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Mentoring Strategies to Enhance Employee Engagement in the Retail Industry

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Cynthia June Moss

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Mentoring Strategies to Enhance Employee Engagement in the Retail Industry

by

Cynthia June Moss

MBA, Saint Leo University, 2013

BA, Saint Leo University, 2011

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

High levels of employee disengagement can lead to high attrition rates that impact customer satisfaction. Retail industry leaders who lack mentoring strategies can experience a decrease in productivity because of employee disengagement. Grounded in transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore mentoring strategies used by three retail industry leaders in the state of Virginia, who have improved employee engagement. Data were collected through semistructured interviews and the review of organizational documents that included a mentoring guide, company newsletter, and mentee core assessments. The themes that emerged from the thematic analysis were mentoring practices, engagement techniques, and organizational leadership roles. A key recommendation for retail industry leaders is to develop a mentoring strategy that includes supporting and training employees and redefining a leader's role to mentor. The implications for positive social change include the potential for organizational stability, which would support local communities by providing better services and employment opportunities.

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Dedication

To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who prompted me to pursue a dream that I thought was out of reach, I thank you. It was only through your grace, mercy, and loving kindness that I made it to completion.

To my husband, Dr. Kenneth Moss, thank you for your support throughout this process. You always inspire me to dream bigger and pursue those things that are larger than me. Thank you for your love, inspiration, and understanding in helping me to achieve my goal. I love you and am forever grateful.

To my deceased mother, Barbara Ann, I wish you were here to see my accomplishment. You were my biggest cheerleader when I decided to go back to school, and I am forever grateful. Thank you for your unconditional love that made me the woman I am today.

To my children, Jessica, Robert, and Tiana, I love you. I always want to be the example for you to know that all things are possible if you only believe and trust God to see you through the process. Remember, nothing is ever out of your reach.

Finally, to my grandchildren, Raiko, Elle, Madison, Leilani, and Mia: Mimmie loves you so much and will always be there to lead, guide, and direct you. I want to be that example for you and future generations to come. Remember, all dreams can come true if you are willing to put in the work to accomplish them.

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Table of Contents

Section 1: Foundation of the Study.....	1
Background of the Problem	1
Problem Statement	3
Purpose Statement.....	3
Nature of the Study	4
Research Question	6
Interview Questions	6
Conceptual Framework.....	7
Operational Definitions.....	8
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations.....	8
Significance of the Study	10
Contribution to Business Practice.....	10
Implications for Social Change.....	11
A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature.....	11
Transformational Leadership Theory	13
Supporting and Contrasting Theories	27
Employee Engagement	33
Mentoring.....	43
Transition	53
Section 2: The Project.....	54

Purpose Statement.....	54
Role of the Researcher	54
Participants.....	57
Research Method and Design	59
Research Method	59
Research Design.....	60
Population and Sampling	61
Ethical Research.....	63
Data Collection Instruments	65
Data Collection Technique	66
Data Organization Technique	70
Data Analysis	72
Reliability and Validity.....	76
Reliability.....	76
Validity	77
Transition and Summary.....	79
Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change	80
Introduction.....	80
Presentation of the Findings.....	81
Theme 1: Mentoring Practices	81
Theme 2: Engagement Techniques.....	85

Theme 3: Organizational Leadership Roles.....	88
Relevance to the Literature	89
Relevance to the Conceptual Framework	92
Effective Business Practices	94
Document Analysis	94
Triangulation of Data Sources	95
Applications to Professional Practice	95
Implications for Social Change.....	96
Recommendations for Action	97
Recommendations for Further Research.....	98
Reflections	100
Conclusion	101
References.....	102
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	143

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Employee engagement is a growing issue. Disengagement has led to organizations losing billions each year (Aslam et al., 2018). Disengaged employees lose focus and detach themselves from their work, leading to increased employee burnout and turnover (Shaukat et al., 2017). Leadership is crucial to employee engagement. A leader's role is critical to enhancing an employee's engagement in the organization (Coetzer et al., 2017). Leaders who understand employee engagement issues can develop strategies to address them (Joubert & Roodt, 2019; Morgan & Bush, 2016). When employees are engaged, they are cheerful, optimistic, and devoted, and they exhibit behaviors of passion, commitment, and immersion in their workplaces (Coetzer et al., 2017; Xiong & Wen, 2020). The results of this study could offer strategic insight into increasing employee engagement through mentoring.

Background of the Problem

Employee disengagement can cause issues for organizations. Organization leaders can encounter higher levels of employee disengagement and turnover when they do not have mentoring plans in place for their employees (Stewart & Harrison, 2016). Employee disengagement is on the rise, and the cost to companies in the United States is reportedly between \$450 and \$550 billion per year (Babakus et al., 2017; Rastogi et al., 2018). Organizations are experiencing a loss in business performance because of the high pace of employee disengagement; levels of disengaged employees are higher than levels of engaged workers (Geethalakshmi & Rodrigues, 2017). Between 2000 and 2015,

organizations encountered a 32% engagement rate, with 50.8% of U.S. employees not engaged and an active disengagement rate of 17.2% (Holmberg-Wright et al., 2017). Disengagement could become costly for organizations that do not address this issue.

Strategies are needed to increase employee engagement. Research is required to discover the antecedents of workplace disengagement so leaders can determine strategies to deter this behavior and increase engagement (Aslam et al., 2018). Organizations that choose the best course of action to deal with these elements can enhance employee engagement. Having an action plan would be advantageous for a company's performance and bottom line because disengaged employees can become a hindrance to the company, which can equate to profit losses (Babakus et al., 2017). Moreover, engaged employees have been connected to positively impacting job performance, reducing turnover levels, and showing more commitment to the organization (Krishnaveni & Monica, 2016). Organizations that implement strategies to increase engagement could have positive outcomes.

Mentoring could benefit leadership and employees. Mentoring has proven to be an essential tool for organizations; mentoring relationships benefit the mentee, the mentor, and the organization (Kennett & Lomas, 2015). Mentoring by leaders has increased employee job satisfaction, engagement, and job performance (Jyoti & Sharma, 2017). Additionally, organizations that employ mentoring programs encounter lower turnover rates and have employees who dedicate themselves to the organization (Jyoti & Sharma, 2017). Mentoring could also build self-confidence and career development while

supporting effective role modeling (Roberts et al., 2019). Furthermore, mentoring has been found to assist and challenge the mentee to acknowledge their capabilities and move forward to enhance personal and professional growth both inside and outside the organization (Ghosh et al., 2019). Mentoring could have positive implications for organizations.

Problem Statement

Organization leaders are experiencing higher employee disengagement and turnover rates due to a lack of mentoring (Srivastava & Pathak, 2017). Babakus et al. (2017) indicated that service firms, which include retail organizations, experience lost productivity of \$450 and 550 billion per year due to disengaged employees. The general business problem is that employee disengagement in retail organizations decreases organizational productivity. The specific business problem is that retail industry leaders lack mentoring strategies to enhance employee engagement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the mentoring strategies that retail industry leaders use to enhance employee engagement. The targeted population included business leaders of two retail organizations located in Virginia who had demonstrated success in developing and executing mentoring strategies to enhance employee engagement. The managers came from retail stores that sell general merchandise. The implications for positive social change include improving profitability and allowing organizations to contribute to communities supporting needy citizens.

