### **Ethical Research**

Protecting the confidentiality and welfare of human participants is the central responsibility of researchers (Aguila et al., 2016). I completed the training course offered online by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for protecting human participants, to understand my ethical responsibilities in conserving the rights and welfare of human contributors to the study. Researchers must conform to ethical and legal requirements to protect human participants (Aguila et al., 2016). The ethical principle of respect requires researchers to obtain the informed consent of participants via a written document. The consent documentation should include a description of the purpose of the study, potential risks and benefits to participants, privacy protection of participants, and the freedom of participants to withdraw at any time (Regmi et al., 2017; Thomas, & Pettitt, 2017). Trust and cooperation between participants and researchers can also develop from the informed

consent process, leading to an enhancement of the study quality (O'Keeffe et al., 2016). The researcher has an ethical responsibility to provide all contributors with enough information about the study in a language they understand to allow them to voluntarily accept or decline participation (Thomas & Pettitt, 2017). After IRB approval was received, and before data collection, an invitation which included the informed consent form was sent via email to each potential participant. All participants were asked to provide their agreement to contribute to the study via an email reply to me with the words *I consent*.

I did not commence the process of sampling and data collection until approval was received from the Walden University IRB. The Walden University IRB approval number is 06-08-20-0406187 and will expire on June 7, 2021. Obtaining approval from the IRB before sampling and collecting data assures the study complies with the ethical standards required for protecting human participants (Lapid et al., 2019; Thomas & Pettitt, 2017). Prior to commencing interviews, I ensured each participant had provided an email reply consenting to contribute to the study, understood the aims and objectives of the study, was aware of the voluntary nature of participation, the steps taken to protect contributors, and the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me via text, email, or telephone to communicate their desire to discontinue. Participants did not receive any incentives for contributing to the study. The informed consent included a statement indicating that participants would receive no incentives. I also obtained each participant's consent for recording the semistructured interviews. The informed consent procedure is critical to the research process. Doody and Noonan (2016) asserted

researchers must prove to IRBs that they have taken the necessary steps to ensure potential participants receive essential study information in an understandable format. Thomas and Pettitt (2017) noted the importance of having the informed consent processes reviewed and approved by the IRB before commencing data collection. Lapid et al. (2019) highlighted the oversight role of IRBs in ensuring safeguards are instituted by researchers to protect human participants from potential harms.

The protection of participants' private information by researchers is crucial in minimizing risk to study contributors (Alter & Gonzalez, 2018). Informed consent is one of the multiple steps I took to protect the confidentiality of participants. Qiao (2018) articulated the importance of taking additional steps to protect the rights of participants in adhering to the ethical principles expressed in the Belmont Report. Adams et al. (2017) asserted maintaining the anonymity of participants serves to protect them. To ensure confidentiality, I used alphanumeric codes to protect the identity of each participant and organization. I replaced the names of participants with identifier codes P1, P2, P3, and continued this coding convention consecutively to the last contributor. The organization was identified by using the code HO. All study documents will be stored in my combination safe for 5 years as mandated to protect the confidentiality of participants. I am the only person with the combination. After the mandatory 5-year holding period, I will destroy all study data by shredding all paper archives and deleting all electronic records from storage media devices.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

According to Hammarberg et al. (2016), semistructured interviews, member-checking, focus groups, archived data, observations, or a combination of these methods may be used to conduct qualitative studies. Some sources of evidence for case studies include (a) documentation, (b) archival records, (c) interviews, (d) participant observation, (e) direct observation, and (f) physical artifacts (Yin, 2018). In qualitative exploration, the researcher observes, receives, handles, and interprets the data collected, and is considered the primary data collection instrument (Yin, 2018; Zhang & Guttormsen, 2016). The primary method of data collection in qualitative research is interviewing (Englander, 2016).

As the researcher, I was the primary data collection instrument, and the semistructured interview technique was used to collect data. Semistructured interviews were conducted using the interview protocol (see Appendix C) to guide the structure of the discussions. I used open-ended interview questions, which allowed participants to share information based on their lived experiences and provided useful data for the study. Yin (2018) articulated multiple sources of evidence allow for triangulation, which enhances the credibility of studies. I collected strategic planning information from the website of the organization regarding its mission and the services provided. The data in the study were triangulated using the interview transcripts and reviewing organizational documents.

I recorded the virtual, semistructured interviews, as described in the interview protocol (see Appendix C). According to DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), the use of

open-ended questions during semistructured interviews provides researchers with the opportunity to obtain comprehensive insights into the explored phenomenon. The use of an interview protocol allows researchers to replicate the interview questions with each participant and maintain consistency in data collection (Dempsey et al., 2016). The semistructured interviews consisted of eight open-ended questions which allowed me to obtain information from the participants regarding their experiences and perceptions of strategies used to promote employee engagement. Semistructured interviews also provide researchers with the opportunity to triangulate with other data sources easily (McIvor, 2016).

Researchers use the member-checking technique to confirm the accuracy of data collected from participants (Iivari, 2018). Thomas (2017) posited member-checking should be used by qualitative researchers to validate meanings with participants and ensure there are no gaps in understanding the phenomenon of interest. The member-checking process is critical in enhancing the validity and credibility of qualitative research studies (Birt et al., 2016). As described by Birt et al. (2016), I asked each participant to review a summary of their recorded interview to ensure their words were correctly interpreted, and the information was accurately reported.

To perform member-checking, I transcribed each recorded interview verbatim and wrote a summary of the transcribed data. A summary of each interview session was then sent to the respective participants via email for them to review. This process served to provide contributors with the opportunity to confirm and modify the interpretations of their responses. I also asked each participant to complete the review via email. Tong and

Dew (2016) asserted that a rigorous approach should be used by researchers when conducting qualitative studies to ensure credibility and validity. Recording of semistructured interviews and member-checking were strategies to help in attaining the reliability and validity of this study.

### **Data Collection Technique**

For qualitative case studies, the primary method of data collection used by researchers is semistructured interviews (Yin, 2018). A primary technique I used to collect study data was audio-recorded, semistructured interviews with member-checking. Once approval was received from the IRB to conduct the study, I requested the partner organization to provide me with a listing of potential healthcare managers, including their email addresses. I then contacted potential participants via email to explain the intent of the study and requested their contribution to the investigation. Each potential participant also received a consent form via email detailing the nature and purpose of the study to obtain their electronic agreement to contribute to the research. After receiving consent from each participant, I sent them the interview questions, scheduled individual interviews, and followed the established interview protocol (see Appendix C) for each meeting. According to Yin (2018), following an interview protocol guarantees consistency and strengthens the validity of the study. All interviews were conducted via Zoom. Yin (2018) recommended collecting data from multiple sources for case study research. I also reviewed organizational documents, including the corporate values, employee policies and benefits, employee engagement survey results, and written articles

by the director of talent management and engagement, regarding strategies that elevated employee engagement.

Birt et al. (2016) noted researchers use the member-checking procedure to actively involve participants in confirming and modifying the interpretation of collected data. After each interview, I informed the respective participants that a summary of my interpretation of the transcribed data would be sent to them via email to review for accuracy. In qualitative research, the collection of accurate data is crucial (Yin, 2018). According to McIvor (2016), potential inaccuracies in a research study's results may arise from contaminated data. Moon (2019) asserted for triangulation to improve rigor and establish credibility in qualitative studies, the collected data must be accurate. The member-checking process was central to the credibility and validity of this study (Hadi & Closs, 2016). Birt et al. (2016) asserted the foundation of qualitative research is trustworthiness. Member-checking ensures trustworthiness in qualitative studies (Hadi & Closs, 2016).