Nature of the Study

A research design is the established plan of responding to the research question (Saunders et al., 2016). In qualitative research, there is an assortment of information-gathering strategies and systematic procedures used to study participants' viewpoints and connections among them (Saunders et al., 2016). In quantitative research, a researcher examines the variables' relationships using a statistical approach (Saunders et al., 2016). The quantitative method was not suitable for my study because I was not testing hypotheses or examining variables' relationships. The mixed method combines both qualitative and quantitative procedures (Saunders et al., 2016). The mixed method was also not suitable for my study because I did not require the quantitative element. I chose the qualitative method to conduct my study because the focal point of this research was identifying and comprehending mentoring strategies that retail industry leaders use to enhance employee engagement. Antwi and Hamza (2015) noted that qualitative researchers attempt to comprehend individuals' encounters and communicate their perspectives. It is vital to acquire specific details to discover common themes among participants' encounters and observations. The qualitative research method was appropriate for addressing my study's purpose because of its focal point.

There are several research designs for a qualitative study on strategies to enhance engagement: (a) ethnography, (b) narrative inquiry, (c) phenomenology, and (d) case study. Ethnographers attempt to assess groups' culture and social activity through observations, informal discussions, and interviews (Saunders et al., 2016). Using an

ethnographic design would not allow me to conduct interviews through guided conversations without first observing the group and reflecting on those observations before interviewing. Using the narrative design requires data to be collected and analyzed through whole personal stories instead of data pieces (Saunders et al., 2016). A narrative inquiry was not appropriate for this study as this design would not allow me to collect data from detailed interview questions to gain insights into the business phenomenon. Phenomenological studies are essential when researchers explore participants' lived experiences to analyze a phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The phenomenology design was not appropriate for this study as I was not exploring the participants' perceptions of their lived experiences.

Case study research is suitable for what, how, and why questions, and devising them at the beginning of my study was critical (Yin, 2018). Saunders et al. noted that case study research could methodically explore the subject in its natural setting. Murphy (2014) suggested that using case study research allows a researcher flexibility at various phases of the research process. A case study design was the most fitting for my study for identifying and exploring the mentoring strategies organization leaders have used to enhance employee engagement by allowing me to gather complete information from participants to establish and investigate the issue. I chose a multiple case study design over a single case study. By conducting a multiple case study, the information could provide duplication. Any conclusions drawn from the research could offer more validity than those offered by a single case study design (Yin, 2018).

Research Question

This study's research question was: What are the mentoring strategies retail industry leaders use to enhance employee engagement?

Interview Questions

Yin (2018) posited that a critical source to case study documentation is the interview. Participants in this study responded to open-ended interview questions used to conduct guided focused discussions instead of related general inquiries (Yin, 2018). Additionally, Yin (2018) noted that conducting interviews aids in clarifying key occurrences while also providing knowledge reflecting participants' relativist points of view. The targeted interview questions were:

1. What mentoring strategies do you use to keep employees engaged?
2. What relevant factors of your strategies did you find were most effective to increase employee's engagement?
3. What critical challenges did you encounter when implementing your strategies to keep employees engaged?
4. How did your organization address the key challenges to implementing its strategies to keep employees engaged?
5. How did you work with other leaders in the organization to develop and execute your mentoring strategies to keep employees engaged?
6. What role does leadership play in the execution of mentoring strategies to keep employees engaged?

7. What additional information would you like to provide regarding mentoring strategies used to enhance employee engagement?

Conceptual Framework

Burns introduced transformational leadership theory in 1978, which highlighted the relationship between the leader and follower. In 1985, Bass extended Burns' work, where the focal point was on the follower's needs instead of the leader (Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership pertains to a leader's ability to inspire followers past their self-interest through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1999). Transformational leadership characteristics could persuade a follower to be their best self while enabling and inspiring them to address the organization's goals. For the follower, transformational leaders may encourage, connect with them emotionally and mentally exhilarate employees (Bass, 1990). The transformational leadership theory supplied the lens to explore successful mentoring strategies that retail industry leaders used to enhance employee engagement.

In this research, I sought to determine if leaders using a transformational leadership model would help implement and sustain mentoring strategies to keep employees engaged. For the organization, employees who are engaged experience better connections with their leaders as they enable unity and symmetry throughout teams, which are traits of transformational leaders (Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015; Lehmann-Willenbrock et al., 2015). Using transformational leadership theory as the framework for this study could guide struggling leaders of organizations that lack employee

engagement. Specifically, transformational leadership may provide strategies to develop transformational leadership styles, methods, and behaviors that may increase employee engagement.

Operational Definitions

Engagement: The conduct a person demonstrates in executing their role within a company (Madden & Bailey, 2017).

Mentoring: When an individual offers guidance, direction, and knowledge to a mentee who might otherwise develop gradually or not at all (Kowalski, 2019).

Methodological triangulation: A method that requires a researcher to use various procedures to gather information to study a phenomenon (Abdalla et al., 2018).

Thematic analysis: A technique used in qualitative research to identify, analyze, and record patterns in the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Transformational leadership: A leadership approach in which the leader solicits followers to leave behind their self-interests for organizational good (Bass & Stogdill, 1990).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

There are specific assumptions associated with this qualitative study. Assumptions are beliefs that might be valid and acknowledged without confirmation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). In this study, I assumed that retail business leaders were knowledgeable in establishing and executing mentoring strategies. I also assumed that the participants' responses to the questions would be forthcoming and unprejudiced. The last

assumption was that the interview question feedback would provide the needed information to address this study's principal research question.

There are specific limitations identified in this study. Limitations are those components that may influence the legitimacy of the study and are outside the investigator's control (Soilkki et al., 2014). The small sample size was the first limitation of this study. Small sample sizes are research limitations (Heyler et al., 2016). A larger sample may produce more robust information leading to the replicability of conclusions. The second limitation was the inclusion of only business leaders of retail organizations; business leaders of other industries may have provided different perspectives on mentoring strategies to enhance engagement. A third limitation was responses to interview questions may have reflected participant bias. A fourth limitation was the lack of generalizability of data results due to the small sample size. Another constraint was the study's restriction to retail organizations located in Virginia, which may present conclusions that are not reflective of other geographical regions and industries.

There are notable delimitations connected to this study. Delimitations are the researcher's limits used to distinguish the examination's bounds (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The first delimitation of this study was that the contributors are business leaders in the retail industry only. The second delimitation was that the participants are limited to two retail organizations in Virginia. The last delimitation was the exploration of only mentoring strategies used by the leaders to enhance employee engagement.

Significance of the Study

Leaders who implement strategies to improve employee engagement could have better organizational performance. Madden and Bailey (2017) asserted that employee engagement is associated with an organization's performance. Kahn examined employee engagement and noted it as how individuals dedicate themselves to their work (Madden & Bailey, 2017). The results of this study could help organizations improve mentoring strategies or change existing strategies for engaging employees. These changes could increase an organization's performance, enabling sustaining or increasing employment, benefiting employees, families, and communities.

Contribution to Business Practice

Employee engagement is a topic of concern for organizations. Babakus et al. (2017) pointed out that organizations must comprehend the issues that govern employee engagement. Organizational leaders need to be open to exploring those mentoring strategies that enhance employee engagement (Welsh & Dixon, 2016). In this research, I sought to provide leaders with the ability to better formulate and implement mentoring strategies to keep employees engaged. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this study may add to business practice by conceivably filling gaps in the comprehension and execution of viable strategies to enhance employee engagement. Leaders might be able to use the results to refine mentoring strategies to recognize suitable candidates for mentoring, improve employee engagement, and reduce turnover intentions for mitigating costs and increasing performance. The implementation of

mentoring strategies could potentially develop employees and build talent (Welsh & Dixon, 2016), leave the mentee feeling rewarded (Kennett & Lomas, 2015), and lead to greater job satisfaction while improving the organization's culture (Stewart & Harrison, 2016). Therefore, developing and deploying successful employee mentoring could prove vital for organizations to enhance performance and increase profitability.

Implications for Social Change

Profitable organizations have more resources at their disposal to engage in positive social change in their communities (Steiner & Atterton, 2014). Organizational leaders who engage employees can position the company to have better outcomes that include reduced turnover, increased dividends, better organizational efficacy, and company growth (Hanaysha, 2016; Johnson & Park et al., 2018; Popli & Rizvi, 2017). This study's results could add to positive social change by improving an organization's profitability and competitiveness, enabling them to provide continuing and growing employment opportunities. Strong organizations may improve the well-being of society by providing better goods and services. Furthermore, employing or adapting findings from this research might provide leaders with opportunities to contribute to communities' economic growth by supporting socially responsible activities to benefit needy citizens.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore mentoring strategies retail industry leaders use to enhance employee engagement. Disengaged employees can cause an organization to experience productivity losses (Babakus et al.,

2017). Developing strategies that incorporate mentoring could be advantageous to the organization and employee transformation (Welsh & Dixon, 2016). Leaders who provide employees with encouraging workspaces could prompt employee engagement results (Shahidan et al., 2016). The exploration of mentoring strategies could aid organizations wanting to increase employee engagement.

The literature review was fundamental to understanding those mentoring strategies that retail industry leaders have used to enhance engagement and to identifying the ones that keep employees engaged. The literature review gives an extensive synopsis and synthesis of the phenomenon under study (Baker, 2016). Critically reviewing the literature gives comprehension and recognition to completed research and how to move forward with analysis (Saunders et al., 2016). For this multiple case study, the targeted population involved leaders in the retail industry located in Virginia, who had effectively executed mentoring strategies to enhance employee engagement.

For the literature review, I incorporated journal articles and books associated with the subject matter about employee engagement, mentoring, and transformational leadership. The primary databases used in this literature review were ProQuest, SAGE Journals, ScienceDirect, Emerald Management, and EBSCOhost through the Walden University Library. Terms that were essential for researching the literature review included *mentoring*, *employee engagement*, *employee disengagement*, *work engagement*, *transformational leadership*, *servant leadership*, *transactional leadership*, *job performance*, *service industry*, and *job satisfaction* or a mixture of the keywords to

assemble information on the subject matter. The literature review was composed of data from 146 articles and books. Of the 146 articles, 135 (93%) of the sources were published within 5 years of my expected graduation date.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory was the conceptual framework of my study. Burns introduced his work on transformational leadership theory in 1978, and since then, a substantial amount of research has taken place in support of this leadership style (Bass, 1999). Bass (1985) expanded upon Burns's work and dedicated the focus to the followers' needs instead of the leader. Burns (1978) employed the transformational leadership theory to explain how leaders can motivate their followers to accomplish a shared objective and surpass organizational targets. Much research has incorporated transformational leadership theory to comprehend the effect on employee engagement (Buil et al., 2019; Jeong et al., 2016; Sahu et al., 2018). The transformational leadership model has positive effects on engagement. Researchers exploring the phenomenon of engagement have noted the positive effects to incorporate the importance of development, observation, and mental stimulation of followers (Buil et al., 2019; Caniëls et al., 2018; Ohunakin et al., 2019). The transformational leadership model could help organizations that seek to increase employee engagement.

Organizations need effective leadership. The transformational leadership theory model is a beneficial tool to discover effective leadership (Hentschel et al., 2018; Kim & Shin, 2017). In research on how a leader's behavior could impact employee allegiance

and performance, the transformational leadership theory might be found beneficial (Pohler & Schmidt, 2016). There are four components to transformational leadership theory: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration (Bass, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1993; Carleton et al., 2018; Ewell, 2018). The behaviors of transformational leadership could provide many benefits to an organization needing efficient leadership.

Transformational leadership can be influential on the leader and the follower. Transformational leadership has recently caught researchers' attention, making it a significant leadership model (Hildenbrand et al., 2018; Lanaj et al., 2016; Ohunakin et al., 2019). Transformational leadership is broadly received and viewed as a compelling leadership style (Thomson et al., 2016). Ewell (2018) and Phaneuf et al. (2016) identified this leadership style as the most common methodology for comprehending groups, individuals, and efficiency in organizations. There are several attributes associated with the transformational leadership model. Transformational leadership combines the components of compassion, kindness, understanding, transformation, and relationship building (Popli & Rizvi, 2017). Leaders who have transformational leadership attributes could be more persuasive to the follower.

The transformational leadership model can affect employees positively. Transformational leadership transforms the followers' self-concepts and links them to the organization's collective identity (Grabo & van Vugt, 2016). Transformational leadership enhances employee engagement when the leader exhibits transformational behaviors

(Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Breevaart et al., 2016; Caniëls et al., 2018; Jena et al., 2018). Allen et al. (2016) found that organizations employing a transformational leadership model linked it to growth in an employee's contentment, dedication, and execution of job duties. While researchers have primarily focused on the follower impact, Lanaj et al. (2016) posited that transformational leadership also promotes improvement to leaders accomplishing daily assignments. Positive effects of transformational leadership behaviors caused leaders to be more influential than transactional leadership behaviors (Lanaj et al., 2016).

Transformational leadership behaviors show positive effects on mentoring. Huang, Weng et al. (2016) provided details on transformational leadership behaviors positively linking with mentoring functions. Hung, Weng et al. (2016) found inspirational motivation, idealized influence, and individual consideration to enhance mentoring features, especially with new employees. Huang, Weng et al. (2016) additionally noted mentoring programs usually have three purposes, psychosocial support, career development, and role modeling. When acting in a mentor's capacity, transformational leaders offer individualized help and direction for advancement (Mahmood et al., 2019). The transformational leader is passionate and can motivate followers, thus compelling followers to commit, work hard, and come into alignment with organizational objectives (Allen et al., 2016; Buil et al., 2019). Huang, Weng et al. (2016) showed the importance of leadership training to amplify a mentor's transformational leadership skills to optimize

the mentoring task successfully. As it pertains to leadership behaviors, transformational leadership is related more emphatically to mentoring than transactional leadership.