According to Pandey and Chawla (2016), using semistructured interviews for data collection offers advantages because prepared open-ended questions based on an interview protocol allow researchers to extract responses from participants systematically and comprehensively. Semistructured interviews also allow researchers to obtain in-depth information, create rapport with participants, observe participant behavior, attain data saturation, and ensures data collection is consistent from the use of the same thematic approach during each interview (Dempsey et al., 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Vaughn & Turner, 2016). There may also be disadvantages to using semistructured interviews as a

data collection technique. Developing the interview protocol, identifying, and confirming participants, data collection, transcribing, and analyzing data can be time-consuming (Sánchez-Gordón & O'Connor, 2016). When researchers are data collection instruments and data analyzers in qualitative studies, they may introduce interviewer bias in the data collected (Birt et al., 2016; Yin, 2018). According to Pandey and Chawla (2016), the most accurate answers to the research questions will be obtained via interviews with participants and are suitable for establishing the reliability and validity of the data collected. The use of semistructured interviews was deemed an appropriate data collection technique for this study because the advantages of this method outweighed the disadvantages.

There are pros and cons to collecting data from reviewing organizational documents. Yin (2018) noted one advantage of data collection by researchers from reviewing documents is obtaining information without imposing on participants. Archival records can contribute to robust and holistic research (Das et al., 2018). The use of archival data also allows researchers to corroborate evidence from interview data via methodological triangulation (McIvor, 2016). Potential disadvantages to reviewing organizational data include the information being incomplete, inaccurate, outdated, or unavailable (Das et al., 2018; Yin, 2018).

Yin (2018) noted methodological triangulation enhances the validity of research studies. Methodological triangulation refers to a process where researchers use multiple methods to collect data and enhance their understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Fusch et al., 2018). Archibald (2016) asserted triangulation helps researchers to develop

a comprehensive understanding of phenomena from the use of multiple data sources. As recommended by Fusch and Ness (2015) and Yin (2018), I used methodological triangulation to confirm similarities between the data sources. I examined publicly available organizational documents and crosschecked the information with the interview data, which may augment this study's accuracy. The documents included information related to programs and policies regarding employee engagement.

### **Data Organization Technique**

During research studies, investigators collect, organize, and analyze data (Patel, 2016). Data are central to research; without factual and objective data, research studies will be incomplete (Patel, 2016). I organized and managed all data collected for this study, including audio recordings of interviews, transcripts, participant code lists, and organizational documents. Yin (2018) noted data organization is one of the principles of data collection.

I assigned generic codes to each participant and the organization to ensure confidentiality. I also labeled participants as P1, P2, P3, and used this coding convention consecutively for all contributors. The organization was labeled HO, and no participant knew their identifiers. The use of recording devices by researchers in conducting interviews helps to reduce bias on the part of investigators (Nordstrom, 2015). The diminishing of potential biases of researchers from the use of recording devices helps to make data analysis valid and meaningful (Alase, 2017; Nordstrom, 2015). All interviews were audio-recorded to enable me to review and transcribe the responses of participants. After each interview, I created a verbatim transcript of the information captured by the

recording device and a summary of the transcribed data, using Microsoft Word, and saved all digital files on a password protected portable computer hard drive.

Neale (2016) noted MaxQDA, NVivo, and ATLAS.ti are some of the many computer software programs that aid researchers in the organization, security, storage, and analysis of data for qualitative studies. According to Brandão and Miguez (2017), NVivo provides researchers with the ability to conduct qualitative data analysis practically and robustly. I used the NVivo software application as a tool for supplementary data organization and analysis. I selected the NVivo application because it was suitable for managing and storing the data generated during this study. Brandão and Miguez (2017) noted NVivo aids in exploring data relationships and discovering new concepts. The NVivo application was used to input raw data, code data into themes, and analyze the data for emerging patterns.

Yin (2018) noted researchers must maintain access to the collected data, the research materials, and the data analyzed to protect the integrity of the data. I transcribed each interview verbatim using Microsoft Word and saved all digital files on a password protected portable computer hard drive. All hard copies of study data and the portable computer hard drive will be stored in a locked fireproof combination safe for five years. At the expiration of the mandatory 5-year timeframe, I will erase the data from the portable computer hard drive and shred all documents.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis plays a crucial role in the translation of massive amounts of raw, unstructured text by researchers into an organized, concise, and meaningful

depiction of the phenomenon of interest (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). Researchers use data analysis to extract meaning from the data collected and arrive at practical conclusions (Bengtsson, 2016). To ensure data analysis is performed in a manner that enhances the validity and credibility of studies, researchers need to complete several steps. Marshall and Rossman (2016) asserted the first steps consist of preparing and organizing the data for analysis. The second step entails reviewing the data collected, which provides researchers with the opportunity to explain findings and refine data that do not answer the research question or augment the purpose of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Yin (2016) noted the beginning of the coding process is a part of the third step in data analysis.

Yin (2016) asserted reductions and analyses of statements into themes result from the data analysis process. Investigators identify essential themes, patterns, and descriptions that provide answers to the central research question during the data analysis process (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Yin (2016) suggested a five-step recursive process for performing thorough analyses on qualitative data consisting of (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. I followed Yin's five-step process as the basis for qualitative analysis.

The first step in finding meaningful answers to the research question is compiling the data into a useable format (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Yin, 2016). In the compiling phase, I created electronic databases to organize and store the data collected from all interviews, organizational documents, and additional research data. The compiling step also included transcribing all interview data, which I reviewed repeatedly. Castleberry

and Nolen (2018) noted transcription helps researchers to become familiar with the data, which aids in understanding the meaning of a term or phrase. The second step in data analysis is disassembling. During this phase, data are separated, and essential groups are created via coding (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I used the NVivo software application to organize the collected data into smaller groups by identifying themes, concepts, and ideas that were related to each other. NVivo is a data analysis software tool that researchers can use to assist in identifying relationships in qualitative studies (Brandão & Miguez, 2017). To enhance the validity of the data interpretation, I coded the exact wording of the transcripts created from audio recordings of all participant interviews. As suggested by Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017), I grouped the codes into categories based on associations between them.

According to Castleberry and Nolen (2018), coding allows meaning to emerge from the data by identifying similar content across the dataset. I assigned a name to each category, which allowed me to identify patterns and themes. Reassembling is the third step in the data analysis process (Yin, 2016). During the reassembling phase, data are recombined or rearranged by researchers (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I grouped similar words and phrases to create themes. I also reviewed each theme to determine if they provided useful information relating to the research question. Themes contain data that are essential to answering the research question (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

The fourth step in data analysis is interpretation, which consists of making sense of the thematic data and deriving realistic meanings (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I interpreted the data by analyzing the themes created to understand their significance in

answering the research question. Yin (2016) noted researchers should strive to ensure qualitative interpretations are complete, fair, accurate, add value, and are credible in discussing their rational understanding of the themes presented. I organized the interpretations so readers could see how I arrived at my explanations. I also strove for fairness in my interpretations and based them on the raw text data to ensure accuracy, following the guidelines of Castleberry and Nolen (2018) and Yin (2016). I also endeavored to ensure the study adds value to understanding strategies healthcare managers use to promote employee engagement and present credible interpretations. Concluding is the final stage of the data analysis process; I discussed my findings during this phase. Researchers make conclusions via interpretations of purposeful findings produced from an exhaustive analysis of text data (Yin, 2016).