Transformational leadership behaviors could affect employee loyalty positively. Ravangard et al. (2016) noted transformational leadership behaviors increased job satisfaction and established trust with the manager. Additionally, Asencio (2016) found transformational leadership behaviors to moderate the trust between a leader and a follower. Each component of transformational leadership could lead to an employee developing confidence in their leader. Leaders exhibiting ethical behavior (idealized influence) show they are trustworthy (Asencio, 2016). Conveying an organization's goals and motivating followers to achieve them (inspirational motivation) can build trust (Asencio, 2016). When leaders encourage and share new views on issues (intellectual stimulation), they show their commitment to followers' development, and trust could ensue (Asencio, 2016). And lastly, when leaders show they care about followers (individualized consideration), a trust could evolve (Asencio, 2016). Transformational leaders are respected and admired and help employees align with organizational vision and values (Ravangard et al., 2016). When employees trust their leaders, there is the possibility they will stay with the organization longer. Employing transformational leaders could give an organization a positive future.

Idealized Influence

The first attribute of transformational leadership is *idealized influence*. Leaders who demonstrate idealized influence display their beliefs, values, and vision; have high

ethical standards; and are considered good role models (Allen et al., 2016; Choi et al., 2016; Langat et al., 2019). Their perspectives stimulate and impact followers (Phaneuf et al., 2016). Followers should be able to identify with and trust their leaders. The behaviors of idealized influence exhibit determination and conviction, which followers can identify with (Bass, 1999). Leaders who display idealized influence behaviors are admired and trusted by their followers (Northouse, 2016). When transformational leaders are trusted, they have a considerable amount of authority and power (Bass, 1990). Leaders exhibiting the behavior of idealized influence are more likely to encourage and impact their employees.

Behaviors of idealized influence build confidence. Leaders exhibiting this quality can inspire followers to overcome hurdles in the workplace (Change et al., 2019). Research has shown idealized influence to positively impact employee engagement (Change et al., 2019). Change et al. (2019) examined three criteria of idealized influence—charisma, ethical leadership, and teamwork—and how these factors influenced employee engagement. Change et al. (2019) concluded that all had favorable importance to employee engagement and that managers who engaged in this behavior could improve employee engagement. When leaders display idealized influence attributes, employees can identify with them better and agree with performance expectations (Change et al., 2019). The behavior of idealized influence could aid in increasing employee engagement.

Inspirational Motivation

The second attribute of transformational leadership is *inspirational motivation*. Leaders' behaviors presenting inspirational motivation elements communicate the vision with followers, clearly understanding their expectations (Allen et al., 2016; Bass, 1990, 1999). These behaviors elevate expectations while motivating and supporting followers to attain organizational goals (Choi et al., 2016; Phaneuf et al., 2016). Inspirational motivation allows the leader to concentrate on the group's vision (Chebon et al., 2019) and to remove the self-serving focus to place it on the group to accomplish more than they would on their own (Northouse, 2016). Additionally, transformational leaders furnish an inspirational foundation that moderates a person's demeanor in the organizational environment (Paolucci et al., 2018). The behavior of inspirational motivation can motivate employee performance for better organizational outcomes.

The behavior of inspirational motivation can increase employee performance. Inspirational leadership could lead to employees having a positive perspective (Salas-Vallina & Fernandez, 2017). Ampofo (2016) found inspirational motivation behavior to include eagerness, confidence, reassurance, and management support. Inspirational motivation has been linked to more excellent worker performance (Chebon et al., 2019), trust in teams, ethical conduct, and knowledge adaptation (Salas-Vallina & Fernandez, 2017). Inspirational leadership may give rise to engagement by enhancing confidence and enthusiasm in the work environment (Salas-Vallina & Fernandez, 2017). Researchers examined the effects of inspirational leadership on team effectiveness (Paolucci et al.,

2018). Inspirational leaders increased the commitment of team members through encouragement and motivating them to work together. Moreover, inspirational leadership within the group context showed enhancing the relationship with the team.

Intellectual Stimulation

The third attribute of transformational leadership is *intellectual stimulation*. Leaders who employ behavior modeling intellectual stimulation bring out the creativity, transformation, and intelligence of followers, stirring them to tackle and solve issues that arise (Allen et al., 2016; Bass, 1990; Choi et al., 2016; Phaneuf et al., 2016). These behaviors encourage followers to try new approaches and not criticize any mistakes or failures (Megheirkouni et al., 2018). Intellectual stimulation could have a positive effect on the entire team. The positive effects of intellectual stimulation could prompt thought-provoking, collaborative learning (Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2018). Organizations need leadership that impacts the whole group to achieve everyday goals (Langat et al., 2019). The behavior of intellectual stimulation could encourage innovation and change in an organization.

The ability of a leader to motivate their followers is essential. Through intellectual stimulation, the transformational leader urges followers to exceed expectations (Rana et al., 2016) and to come up with ways to solve problems (Brown et al., 2019). Change (2019) investigated the influence of intellectual stimulation on employee engagement. The study concluded that managers who display behavior that indicates intellectual stimulation could see better engagement levels throughout the organization. When

leaders stimulate creativity and innovation, engagement will follow. Engagement, in turn, could improve organizational performance.

Individualized Consideration

The fourth attribute of transformational leadership is *individualized consideration*. Leaders who engage in behavior exhibiting individualized consideration are concerned with the follower's development and maturing (Allen et al., 2016; Choi et al., 2016; Martínez-Córcoles et al., 2020; Phaneuf et al., 2016). Leaders should provide growth opportunities to their followers. The individualized consideration behavior gives the leader the chance to delegate, which could supply followers with growth opportunities (Bass, 1999). Practices surrounding individualized consideration can encourage followers and aid them in reaching self-fulfillment (Northouse, 2016). Individualized consideration also has been shown to increase organizational citizenship behavior and promote a leader's self-motivation (Koveshnikov & Ehrnrooth, 2018). The development of employees is essential to their organizational success.

Individualized consideration is connected closely to mentoring. Transformational leaders help followers reach their highest potential by acting as a trainer or mentor (Burns, 1978). Kark et al. (2018) discussed how transformational behaviors influence followers to achieve more than they may have previously. Martínez-Córcoles et al. (2020) noted transformational leadership positively impact an employee to align with organizational values while enhancing job motivation and inspiring communication (Martínez-Córcoles et al., 2020). Individualized consideration is an essential component

of transformational leadership to help followers thrive in the workplace (Megheirkouni et al., 2018). The practice of individualized consideration gives the follower a chance to learn from the leader's direct attention and provides the same interaction during a mentoring relationship. Bass (1985) noted individualized consideration to have the most significant connection to mentoring. The individualized consideration behavior could provoke an employee to have a positive work attitude, ultimately impacting engagement.

Transformational Leader

The characteristics of a leader could transform a person and the organization by their style of leadership. Organizations should select proactive leaders who can motivate and show support for their teams (Abelha et al., 2018; Popli & Rizvi, 2017). A leader's choices have a significant impact on a follower (Paolucci et al., 2018). When leaders can motivate themselves and the follower, they are deemed successful (Lussier & Achua, 2016). Leaders showing a secure positioning towards support and cooperation are likely to employ transformational leadership behaviors (Phaneuf et al., 2016). A person exhibiting transformational leadership behaviors could inspire in ways that benefit the organization. Researchers examined how leadership styles affected the employee's beliefs and actions related to service quality and performance (Schaubroeck et al., 2016). This study showed transformational leadership to increase employee growth in both areas, leading to organizational goal achievement.

A leader's mentality could determine the behaviors they present to the follower. The transformational leader urges the follower to relate to the organization's vision while

being a role model (Megheirkouni et al., 2018). There are times when a transformational leader could act in a mentoring capacity. As a mentor, the transformational leader focuses on the follower's independent needs while supporting their advancement in the organizational environment (Ampofo, 2016). They exhibit behaviors that cause a follower to achieve more, grow personally, and tackle problems differently (Megheirkouni et al., 2018) while encouraging the follower to accomplish more through purposeful commitment and trust (Chen et al., 2018; Jena et al., 2018; Marques De Lima Rua & Costa Araujo, 2016). Transformational leaders support the follower to be the best version of themselves.

Transformational leaders impact their followers in several ways. To the follower, the transformational leader is inspiring and can intellectually motivate and meet emotional needs (Bass, 1990; Buil et al., 2019; Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2018). Transformational leaders bring out the best in their followers by encouraging motivation at work (Caniëls et al., 2018; Luo et al., 2019). They support behaviors of transformation, imagination, and scholarliness to ensure a follower's success (Allen et al., 2016). When a leader's actions display transformational attributes, individuals carry out their duties and sometimes outperform others (Ohunakin et al., 2019). The conduct of a transformational leader could transform the way an employee looks at themselves.

Transformational leaders could impact an employee's job performance. Hetland et al. (2018) examined a transformational leader's impact on a follower's job duties' daily execution. The transformational leader challenged the follower to take command over

their work and motivated them to improve their work environment. Results show transformational leadership positively relates to an employee's daily job performance and is essential when the follower is promotion-focused and driven to grow and develop. Transformational leaders can motivate, stimulate, and focus on employees' individual needs and urge them to assume accountability, affecting worker performance and engagement. Recently Buil et al. (2019) additionally noted transformational leadership to change service employees' job performance directly. Findings showed employees to have better interaction and higher engagement when the managers displayed a transformational leader's behaviors.

Benefits of Transformational Leadership

Research has provided information that shows a leader's style to benefit organizations. The form of leadership should matter to organizations wishing to advance employee's happiness. Recent research has connected transformational leadership with job satisfaction. Researchers examined the relationship between transformational leadership style and employee job satisfaction in the service industry (Ohunakin et al., 2019). The conclusions of the study showed the behavioral components of transformational leadership to enhance job satisfaction conclusively. If organizations welcome transformational leadership, they could see changes to employee manners and ways of thinking. When employees are happy in their jobs, organizations tend to experience lower turnover intentions, saving them money down the road.

Ariyabuddhiphongs and Kahn (2017) examined the correlation between transformational

leadership and employee turnover intention. The study results revealed transformational leadership to sway and reduce turnover intention by lessening psychological fatigue associated with turnover intent. Because turnover is costly for organizations, understanding the type of leadership style that could deter this from happening is essential.

Transformational leadership can help organizations experiencing upper management changes. Ewell (2018) provided details on an organization experiencing change due to turnover in leadership. The results of this study found transformational leadership to have an immediate effect on long-term results in the organization by building a team of leaders and incorporating the four factors of transformational leadership. The incorporation of transformational leadership revived the organization instead of it dissolving. Another study researched transformational leadership's effects when the organization experienced changes (Faupel & Süß, 2019). The results of the study show that during organizational change, transformational leadership strengthened employee engagement. When change occurs, research has demonstrated transformational leaders to empower the employee's behavior and change their demeanor; thus, motivating them to support the changes. Transformational leadership behaviors could help the follower in how they regard change to look at it positively instead of being intimidated by it.

Another benefit of transformational leadership would be the linkage to the performance and operation of teams. Lehmann-Willenbrock et al. (2015) noted

transformational leadership positively links to team performance because of the leader's use of solution-focused communication. During team meetings and interactions, proposing ideas and solutions could prompt the follower to perform similar behavior. This study is essential because it shows how the transformational leader can impact a team and offers an alternative way of providing guidance and mentoring when one-on-one communication is impossible. Tuckey et al. (2017) asserted transformational leadership to benefit an employee when encountering workplace problems by encouraging them to work harder, thereby enhancing job performance. A transformational leader as a role model can set the standard for proper behavior, thus prompting the follower to emulate.

Transformational Leadership and Engagement

Employees aspire to achieve the goals of the organization when they can connect with their leaders. Transformational leaders commit themselves to the organization's good, strengthening supporters, and a culture of shared qualities and objectives (Allen et al., 2016). There has been a positive association between employee engagement and higher performance reviews when their leader's behavior was more transformational (Breevaart et al., 2016). Research from Breevaart et al. (2016) highlighted the leader's motivation to accomplish their work and if the follower had any part motivating themselves. Findings depicted transformational leadership to positively affect employee engagement and the execution of their work weekly. In support of this statement, Jeong et al. (2016) found transformational leadership to improve an employee's commitment and

engagement to meet the organization's goals. Employees that feel encouraged by their leaders are more engaged and committed to getting the work done (Edelbroek et al., 2019). Leaders who display more transformational behaviors could engender a creative environment, which may, in turn, cause employees to connect better in their work.

Because transformational leaders are known to be more motivational, they could be notably impactful to the follower. One empirical study demonstrated transformational leadership's effect on engagement when job demands were high (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018). The transformational leader persuaded the follower to develop solutions to the problems that confronted them at work, therefore, increasing their confidence. Instead of being overwhelmed with the job demands, it was viewed as a moment to show competence. The study's findings showed that transformational leadership assisted in engagement and guarded against the impact of higher job demands during these times. Sahu et al. (2018) additionally examined the relationship between transformational leadership and how it may influence engagement and an employee's intention to leave an organization. This study showed a transformational leadership style to affect employee engagement positively and that it played a role in the plan of an employee to leave the organization. Organizations wanting to increase engagement and lessen turnover intentions should incorporate leaders with more transformational behaviors to increase employee commitment and satisfaction.