I decided to use the NVivo analytical tool based on several factors, including the ability to code, classify, sort, arrange the data, and investigate the associations between them. Brandão and Miguez (2017) noted that the NVivo application has a word frequency feature, which provides researchers with the ability to identify the occurrence of specific words used by participants during interviews. I used the word frequency feature to identify and code themes with the NVivo application from recognizing common words and phrases. Researchers can use the NVivo tool to sort words and phrases to develop themes and categories using word recognition and auto-coding functions (Brandão & Miguez, 2017). According to Neale (2016), the NVivo tool helps researchers to analyze large amounts of complex and unstructured data collected during qualitative studies. Brandão and Miguez (2017) asserted NVivo helps researchers to explore the associations

among data and identify new concepts, which enhances the investigators' explanations of the phenomenon of interest.

I used the methodological triangulation technique to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Triangulation is a technique used by researchers in qualitative studies to gain a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon from the collection of data via multiple sources (Yin, 2018). Obtaining perspectives of the same phenomenon from different sources provides researchers with the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the experiences and enhances the validity of studies (Yin, 2018). Fusch and Ness (2015) noted four types of triangulation researchers could use but asserted methodological triangulation allows investigators to compare data from multiple sources for the same phenomenon and reveal the richness of the information obtained from the data. Researchers use methodological triangulation to reduce bias by collecting data from multiple sources in investigating the same phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Fusch and Ness (2015) asserted methodological triangulation aids in data saturation and enhances the reliability of study findings.

The conceptual framework for this study is transformational leadership. The perspectives of managers regarding the use of the transformational leadership style in promoting employee engagement in the healthcare environment was explored. The original work of Burns (1978) and the extensive work of Bass (1985) was used in analyzing the data regarding transformational leadership principles on employee engagement. The analysis of the data collected provided insights into strategies healthcare managers use to promote employee engagement.

## **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are integral to demonstrating rigor and academic integrity in research (Cypress, 2017). According to Yin (2018), trustworthiness is crucial to demonstrating reliability and validity in research studies. Trustworthiness conveys the level of confidence readers have in the results of studies (Cypress, 2017). Lincoln and Guba (1985) posited credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as four criteria to evaluate reliability and validity in qualitative research studies.

### **Reliability**

The achievement of consistent similarity in research findings is referred to as reliability in qualitative research (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019). Hadi and Closs (2016) noted dependability is the measure of reliability and trustworthiness. In my role as the researcher, I used three processes to promote consistency and accuracy of the data to ensure dependability (a) interview protocol, (b) member-checking, and (c) methodological triangulation.

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018b), dependability refers to the ability to consistently produce the same study findings using the documented research procedures. Matamonasa-Bennett (2015) noted the ability of future researchers to replicate the study establishes dependability. Tong and Dew (2016) suggested that coherence across the methodology, data, and findings refer to dependability. I strove to achieve dependability within the study by providing detailed descriptions of (a) participant selection criteria, (b) the research method, (c) the research design, (d) sampling technique, (e) data collection methods, and (f) data analysis.

In conducting participant interviews, I adhered to the interview protocol (see Appendix C). Kallio et al. (2016) noted using a guideline enhances the reliability of a research study. Each participant was asked the same questions in the same order to maintain consistency using this data collection procedure. I also recorded and transcribed the interviews. After transcribing participant interviews, I performed member-checking to verify the accuracy of the data collected. Birt et al. (2016) and Iivari (2018) noted the use of member-checking promotes reliability in qualitative studies. All participants were provided with the summaries of their interviews and allowed to review and modify my interpretations via email. Fusch and Ness (2015) asserted the member-checking process helps to ensure researchers accurately describe participants' experiences of a phenomenon. The third step I used to ensure dependability was methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation provides researchers with a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon from collecting data via multiple sources (Archibald, 2016; Yin, 2018). I compared the data from participant interviews and organizational documents to confirm similarities, which could aid in improving the accuracy of the study.

### **Validity**

The aim of validity in qualitative research is to provide accurate representations of the phenomenon of interest, supported by evidence (Gaus, 2017). Cypress (2017) noted validity is a construct that represents accuracy and truthfulness to ensure rigor in qualitative inquiry. As recommended by Maher et al. (2018), I used the criteria of

credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation to enhance the validity of this study.

To enhance the credibility of this study, I used member-checking and methodological triangulation to verify the accuracy of the data collected. Fusch and Ness (2015) asserted the member-checking process helps to ensure researchers accurately describe participants' experiences of a phenomenon. I used methodological triangulation as the second technique to enhance the credibility of the study. Archibald (2016) and Yin (2018) articulated methodological triangulation provides researchers with a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon from collecting data via multiple sources. I promoted credibility within the study by confirming similarities within the data collected from participant interviews and organizational documents.

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a qualitative study apply to other settings (Maher et al., 2018). According to Hadi and Closs (2016), researchers can achieve transferability by providing a detailed description of the specific research context. Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggested a study is transferable if the target audience can use the research findings. I provided a detailed description of the research context, participant selection criteria, data collection methods, and data analysis, to allow readers to evaluate the transferability of the findings to other study settings and populations.

Confirmability refers to the extent to which findings and interpretations of a study represent participants' experiences instead of researchers' biases or preferences (Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Tong & Dew, 2016). To mitigate bias and achieve confirmability, I

performed bracketing and member-checking. I provided participants with the transcribed syntheses of their interviews, and they were allowed to review and modify the narratives. Cypress (2017) noted the importance of researchers in being aware of their biases; the findings and conclusions of studies may be tainted from the personal views and perspectives of researchers. Bracketing was conducted to set aside my perceptions and opinions of the phenomenon being explored to understand and objectively describe the experiences of the study participants.

A critical component to enhance validity in qualitative research is data saturation (Constantinou et al., 2017). Yin (2018) noted data saturation should be achieved by researchers to enhance validity within studies. When no new codes or themes emerge, this indicates the achievement of data saturation (Hennink et al., 2017). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation is an indication that data collection is complete; additional data will be redundant. Constantinou et al. (2017) suggested researchers need comprehensive data to meet the criteria of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability in qualitative studies. Saturation is an indicator that data of the appropriate depth has been collected for researchers to understand and describe the phenomenon of interest. I interviewed participants until no new data emerged; this was an indication of attaining data saturation. The depth and quality of the data collected will result in data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Sim et al., 2018).

### **Transition and Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study is to explore the strategies healthcare managers use to promote employee engagement. Section 2 included a detailed

description of the methodology and design of the study to demonstrate rigor and academic integrity. A description of my role as the researcher, the criteria for selecting study participants, and ethical actions taken to protect the confidentiality and welfare of the contributors for this study were also presented in Section 2. The section also included explanations of the data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, and data analysis procedures. Section 2 concluded with the processes to ensure reliability and validity in this study. A comprehensive description of the interpretation of the collected data and study findings will be presented in Section 3. The interpretation will include a summary of the common themes and conclusions from the collected data. The contribution of the study to business practice and the implication of the findings for social change are also included in Section 3. My thoughtful insights and recommendations for future research studies conclude this section. Healthcare managers might be able to use the findings of this study to identify and select effective strategies to promote employee engagement in their organizations.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies healthcare managers used to promote employee engagement. The target population was six healthcare managers from one organization in New Jersey who utilized successful strategies for employee engagement. The data were collected by conducting semistructured interviews and reviewing public organizational documents. I explored employee engagement through the lens of the transformational leadership theory. Transformational leaders exhibit behaviors that support and empower employees to enhance engagement levels (Aydogmus et al., 2018; Louw et al., 2017). My findings consisted of three themes that healthcare managers used to promote employee engagement: (a) organizational culture, (b) development, and (c) communication.