A transformational leader's behavior can distinctively impact engagement through the outcome of an employee's behavior. Mozammel and Haan (2016) revealed that

transformational leadership behaviors increase productivity and are crucial to employee engagement. Organizations should attempt to have influential leaders who can engage employees, as an engaged employee is said to be particularly useful and dependable. Another study explored the linkage between transformational leadership, engagement, and a follower's self-motivation (Prochazka et al., 2017). The study determined that transformational leadership was notably related to engagement and self-motivation. For employees who have lower levels of self-motivation, transformational leadership aided in increasing those levels. Leadership style is a critical component of engagement, and transformational leadership behaviors affect the follower's inner motivation.

Supporting and Contrasting Theories

There are several theories to explore employee engagement. To increase employee engagement comprehension, I reviewed a few of the most familiar hypotheses that researchers used to comprehend employee engagement. The accompanying data is a review of servant leadership theory and transactional leadership theory. Servant leadership theory was explored as a supporting theory, while transactional leadership theory a contrasting one.

The Servant Leadership Theory

Servant leaders possess many traits. Greenleaf established the servant leadership theory in 1970 and recognized servant leaders to have the following qualities: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. Under the servant

leadership theory, the leader is a servant first (Andersen, 2018; Jeyaraj & Gandolfi, 2019; McCune Stein & Ai Min, 2019). They are looking to include others in making decisions while displaying moral conduct (Bao et al., 2018). Servant leaders want the employee to feel emotionally safe in the workplace and persuade them to be their authentic selves (Heyler & Martin, 2018; Lu et al., 2019) while encouraging an empowering organizational lifestyle (Liu, 2019). Servant leaders employ active listening to comprehend their followers' needs, thereby aiding their personal, professional, and spiritual growth (Arain et al., 2019; Kiker et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2019). Servant leaders could inspire change in their followers.

Investigations that incorporate servant leadership help to corroborate establishing confidence in how it affects employee engagement. Bao et al. (2018) found that how a servant leader conducts himself positively impacts employee engagement. An engaged employee exhibits elevated amounts of vigor, commitment, and involvement that could undoubtedly translate to company achievement. More recently, Andersen's (2018) research of servant leadership found that it strengthened organizational performance and profitability. Others state the servant leader must represent what is acceptable, even if it is not beneficial to the organization financially. Servant leadership could lead to favorable organizational results by inspiring a disengaged workforce.

The characteristics of a servant leader could offer an effective way of communication for leaders in organizations. The leadership attributes affiliated with servant leadership involve genuineness, employee growth, and management modeling

(Liu, 2019). The choice to serve instead of lead first distinguishes servant leadership from other leadership styles (Kiker et al., 2019). Researchers have noted that leaders exhibit servant leadership qualities to concentrate on outcomes, follower development, attitudes, dedication, and employee execution (McCune Stein & Ai Min, 2019; Wang et al., 2017). The servant leadership theory is concerned with the follower's cultivation to grow into servant leaders themselves through observation to emulate a leader's ethics, viewpoint, and manners (Wang et al., 2017). Research shows trusting relationships to develop as servant leaders accept and focus on the followers' welfare (Liu, 2019). Scholars have noted servant leadership to positively impact team performance, firm performance, organizational citizenship behavior, employee contentment and allegiance, and the intent to stay with an organization (Bavik, 2020; Sendjaya et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2019). Servant leadership could help with increased communication in an organization.

Servant leaders show concern for the follower. The servant leadership theory portrays leadership that is kind and encouraging, comparable to the attributes of transformational leadership reported by Burns (1978) to include intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Both are concerned with the development of the follower and are said to affect entire teams positively. Bavik (2020) recognized servant and transformational leadership to call attention to vision, influence, and trust. The servant leader is sincerely interested in the follower (Greenleaf, 1970). As a servant leader, one must serve first, and through this service, others will acknowledge them as being a leader (Bavik, 2020). Concern for the employee compels the servant leader to

lead so that everyone around them becomes more self-governing, intelligent, unrestrained, and in good health (Lu et al., 2019; Tuan, 2020). Servant leaders have a selfless mindset, and by forming trusting relationships, they can transform others in worker engagement, performance, and commitment (Bavik, 2020). The servant leader does not drive individuals to follow but walks side by side with them toward a path that joins all towards a collective organizational vision (Sendjaya et al., 2020). The attributes of a servant leader could positively affect the follower and the organization.

Research has established a supportive relationship between the two factors in reviewing the connection between servant leadership and employee engagement. Tuan (2020) believed servant leadership to impact employee engagement through creative undertakings by improving their self-idea, task importance, and community feelings. Kaur (2018) noted that when followers monitor a servant leader's positive aspects, it motivates them to exert elevated engagement levels. These conclusions are comparable to Bao et al. (2018), who explored servant leadership and engagement. The findings of the study suggested servant leaders who are more visible produce engaged employees. Their visibility makes them more engaging and allows the follower to learn from them. The conclusions of Kaur (2018) and Bao et al. (2018) showed a servant leader's behavior to build trust with an employee, thereby increasing engagement and job satisfaction. When an employee is engaged, it could change their attitude, ethics, and work performance.

The way a leader governs is essential to the engagement of an employee. A servant leader's behavior is said to guide and provide sympathy, input, moral support,

and resources (Yang et al., 2017). Research has shown servant leadership to improve employee trust in management and encourage staff members' stable organizational societies (Sheikh et al., 2019). Trust is a mediating factor between servant leadership and employee engagement, with the servant leader's display of humility to have the most significant impact on an employee to engage (Yang et al., 2017). When employees believe that their leader is trusting and creating an atmosphere of positivity and free of conflict, they apply more significant effort to their work (Kaur, 2018). Servant leadership behavior could increase employee engagement.

Transactional Leadership Theory

Transactional leadership differs from transformational leadership. Transactional leadership theory centers around the interchanges of a leader with the follower (Northouse, 2016). Transactional leadership theory includes contingent rewards and management by exception (Saeed & Mughal, 2019; Xu & Wang, 2019). The transactional leadership theory bears no resemblance to transformational leadership theory as this type of leadership encourages agreement with rewards and correction, while transformational leadership inspires and motivates followers (Abelha et al., 2018; Bass, 1990; Bian et al., 2019; Popli & Rizvi, 2017). Transactional leaders expect followers to achieve beyond expectations (Breevaart et al., 2016), using external inspiration and control (Xu & Wang, 2019). The transactional leader accomplishes organizational goals differently from a transformational leader.

The behavior of a leader has the power to determine how an employee performs in the workplace. Concerning organizational change, some researchers theorize transformational leaders to be more successful than transactional leaders (Zhang et al., 2020). Other researchers suggest that a transactional leader's behavior deals better with production demands (Megheirkouni et al., 2018). Li et al. (2018) investigated the impact of leadership styles on a workers' engagement. The study's findings showed transformational and transactional leadership to impact engagement, whereas transformational leadership had the most substantial effect on employee engagement. The impact of engagement could be that transformational leadership is considered a more proactive leadership style that impacts an employee's attitude and behavior. The transactional leader has a short-term focus, using tangible rewards to get the job completed, which could obstruct the follower's individuality (Zhang et al., 2020). Because transactional leaders motivate by rewards, they are said to successfully reduce turnover and facilitate employee engagement stimulated by this process (Edelbroek et al., 2019; Li et al., 2018). When employees are motivated by rewards, transactional leadership could work for an organization looking to increase engagement.