#### **Presentation of the Findings**

The central research question for this study was as follows: What strategies do healthcare managers use to promote employee engagement? I conducted semistructured interviews with six healthcare managers who had experience implementing successful strategies to engage employees. All interviews were conducted via Zoom. Interviews lasted between 30 and 50 minutes. I transcribed audio recordings of each interview verbatim and created a synopsis of my interpretation. After all synopses were completed, I used member-checking to ensure my interpretations of participants' responses were accurate. I sent each participant a summary of their interview session via email for them to review and confirm the accuracy of interpretations or identify discrepancies. Each

participant validated my interpretation of transcribed data. To support the validity of this study, I used the methodological triangulation process. I collected data from participants' interviews and organizational documents.

Upon completion of member-checking, the interview information was entered into NVivo for data analysis. After I coded the data from the interview sessions, I realized no new themes emerged after the fourth interview, indicating data saturation at this point. I used a five-step recursive process for performing analyses of the qualitative data: (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. The compiling phase consisted of importing data from interview transcripts into NVivo and formatting information to facilitate utilizing the auto-coding feature of the application to analyze text. During the disassembling phase, I used the word frequency query feature of NVivo to identify frequently used words. Word tree and word cloud features were also used to identify prominent words and phrases. Throughout the reassembling phase, I grouped similar words and phrases to create themes. During the interpretation phase, themes were analyzed to understand their relevance to the central research question. The conclusion stage included a discussion of my findings from data analysis. Three themes emerged from the data analysis (see Table 2).

**Table 2***Emerging Themes and Frequencies*

Emerging theme	Frequency	Percentage of total
Organizational Culture	213	44.2%
Development	137	28.4%
Communication	132	27.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Theme 1: Organizational Culture**

Participants shared similar ideas regarding successful strategies to create an organizational culture in which employee engagement is encouraged. Shen and Jiang (2019) suggested organization-initiated engagement strategies positively influence employee engagement. P1 expressed being accountable and working as a team member instead of exerting positional power effectively promoted employee engagement. When organizations use strategies involving openness, networking, and assurances of legitimacy, employees become highly engaged (Shen & Jiang, 2019). Alegre et al. (2016) stated the promotion of teamwork in organizations enhances relationships between employees and creates pleasant working environments. According to Othman et al. (2019), the most significant determinant of employee engagement is organizational culture.

Leaders who align their actions with transformational leadership theory constructs positively influence employee engagement behaviors, including motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship (Strömberg et al.,

2017). Participants expressed ethical leadership was a factor in terms of treating employees fairly and building trust with them. P1, P3, and P4 noted there was an expectation of fairness within the organization. Responses from participants illustrated the influence of managers on employee engagement. Participants stated survey responses and feedback received during monthly meetings with individual employees indicated high trust levels. Each participant expressed that they trust employees. Organizational documents showed a corporate culture focused on trust, inclusion, diversity, and equity. P2 stated employees' trust was earned by listening, sharing, and supporting their ideas and concerns. P3 and P4 agreed and added employee trust and engagement were promoted through actions on the parts of managers showing they supported individual and collective needs of employees. P5 expressed turnover rates are one measure of effectiveness of the organization's employee engagement strategies. P5 added that prior to focusing on developing the organizational culture to influence employee engagement, the turnover rate was close to 40%. The turnover rate has decreased to 15%. According to Sugianingrat et al. (2019), ethical leadership is positively associated with employee engagement. Engelbrecht et al. (2017) stated employee engagement and mutual trust increase when the decisions of leaders display fairness and adherence to moral principles. Engelbrecht et al. (2017) suggested ethical leadership involves having healthy working relationships and promoting employee engagement. P1 and P3 described using a tool for objectively assessing employee strengths to support their professional development. P5 noted team members were responsible for creating measurable outcomes for objectives, such as process improvement processes, and determining measures for meeting as well as

exceeding expectations. Dust et al. (2018) asserted the psychological empowerment from ethical leaders helps employees to recognize and understand the meaning and impact of their work. Ethical leaders motivate followers to be ethical and successful in their job roles (Dust et al., 2018).

Job satisfaction is the positive psychological state experienced by individuals ensuing from an assessment of their work tasks (Alegre et al., 2016). Job satisfaction is not only for the benefit of employees, but also for organizations because they gain from the results of satisfied employees (Shantz et al., 2016; Stoyanova & Iliev, 2017). Participants shared that employee job satisfaction rose from 40% to 78%, engagement levels increased from 36% to 80%, turnover rates decreased from 40% to 15%, and organizational profits increased by 84% over 5 years. Hanaysha and Tahir (2016) stated employees with high levels of job satisfaction may display increased creativity, flexibility, innovation, and commitment. Strömgren et al. (2016) found a positive association between job satisfaction and employee engagement. Participants indicated a focus on supporting changing personal and professional needs of employees to maintain a positive work-life balance and high job satisfaction levels. P1, P3, P4, and P6 expressed a need for dialogue and listening to employees to understand their desires and make decisions leading to increased job satisfaction. The need for managers to understand that flexibility is required regarding work expectations for employees to effectively meet their needs and increase job satisfaction was expressed by P5.

Participants noted from the responses to employee surveys and one-on-one discussions that implementing flexible work schedules was a successful employee

engagement strategy. P5 said, “This opens the opportunity for job satisfaction, which translates to positive employee engagement.” P4 shared the results of job satisfaction surveys, which showed an increase from 40% to 78% over 5 years. Teoh et al. (2016) asserted employee satisfaction is the responsibility of managers. Strömngren et al. (2016) posited social capital may contribute to job satisfaction. Social capital may foster trust and alliances among professionals, leading to improved employee well-being and promoting the engagement of the workforce in enhancing outcomes (Strömngren et al., 2016). Some social capital sources of job satisfaction include relationships with co-workers and managers (Strömngren et al., 2016). P6 described an experience where the performance of a new employee began deteriorating. Upon speaking with the employee, P6 learned that the individual did not feel close to any team member. P6 stated, “the employee’s performance and commitment to the team improved when strategies were implemented to strengthen the relationship among team members.” Alegre et al. (2016) stated positive relationships between employees and their co-workers promote teamwork and leads to job satisfaction.

All participants expressed the involvement of employees in contributing to business objectives and projects. P5 said, “As a manager, I outline the objective, and allow the team members to create the measurable outcomes that align to it.” Lee et al. (2017) suggested a supportive organizational climate contributed to employee engagement. An organizational climate in which employees feel empowered enhances employee engagement and can result in improved productivity and profitability.

Empowering leadership and a supporting organizational climate promote employee engagement (Lee et al., 2017).

**Correlation to literature and conceptual framework.** The findings of the role of organizational culture in the employee engagement process align with Burns' (1978) and Bass' (1985) explanations of the transformational leadership theory. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) asserted transformational leaders promote idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, which are essential in improving employee performance, enhancing teamwork, and fostering organizational commitment. Engagement reflects the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy directed to positive organizational results (Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017). Creating environments where employees find work meaningful, fulfilling, and motivating promotes employee engagement (Yasin Ghadi et al., 2013). The research of Hayati et al. (2014) also supports the findings. Hayati et al. (2014) found that transformational leadership significantly influences the employee engagement components of vigor, absorption, and dedication.