Transformational and transactional leadership could provide organizations with results. Studies have shown transformational and transactional leadership to be related to different organizational outcomes, such as efficiency that push the organization forward (Edelbroek et al., 2019). Megheirkouni et al. (2018) pointed out the need for management to develop transformational and transactional leadership skills equally to gain specific

leadership skills. Leaders who display genuine leadership qualities could introduce both transactional and transformational behaviors. Researchers examined how the chief operating officer's transactional and transformational leadership behaviors impacted organizational innovation as consumers' preferences and organization products changed over time (Prasad & Junni, 2016). The data comprised in this study was of several industries, one being the service industry. Results indicated that both leadership styles positively impact innovation, but transformational leadership was more beneficial when there were changes in the environment.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a generally new yet very well-known idea in Human Resource Development. Employee engagement is the most discussed point among Human Resource experts while developing a research area among academicians and specialists (Krishnaveni & Monica, 2016). Kahn (1990) characterized employee engagement as inspiring members to play out their obligations to meet the organization's objectives while expressing themselves physically, psychologically, and genuinely in the working environment. An examination of employee engagement in the workplace environment has shown it to be one of the most significant difficulties (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). These difficulties could bring managers challenges as engagement is vital to an organization's liveliness, existence, and success (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Organizations that tackle the issue of engagement early on could experience fewer challenges moving into the future.

It is essential to understand what keeps an employee engaged. Employee engagement is a dominant factor to gauge an organization's power and identifies itself with organizational efficacy (Hanaysha, 2016). There are advantages for organizations that have employees who are engaged. Employee engagement is related to having a favorable and fulfilling business-related disposition comprised of three measurements: strength, involvement, and commitment, all vital in achieving business goals (Hanaysha, 2016; Krishnaveni & Monica, 2016; Menon & Priyadarshini, 2018; Sendawula et al., 2018). Engagement involves how observant and consumed an employee is in role execution and distinguishes itself by vitality, contribution, adequacy, vigor, and devotion (Caniëls et al., 2018; Cooke et al., 2019; Sendawula et al., 2018). Organizations that understand the factors of engagement have a greater chance of keeping employees engaged.

There are several facets related to employee engagement. Research has shown employee engagement factors to incorporate work surroundings, management, group and co-workers, coaching and professional development, financial rewards, company practices, and office welfare (Jiang, Di Milia, et al., 2020; Menon & Priyadarshini, 2018; Saks, 2019). An organization can gauge employee engagement by reviewing the increased efficiency of an employee, reducing employee attrition rates, and increasing customer commitment (Shahidan et al., 2016). For organizations, having a competitive advantage is essential. Organizations with an engaged workforce have a competing advantage over those who do not, with engagement measures linking positively to

performance, profitableness, and staff turnover (Iqbal et al., 2017; Johnson & Park et al., 2018). Organizations should strive to have an engaged workforce to gain a competitive advantage.

Implications for the Organization

Organizations should consider how an employee's engagement affects the total operation. Employee engagement is vital to organizations as it could have a positive impact on higher job performance, reduction of turnover, customer allegiance, heightened morale, unity, and favorable levels of commitment to the organization from the employee (Hanaysha, 2016; Johnson & Park et al., 2018; Krishnaveni & Monica, 2016; Popli & Rizvi, 2017). Management plays an essential role in engagement. To the employee and the organization, employee engagement is of the utmost importance, and leadership should support engagement strategies as they are crucial to an organization to enhance engagement (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Moreover, engagement furnishes a compelling research strategy in which you could create and sustain a competitive advantage (Chawla, 2019). Organizations have credited employee engagement to the favorable results of business outcomes. These favorable results include customer gratification, organizational efficacy, profits, decreased attrition, innovation, and company development (Hanaysha, 2016; Johnson & Park et al., 2018; Krishnaveni & Monica, 2016; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Engagement should be a top priority to organizations and management to obtain desired outcomes.

Efficiency is said to be a trait of an employee that is engaged. When an employee is engaged, organizations encounter a 51% more prominent productivity when contrasted with others with low commitment measures (Aslam et al., 2018). Reduced commitment and productivity by an employee could put the organization in a position to lose a competitive advantage. Organizations with higher percentages of engaged employees have shown greater operating profits than cost occurred by having nonengaged employees (Ghosh et al., 2019). When an employee feels trust, then employee engagement could potentially increase. Jiang and Luo (2018) discussed employee engagement to engender increased trust in organizations. For organizations to sustain competitive advantage, they must have employees who work to their best potential, giving physically, intellectually, and emotionally with job performance (Pham-Thai et al., 2018). As engagement becomes taxing for organizations, discovering ways to sustain engagement longstanding will lower turnover rates and enable higher retention (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Engagement can affect an employee's frame of mind, and organizations should work hard to grow and encourage engagement in the connection linking the employee and employer (Ghosh et al., 2019). For the organization, engaged employees form lasting relationships, in contrast to disengaged employees, and search for ways to perform their jobs more effectively (Pandita & Ray, 2018). Finding ways to increase engagement could be beneficial for management and the employee.

Leaders need to take steps to discourage disengagement. Employee disengagement is becoming an issue for organizations today, with approximately 70% of

the workforce showing indications of being latently or effectively disengaged, causing substantial financial weights to associations (Rastogi et al., 2018). Disengagement diminishes the eagerness and dedication that an employee has to their organization, negatively impacting allegiance and retention (Hanaysha, 2016). The expense of employee disengagement is a contributing variable in an organization to lockout measures to diminish the number of workers who are not engaged and find compelling means to build engagement (Rastogi et al., 2018). In addition to the high cost to organizations, disengagement impacts an employee's efficiency, changes their perspective, and creates skepticism (Chawla, 2019). Babakus et al. (2017) reported the expense of a worker's disengagement to cost the US \$450 and \$550 billion a year because of lost productivity. A disengaged employee becomes an impediment to the organization as they push clients away, while employees who are engaged help the bottom line by promoting energy on the job and happy customers (Babakus et al., 2017). Finding ways to lessen the disengagement of employees could be valuable to the organization.

The reasons for employee disengagement can change across organizations because of the distinctions that exist between them. Rastogi et al. (2018) noted a primary cause of disengagement at work to be the lack of resources on the job, while Aslam et al. (2018) discussed the components that expanded employees being disengaged in the work environment to incorporate work overload, wrongness, and the absence of responsibility. Disengaged employees guard and distance themselves, separated by their lack of

commitment, withdrawal, and disconnectedness from their work, and perform poorly each day (Rastogi et al., 2018). Knowing the causes of disengagement could help the organization in creating a solution to overcome it.