Bottomley et al. (2016) noted transformational leadership focuses on behaviors that foster the accomplishment of shared objectives instead of individual ambitions. When healthy relationships develop between managers and employees, individuals are motivated to attain improved organizational outcomes (Choi et al., 2016). The findings confirm the research of Bottomley et al. (2016) and Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016), who noted employees mentored, coached, encouraged, and supported by managers, feel empowered, and their engagement levels increase. Yıldız and Şimşek (2016) noted

employees who received support from transformational leaders were confident in their abilities to accomplish tasks. Transformational leaders provide employees with freedom in decision making, which leads to increased workforce engagement (Gözükara & Şimşek, 2015).

Othman et al. (2019) found an organizational culture to be the most significant contributing factor to employee engagement. All participants expressed the importance of organizational culture in promoting employee engagement. As identified from the data analysis, managers who successfully promote employee engagement attributed support, empowerment, and teamwork among employees as contributing factors. Managers who successfully promoted employee engagement validated this study's alignment with the transformational leadership theory by identifying relationship-oriented factors that determined the theme of a culture of engagement. Such factors included developing trusting relationships, fair treatment of employees, encouraging teamwork to accomplish shared objectives, and involving employees in decision making.

Sun and Wang (2017) noted transformational leadership might foster a workplace culture that supports strong bonds between employees and enhances their commitment to organizational goals. Transformational leaders support and empower employees via intrinsic factors, including innovation, recognition, teamwork, and job satisfaction (Aydogmus et al., 2018; Louw et al., 2017). The findings align with those articulated by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) that the focus of transformational leaders is on understanding and supporting employees' needs through engagement in mutually stimulating relationships.

**Theme 2: Development**

Participant responses demonstrated that healthcare managers recognize development as an essential aspect of their strategies to enhance employee engagement. Participants expressed supporting employees with opportunities for career growth by providing them with training to enhance their skills and placing them in roles aligned with their career paths. P4 said, “In determining which project to ask for a person’s assistance on, I first make sure there is an aspect of the project that aligns with their interest and development objectives.” P6 stated weekly emails were sent to the team and executive leadership to recognize team members for their accomplishments. Employees want to work for organizations that encourage and recognize achievement, offer challenging and exciting jobs, and provide career growth opportunities (Alegre et al., 2016; Choi et al., 2016). Shantz et al. (2016) stated opportunities for continued professional development, career advancement, increased responsibilities, and decision making contribute to job satisfaction. Employee engagement is positively associated with job satisfaction (Strömngren et al., 2016). Job satisfaction surveys results shared by P4 showed an increase from 40% to 78% over 5 years. Documents provided by P3 revealed engagement levels increased from 36% to 80% during the same period. All participants expressed that development and training were contributors to employee engagement. P3, P5, and P6 stated employees were reimbursed for related expenses upon successful completion of college courses in furthering their education. P6 added that employees were also provided with other educational opportunities including a corporate university where they could participate in internet-based training programs at no cost to them.

Organizational documents showed the company placed significant importance on the education and development of employees. The documents also showed corporate university training programs supported employees in their current roles and when they are making career progressions. P2 stated employees need to know their roles are vital to the organization and stated that by getting to know everyone's professional goals a strategy could be developed for the professional growth of employees. P5 described using the organizational cultural pillar of Speak and Listen allowed employees to identify problems and present them to all levels of organizational leadership, then play active roles in devising resolutions to the challenges.

Managers can be provided with guidance regarding the most appropriate development opportunities by using tools that identify employees' interests, strengths, values, and personality characteristics. Participants stated employees were provided with opportunities to learn and grow by aligning their interests with projects in the organization. P6 stated the organization valued new ideas by employees and opportunities were provided for them to present innovative solutions. P1, P3, P4, and P5 stated using a specific tool to identify employees' top strengths has assisted in aligning team members with development opportunities that are of interest to them. P4 indicated when deciding to assign an employee to a project one of the factors taken into consideration is that at least one aspect of the venture aligns with the individual's interests and development objectives. Teoh et al. (2016) stated managers should respect the opinions and concerns of employees and play an active role in their well-being and growth. Hanaysha and Tahir (2016) asserted employees should be presented with growth opportunities to enhance

their critical thinking skills and increase their value to organizations. P1, P2, and P6 noted the importance of maintaining individuality when providing development opportunities. P6 said, "It is individualized; whatever a manager does they first have to understand what motivates the individual." P1 noted when employees have an interest in what they are doing their job satisfaction, engagement, and performance levels increase. The results of surveys shared by participants showed the employee job satisfaction rating rose from 40% to 78%, and engagement levels increased from 36% to 80% over 5 years. Financial documents revealed by P5 showed that corporate profits increased by 84% during the same period. P5 also shared that turnover rates had decreased from 40% to 15%.

Development in relation to innovation occurs as a product of identifying shared values and an evolving understanding of organizational direction (Widmann et al., 2016). According to Widmann et al. (2016), innovation is the ability to generate new solutions for the current or future needs of a team or organization. Widmann et al. noted there is a greater chance for innovation ideas to be identified by teams because of the multiple perspectives provided by individual members. P1 and P6 expressed working with teams to develop a vision for the organization. P6 also stated the organization valued new ideas, and opportunities were provided for teams to participate in discussions regarding the generation of innovative concepts. P2 highlighted having a suggestion box for work-related suggestions that was reviewed weekly to promote innovation. P2 shared that an online platform was also available for employees to submit suggestions. P2 added that the organization used suggestions made by employees and financial incentives were

awarded. Organizational documents showed 41% of suggestions submitted by employees in 2019 were implemented, resulting in savings of more than \$2 million and the payment of financial awards totaling more than \$500,000. P5 said, “We continually assess for active engagement. We know that engaged employees tend to perform at consistently high levels and they bring forth ideas for how to make the process or organization better.” P4 added, “Transformational leadership appreciates the voice of the employee and encourages that voice in creating an atmosphere in which the employee feels empowered, compelled, and motivated.” Participants expressed the importance of providing team members with opportunities to learn by exposing them to a variety of experiences with business and franchise projects. Enhancing learning behaviors and innovative work behavior may foster team development (Widmann et al., 2016). A learning climate is an organizational resource that enhances employee engagement (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016). According to Eldor and Harpaz (2016), employees should be encouraged to collaborate and be architects of organizational vision. Organizational environments are continually changing. The development of strategies to enhance the learning climate of organizations and elevate engagement levels is essential to prepare employees for adjusting to changes effectively (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016).

Participants noted the organization had a formal mentoring program, and, from responses to employee surveys and one-on-one discussions, this was a successful engagement strategy. P1 expressed that the mentoring program was successful because it contributed to a lower turnover rate. P3 said, “Most employees who completed the mentoring program have remained with the organization.” P4 stated new employees were

provided with mentoring to familiarize them with the organization and for experienced workers who desired attention in a specific job area. P1 and P3 indicated mentorship enables employees to gain confidence and adapt to changing work requirements. P5 added that mentoring assists in knowledge sharing and can lead to employee engagement. According to Bang and Reio (2017), mentorship is a job resource that supports employee success, leading to career development. Bang and Reio (2017) also noted advice, counseling and developmental opportunities provided by the mentoring relationship shape the career experiences of mentees. Mylona et al. (2016) stated high levels of engagement, job satisfaction, and career growth interests are associated with mentored employees. Bang and Reio (2017) asserted mentorship may support employees in optimizing their creative abilities to help organizations gain and maintain a competitive advantage in business environments. P5 expressed being sought by employees as a mentor. Informal mentorship associations develop naturally and voluntarily from mutual attractions between mentees and mentors (Holt et al., 2016; Jyoti & Sharma, 2017). According to Holt et al. (2016), within informal mentor relationships mentees are more satisfied with their mentors and have more enjoyable and beneficial interactions. P1 stated, “Employees are able to receive negative feedback from me when warranted, and accept it knowing I am committed to making them better and more successful. I am generally sought out as a mentor by past colleagues and am currently mentoring 5 past employees.”

**Correlation to literature and conceptual framework.** The findings in Theme 2 align with the transformational leadership framework. Burns (1978) argued

transformational leaders motivate employees to attain performance outcomes beyond their expectations. According to Caillier (2016), transformational leaders encourage employees to challenge obstacles that may prevent them from attaining goals by promoting mentorship and providing professional development opportunities. Mylona et al. (2016) noted mentoring is associated with career progression, which drives employee engagement. Eldor and Harpaz (2016) noted transformational leaders create organizational cultures that foster learning environments and employee development. Job autonomy is the freedom and independence of employees in decision making regarding their work tasks (Gözükara & Şimşek, 2015). Kahn (1990) noted autonomy contributes to employee engagement. Gözükara and Şimşek (2015) determined that the provision of development opportunities by transformational leaders enhances employee engagement via job autonomy. Phaneuf et al. (2016) argued that employees feel free to think in new ways, go beyond standard practices, and develop innovations without fear of penalties in transformational leadership environments.

Participants recognized employee development as a factor that promoted employee engagement. Employees are actively involved in their career development based on their interests and strengths. Managers provide employees with opportunities to develop organizational processes and methods by assigning them to projects that align with their interests and development objectives. The promotion of intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation by transformational leaders positively impacts employee engagement (Burns, 1978). These findings align with the transformational leadership theory by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), who noted that transformational leaders not

only motivate their followers; transformational leaders invest in the growth of their followers. The findings also supported the research of Choi et al. (2016), who found supportive, motivational, and inspirational relationships between followers and transformational leaders result in workers feeling challenged, involved, and satisfied, leading to employee engagement.

### **Theme 3: Communication**

The third theme that emerged from analyzing participants' responses was communication. Participants expressed their recognition of communication as an effective strategy to promote employee engagement. P4 stated the organization's open-door policy and managers working on the floor with employees were strategies to enhance employee engagement. P2 concurred and added socials and roundtable discussions with employees were actively held to allow for open conversations. P2 also indicated open discussions presented employees with opportunities to share their ideas regarding what worked well and areas where improvement was needed. P1 shared communication was used to build a culture of trust and engagement. P4 said, "Developing trust in each individual relationship is key to influencing engagement." P2 stated that without trust, employee engagement efforts would fail. The trust employees have in themselves is associated with the trust they have in their organizations (Ozyilmaz et al., 2018). According to Ozyilmaz et al. (2018), employee job satisfaction, turnover intentions, task performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors are impacted by the levels of trust in organizations. Employee confidence is higher when they trust their organizations (Ozyilmaz, et al., 2018).

Participants' communication strategies included daily and weekly emails, weekly and quarterly calls, socials, and round table discussions. P6 stated the open-door policy of the organization allowed employees to freely discuss issues and matters of concern with their managers. P3 noted calls were received directly from team members once or twice per week to discuss professional and personal matters. Participants agreed communication influences collaboration among team members. P1 and P3 described the use of an organizational tool to assess the strengths of employees and communicating with team members to hear of their interests and desires. P1 stated that the understanding of team members' strengths and interests allows managers to align employees with projects and task force groups, leading to greater efficiency and success in accomplishing organizational objectives. Verčič and Vokić (2017) noted effective communication strategies promote employee engagement and lead to positive performance outcomes. P1 and P3 noted managers must communicate with employees frequently to create an engaging and functional work environment. P4 stated input from employees was essential to engagement strategies. P6 added feedback enhances the quality of the manager-employee relationship. P6 also stated it is essential to create environments for employees to progress in their careers and feel valued by the organization. Participants noted survey responses and feedback received during one-on-one meetings indicated that seeing their suggestions acted on contributed to enhanced job satisfaction and engagement among employees. P2 added frequent feedback from employees indicated that witnessing the implementation of submitted suggestions made them feel their inputs were valued by the organization.

P1, P4, and P5 noted communicating directly with employees personally enhances trust, which can create a comfortable working environment. P4 stated, “I first had to demonstrate that I was there for the employee as a person, not as a worker for our company.” According to Mazzei et al. (2019), communication is an essential strategy to promote employee engagement because it allows employees to feel a sense of belonging to their organizations. Effective internal communication can assist in organizational growth and improve manager-employee collaborative relationships (Mazzei et al., 2019). All participants indicated the importance of communication in expressing organizational initiatives and the expectations of the manager in accomplishing the objectives. P3, P4, P5, and P6 expressed the importance of communicating in seeking the voices of the employees to help in generating new ideas and growth opportunities for the organization. P1 noted that taking a sincere interest in knowing employees personally could help managers to establish trust and enhance engagement in the work environment. P3 added, “Each team member probably calls me directly 1-2 times each week. Sometimes it is to ask for clarification, sometimes to express concern, other times it is to talk about something going on in their personal lives.” P4 stated, “Getting to know the employees and creating an opportunity to meet their families or to be a part of something that is important to them, was a great tool in establishing trust amongst employees.”

The theme of communication incorporated how managers provide feedback, express expectations, influence collaboration among team members, and express communication strategies. The creation and support of workplace environments where managers can communicate in ways that facilitate positive relationships between

employees and organizations are significant in developing and maintaining employee engagement (Mazzei et al., 2019; Verčič & Vokić, 2017). According to Ruck et al. (2017), organizations need to incorporate specific employee and management communication objectives in their strategic plans. An organizational culture that fosters open communication enhances employee engagement and commitment (Walden et al., 2017).

**Correlation to literature and conceptual framework.** The finding that open and honest communication promoted employee engagement aligns with Burns' (1978) transformational leadership theory. Burns (1978) asserted transformational leaders create work environments where employees are motivated to be team-oriented in accomplishing organizational objectives instead of being self-centered. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) found that transformational leaders use their communication skills to inspire and encourage employees to accomplish organizational objectives by clearly articulating a desirable vision, high-performance expectations, and individualized support. Transformational leaders engage in open and honest communication and are also engaged in their organizations (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978).

The findings in Theme 3 indicated that successful managers recognize building trust among employees and promoting confidence in the organizations' vision enhances employee engagement. Transformational leaders enhance employee trust and contribute to employee engagement by displaying ethical behaviors consistent with organizational values, missions, and goals (Bottomley et al., 2016; Kang & Sung, 2019). As identified through six independent interviews for this study, managers who successfully promote

employee engagement prioritize establishing trusting relationships with employees. Mo and Shi (2017) discovered that open communication and trust significantly impact employees' attitudes and behaviors. Building trust among employees and promoting confidence in organizational vision is a principle of the transformational leadership theory (Phaneuf et al., 2016). Ozyilmaz et al. (2018) noted that trust develops because of accumulated positive experiences. By engaging in open and honest communication, leaders can promote organizational commitment and enhance employee engagement (Walden et al., 2017).

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

This study's objective was to examine successful strategies healthcare managers use to promote employee engagement. The findings of this study include specific strategies that healthcare managers can adopt to support employee engagement. The strategies aligned to three distinct themes: (a) organizational culture, (b) development, and (c) communication. Healthcare managers may enhance employee engagement by understanding and utilizing the strategies identified in this study to create working environments which foster increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment. As recognized by participants, and supported by the transformational leadership theory, healthcare managers should prioritize establishing trusting relationships with employees, which include providing flexible working environments, supporting the needs of employees, and ensuring that employees feel appreciated. Additionally, healthcare managers who successfully promoted employee engagement focused on communication strategies that included employees in decision-making opportunities, facilitated

collaboration among team members, supported the implementation of ideas from employees, and provided clear, concise feedback. Healthcare managers who are successful at promoting employee engagement focus on development strategies for team members, including providing training opportunities that are aligned with career interests, supporting continuing educational pursuits, and ensuring that employees contribute to innovative solutions. The development theme demonstrates outcomes of successful strategies for collaboration and communication and their contributions as mechanisms that create job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee engagement.

Healthcare organizations are confronted with the need to develop and implement employee engagement strategies, which can facilitate the commitment of the workforce to the attainment of organizational goals. While managers use a myriad of strategies to increase employee engagement, participants of this study shared that healthcare managers could enhance employee engagement by (a) creating an organizational culture that promotes employee engagement, (b) focusing on the professional development of employees, and (c) engaging in open and honest communication with employees. The research findings are applicable to professional business practices in the healthcare industry by offering an understanding of healthcare managers' knowledge, best strategies, and experiences as they pertain to the promotion of employee engagement. Healthcare managers representing different departments within one healthcare organization provided their insights on successful employee engagement strategies. The findings from this study added to the existing body of knowledge concerning the importance of employee engagement. The findings might be beneficial to healthcare organizations that have

suffered from low employee engagement and commitment. Based on the findings of this study, strategies may be identified by healthcare managers to promote or stimulate employee engagement. Healthcare managers may (a) use the findings to implement employee engagement strategies that they deem as applicable to their organizations, (b) review current organizational strategies to incorporate employee engagement, and (c) identify employee engagement strategies that are effective or ineffective in their organizations.

### **Implications for Social Change**

This research study may contribute to social change by providing strategies to promote employee engagement in healthcare organizations. This study's results might improve employee engagement and organizational performance, which contribute to the social well-being of individuals and communities. The findings of this study indicated employee engagement positively impacts profitability of organizations, employee retention, and employee performance. An organizational culture that promotes employee engagement is positively associated with job satisfaction, which may increase retention. The findings in this study identified that creating a positive work environment can be established by developing trusting relationships with employees, maintaining adequate communication levels, and supporting the continual development of intellectual capital. Healthcare organizations with low employee turnover may contribute positively to the communities they support through a stable workforce. Healthcare organizations that maintain an engaged and stable workforce may deliver consistent, efficient, and patient-centered care, which positively impacts patient experiences and establishes trust with the

communities served. Strömgren et al. (2016) suggested employee engagement may contribute to enhanced clinical outcomes and patient safety. Improved personal health may improve the ability of individuals to interact socially. A healthier society creates more robust social networks and communities.

The findings of this study may also have social change implications for healthcare employees. Strömgren et al. (2016) asserted social capital sources, including relationships with co-workers, managers, and recognition, are associated with job satisfaction and have a positive association with employee engagement in healthcare. Increasing employee engagement enhances organizational performance, enriches employees' lives, and positively impacts their communities (Eldor, 2016; Moss et al., 2017). Lee and Brudney (2015) asserted motivated and satisfied employees use their cognitive and behavioral skills to volunteer in their communities.

The promotion of successful employee engagement strategies may also result in a strong organizational perception and lead to increased utilization by the community population, which could result in increased profits, organizational growth, and increased sustainability. Healthcare organizations could use their growth to provide increased support to local community institutions, including schools and churches, as well as homeless shelters. The growth of healthcare organizations from the implementation of successful employee engagement strategies may also result in increased employment within communities served by these institutions, thereby invigorating local economies, and improving the lives of people.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Employee engagement is vital to employees and organizations. Healthcare organizational objectives are supported by employee engagement strategies (Holton & Grandy, 2016). Employee engagement does not randomly occur but, instead, depends on the actions of managers to promote the phenomenon. The findings of this study indicate that healthcare managers promote employee engagement in multiple ways, which improve employee and organizational performance.

According to Shuck, Adelson et al. (2017), employee engagement is a long-term commitment between employees and organizations. Healthcare managers should consider if the employee engagement strategies revealed by this study reflect the missions of their organizations. Although some healthcare managers may not think the results of this study are valuable to their organizations, it is recommended that healthcare organizations communicate employee engagement initiatives in their strategic objectives. Participants for this study revealed the incorporation of strategies to promote employee engagement positively impacted productivity and organizational performance.

Employee disengagement is problematic for all industries (Rastogi et al., 2018). The findings from this study may also provide business managers from service industries with a better understanding of employee engagement and enhance their strategies for improving employee commitment, productivity, and organizational profitability. Gupta and Sharma (2016) noted organizations are beginning to understand the impact of implementing employee engagement strategies on positive outcomes, including increased employee satisfaction, productivity, profitability, and customer satisfaction.

The findings from this study will first be published through the ProQuest/UMI dissertation database, which may be beneficial to current and future researchers. I will seek additional opportunities to disseminate this study's findings through publishing articles in scholarly journals and other business-related publications. I will also seek opportunities to share the findings of this study during meetings, forums, and conferences. The focus on using a wide variety of communication channels to disseminate the results is to assist managers in understanding the importance of employee engagement to individual and organizational performance.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The purpose of this single case study was to explore strategies that healthcare managers use to promote employee engagement. Future researchers might want to conduct a similar study using different healthcare organizations and geographic locations. The current study was limited to one healthcare organization and geographic location. By expanding the study to different healthcare organizations and geographic locations, researchers may uncover additional findings that assist healthcare managers in understanding effective strategies better to promote employee engagement.

I would also recommend that future researchers consider a quantitative study design to examine the relationship between employee engagement and other variables, including organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Examining the relationship between different variables might provide managers with additional knowledge to promote employee engagement, which may increase productivity and profitability, and result in improved sustainability. Studies examining the relationship of predictor

variables to employee engagement would also be beneficial to the literature on the relationship among these variables concerning business management.

Finally, I would recommend a study conducted in the same manner as this study but in another industry. According to Rastogi et al. (2018), employee disengagement is problematic for all industries. It may be beneficial to healthcare and non-healthcare managers to learn if successful strategies used in healthcare to promote employee engagement are also applicable within other industries.

### **Reflections**

The doctoral path was challenging, with many obstacles, including changing my research topic just as I was about to submit my prospectus and in the middle of my literature review. The thought of quitting never crossed my mind once; I wanted to prove that I could complete the DBA program of study. With God's guidance, hard work, self-belief, trust in myself and others around me, I was able to complete the journey. Additionally, I developed my scholarly voice, which I will continue to use throughout my life. I dreamt, planned, and accomplished. This has truly been an amazing journey; it was long and tiresome but well worth the effort. I am truly blessed.

The purpose of this study was to explore successful strategies healthcare managers used to promote employee engagement. After changing my initial study topic, I selected the topic of employee engagement in healthcare from learning through research conducted via Walden University's library that employee engagement was a significant challenge in the healthcare sector. The recognition of employee engagement as a primary concern in healthcare assisted with my decision to explore this phenomenon for the study.

I wanted to understand strategies healthcare managers implemented to improve employee engagement in the face of evidence showing that disengaged employees presented a considerable threat to organizations.

My personal view of employee engagement changed throughout this study. I realize that managers play a critical role in engaging employees. Employee engagement is a phenomenon that produces tangible results for organizations and employees. To promote employee engagement, leaders need to establish organizational cultures that are supportive of this phenomenon. Conducting this study made me cognizant of the challenges placed on a qualitative researcher to substantiate the quality and validity of the research. Throughout the study, I remained aware of my personal biases and did not let my preconceptions interfere with the data collection or the resultant data. The findings from this study provided me with a profound understanding of strategies and practices that can be used to promote employee engagement. The study also reinforced that employees are the most important resource in organizations. I believe that the findings from this study may be able to provide healthcare managers with strategies that they can use to be successful in implementing employee engagement initiatives.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore successful strategies used by healthcare managers to promote employee engagement. Organizations are challenged to improve employee engagement (Imperatori, 2017). According to Anaza, et al. (2016), the American workforce is increasingly disengaged. Disengaged employees pose threats to organizations from their (a) lack of commitment and enhanced

turnover intentions, (b) job dissatisfaction, and (c) poor work performance (Aslam et al., 2018; Rastogi et al., 2018).

The transformational leadership theory was the conceptual framework for this study. Fernet et al. (2015) asserted that of the many proposed practices endorsed for adoption by organizations in fostering employee performance to remain competitive, there is agreement on the virtues of transformational leadership. Workforce engagement is promoted from the creation of organizational cultures by transformational leaders that result in subordinates feeling challenged, involved, and satisfied (Choi et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2017).

Bailey et al. (2017) found employee engagement is positively associated with organizational performance. Employee engagement is a critical component of organizational competitive advantage in business environments (Lee et al., 2017; Sekhar et al., 2018). Eldor (2016) noted managers who aspire to improve the competitive advantage of their organizations should cultivate and adopt employee engagement. Understanding the determinants of employee engagement will assist organizations in enriching the lives of employees and improving organizational outcomes. The findings from this study revealed that managers of healthcare organizations could enhance employee engagement by creating workplace environments to support this phenomenon, foster the career development of employees, and promote open and honest communication between managers and employees.

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### Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation Request

Dear <Name>,

I am a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) student at Walden University. One of the requirements of the doctoral program at Walden University is completing a study that addresses a current business problem. I am conducting my doctoral study on the topic “Strategies used by Healthcare Managers to Promote Employee Engagement.” I consider this study important because employee engagement impacts profitability and sustainability, which are important to the success of healthcare organizations.

Approval has been granted by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study. Walden University’s approval number for this study is 06-08-20-0406187, and it expires on June 7, 2021. One requirement of the IRB is that a letter of cooperation must be provided from an authorized employee of the organization that will partner with the researcher to assist with recruiting potential participants for the study. To comply with the requirements of the IRB, I am requesting a letter of cooperation from you which includes confirmation that you will assist in providing me with names and email contact information for managers in your organization with roles that may impact employee engagement, and your permission for me to interview them.

As a researcher, I am responsible for ensuring that the data I collect does not affect the organization or the research participants. I will not mention the names of your organization and the names of participants in my findings because it is a violation of

ethical research and Walden University's policies. All information collected will be strictly confidential and purely for academic purposes. I will share a summary of my findings with your organization and all participants. Please feel free to contact me if you would like more information. You can call the Research Participant Advocate at Walden University at 612-312-1210 if you wish to talk privately about the rights of participants.

I appreciate your valuable time and thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Peter Green, MHA, MS  
Doctoral Student  
Walden University  
(610) 329-5211  
peter.green@waldenu.edu

## Appendix B: Letter of Invitation

[Date]

[Address Block]

Dear [Invitee Name]

My name is Peter Green and I am currently a candidate in the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program at Walden University. I am conducting research on successful strategies that healthcare managers use to promote employee engagement and would like to invite you to participate in the study. I am inviting you to contribute to this study because you are a manager in the healthcare industry with responsibilities for promoting employee engagement. I am requesting an interview of no more than 60 minutes to collect data for the study. The interview will be conducted via telephone or any other communication method that is convenient for you, including Microsoft Teams, WebEx, or Zoom. Your participation in this study will provide information that may assist in developing effective strategies to promote employee engagement in healthcare organizations.

I will also conduct a follow-up interview with you of no more than 30 minutes before including your responses in the study. The objective of this second interview is to allow you to confirm that my interpretations of your responses are accurate. The second interview will be done via a communication method that is convenient to you. I will share the findings of the study with you. I have attached a consent form for your review. The consent form describes the study, potential risks and benefits to you if you decide to contribute to the research, and the protection of your rights as a participant. Your reply to this email with the words "I consent" signifies you have read the consent form, understand the information, and are confirming your participation in the study.

Please feel free to ask me any questions you may have before accepting the invitation. The interview will include eight open-ended questions. Below are some sample questions:

- What strategies have you utilized to promote employee engagement?
- How do employees respond to your different engagement techniques?
- What specific strategies were effective in improving employee engagement?

I appreciate your valuable time and thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Peter Green, MHA, MS  
Doctoral Student  
Walden University  
(610) 329-5211  
peter.green@waldenu.edu

## Appendix C: Interview Protocol

<b>Interview Protocol</b>	
<b>What you will do</b>	<b>Script of what you will say</b>
Introduce the interview	Good morning/afternoon, Welcome and thank you for your participation in this study. My name is Peter Green and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. My doctoral study is being conducted to explore strategies managers use to promote employee engagement in healthcare. You were selected because of your success in fostering employee engagement. The information provided by you for this study may help to develop effective strategies to stimulate employee engagement. The anticipated duration of this interview is 30-60 minutes.
Overview of the study	
Informed consent form review	At this time, I would like to review the informed consent. You understand that by replying to my Informed Consent email with the words, "I consent", signified your agreement to participate in this study. The informed consent also provides the aims and objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of your participation, the steps taken to protect the identities of your organization and you, and the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. Please let me know if you need to take a break or stop the interview at any time.
Request permission to record the interview	Before we begin, I would also like to obtain your permission to record this interview, so that I can accurately document our conversation. If you would like me to discontinue recording at any time during this interview, please let me know. Do you have any questions or concerns before we commence? If not, with your permission we will begin.

<p>Paraphrase as needed</p> <p>Ask follow-up questions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What strategies have you utilized to promote employee engagement?</li> <li>2. How do employees respond to your different engagement techniques?</li> <li>3. What specific strategies were effective in improving employee engagement?</li> <li>4. How did you address the key challenges to implementing your strategies to improve employee engagement?</li> <li>5. How do you support, motivate, and effectively influence employees in your organization?</li> <li>6. How does your organization assess the effectiveness of your employee engagement strategies?</li> <li>7. How does transformational leadership help your organization to overcome the challenges of disengaged employees?</li> <li>8. What additional information would you like to share regarding your experience with employee engagement strategies?</li> </ol>
<p>Conclude the interview and thank participant</p>	<p>Thank you for your participation. The information you have shared may help in fostering strategies to promote employee engagement in health care. I want to remind you that any information that can identify you and your organization will remain private. The information you have provided will also remain confidential.</p>
<p>Schedule follow-up member-checking review</p>	<p>I will provide you with a summary of this interview via email in the next 5 days and allow you to review the document for accuracy. You can provide corrections to the interpretations of your interview responses via email by noting in the summary where the information is incorrect and the desired change. I would also like to request that we schedule a follow-up review within 10 days of this interview to ensure my interpretations of your responses</p>

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are correct. This will be done via email. Is this acceptable? If you would like to contact me prior to the follow-up review, please feel free to contact me via telephone or email.