The changing workforce is contributing to disengagement. A shift has occurred because of Baby Boomer's retirement and Millennials joining the labor force (Holmberg-Wright et al., 2017). Understanding this shift to the workforce is necessary for any organization. To enable organizations to conform to Millennials' entry into the workforce, Holmberg-Wright et al. (2017) proposed that associations need to provide a traditional career path and give firm guidelines regarding mentoring, leadership, and professional growth to adjust the matter of disengagement. Moreover, Holmberg-Wright et al. (2017) discussed how millennials are searching for mentors, not directors, having an open-door policy with those who offer support and developing them to reach their real potential. Having strategies in place could save organizations long term by confronting the issue of disengagement.

Attributes of an Engaged Employee

Engaged employees exhibit many positive qualities. Tkalac Verčić and Pološki Vokić (2017) identified engaged employees to be connected to the organization, exerting performance that produces company success. An engaged employee displays attachment to their workplace intellectually and passionately (Kahn, 1990; Shahidan et al., 2016). Handling challenges in the workplace is better for engaged employees as they take steps to perform beyond expectations (Kwon & Kim, 2020). Engaged employees commit

themselves to do what the organization needs and comprehend what is at stake while acting in the organization's best interest, leading to pivotal growth in business results (Jena et al., 2018; Krishnaveni & Monica, 2016). Their compelling and determined nature stimulates creativity and positive behaviors that want to fulfill the organizational goals (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016; Menon & Priyadarshini, 2018). Results include customer fulfillment and understanding of quality, customer engagement, and business success (Jha & Malviya, 2017; Popli & Rizvi, 2017). An engaged employee could potentially impact specific outcomes for the organization.

While carrying out their job responsibilities, engaged employees have confidence they are doing what is best for the organization. Engaged employees often have positive feelings and are substantially healthier, examining the job to obtain insight and mine for ways to increase value (Geethalakshmi & Rodrigues, 2017; Prochazka et al., 2017). An engaged employee is devoted to their work, having a significant impact on company performance, and having an attitude that exhibits enthusiasm and happiness, making them more productive (Madden & Bailey, 2017; Mozammel & Haan, 2016). Engaged employees appreciate, assist, and motivate their co-workers to improve the workplace environment for the organization's success (Menon & Priyadarshini, 2018; Sendawula et al., 2018). They outpace their disengaged colleagues (Rastogi et al., 2018) and feel that their workplaces and corporate culture emphatically impact their physical and mental prosperity in the work environment (Hanaysha, 2016). The engaged employee is high-yielding, provides more excellent service to customers, and stays with the organization

longer, therefore permitting an organization to be competitive and successful (Chawla, 2019; Popli & Rizvi, 2017). Creating an environment that encourages engagement could prove to be beneficial to an organization's livelihood.

Ways of Increasing Engagement

Organizations should seek out various approaches to build a workforce that is engaged. Krishnaveni and Monica (2016) suggested they identify those factors that drive an employee to be engaged and develop strategies around those elements for organizations looking to improve their employees' engagement. Additionally, Krishnaveni and Monica (2016) found aspects of employee engagement: job characteristics, teaching, development, supportive network, rewards, and appreciation. An organization not knowing what drives engagement will be one of the main reasons employees could become disengaged. Strategies that increase career development could enhance engagement while reducing turnover intent (Lu et al., 2016). Knowing those factors surrounding the engagement of an employee could strengthen the ideas that managers put in place.

Management support is essential to engagement. Milhem et al. (2019) identified the linkage of employee engagement to organizational and management support, a gratifying work environment, job development, and growth potential. Leaders should pay attention to those job resources that could enhance engagement. Of high importance is monetary rewards, creating a team environment, and allowing employees to have a role in making decisions (Matthews et al., 2018). Daily planning by the employee could also

enhance their productiveness and engagement (Parke et al., 2018). By using various workplace resources, organizations could develop a team of employees who are engaged.

It is essential to understand the circumstances that affect engagement.

Establishing employees' training was found to notably affect engagement, specifically related to their customer service orientation (Johnson & Park et al., 2018). Meeting an employee's psychological needs has been found to directly correlate to the employee's commitment and cause them to be engaged (Krishnaveni & Monica, 2016; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Recent research by Rastogi et al. (2018) noted an employee knowingly decides to engage/disengage by assessing the circumstances based on the psychological elements of significance, well-being, and availableness. Mentoring links positively to employee engagement, and mentoring programs provide psychosocial support for an employee and allow them to develop a career plan (Iqbal et al., 2017). Mentoring guides employees with the execution of job duties, which could help accomplish organizational objectives (Anaza et al., 2016). Mentoring could not only be beneficial to the Mentee but to the Mentor as well.

Leadership performance could affect the engagement of an employee. Employee engagement lessens when leadership is ineffective (Krishnaveni & Monica, 2016; Popli & Rizvi, 2017; Rastogi et al., 2018). To increase engagement, organizations should ensure supervisory or leadership support because employees could become disengaged (Krishnaveni & Monica, 2016; Ladyshevsky & Taplin, 2018; Rastogi et al., 2018).

Leaders who over manage their employees may hinder engagement. To help

organizations adequately initiate employee engagement, Jiang and Luo (2018) recommended training for leaders on promoting open and effective communication in the organization through employer and employee response. Organizations could improve employee training by incorporating programs that enhance transformational leadership behaviors (Akbari et al., 2017) and hiring managers who display notable transformational leadership characteristics to increase engagement (Buil et al., 2019). A leader's behavior can impact engagement, and those with transformational leadership qualities have employees that outperformed what is required (Akbari et al., 2017; Mahmood et al., 2019). When an employee feels that they have the support of their managers, the answer is better engagement (Krishnaveni & Monica, 2016). Leaders who collaborate with employees could improve their job contentment and self-sufficiency.

Comprehending those facets that improve engagement is vital to leadership and organizations. Leaders can advance engagement in the working environment by having casual one-on-one gatherings and structured appraisals to give user feedback and discuss employee and organizational goals (Knight et al., 2017). Internal communication is a significant factor in creating a corporate culture of transparency among a manager and their employee (Tkalac Verčič & Pološki Vokić, 2017). Research has shown internal communication to have a positive impact on employee engagement by increasing confidence and uniting the manager and employee (Tkalac Verčič & Pološki Vokić, 2017). When employees trust their leaders, it could prompt a more engaging work environment, producing substantial employee engagement for the organization (Jena et

al., 2018)). Creating surroundings that engender trust could provide a more engaging environment for employees and organizations.

Mentoring

Effective mentoring provokes a connection between the mentor and mentee. Mentoring portrays itself as a relationship in which a more accomplished individual assists the less experienced one (Banerjee-Batist & Reio, 2016; Foster & Hill, 2019). The mentor is there to help the mentee in comprehending aspects of the job. Mentoring involves skillful training as it identifies with company success and centers itself around the mentor and mentee (Dopson et al., 2017; Honkimäki & Tynjälä, 2018; Kowalski, 2019). As organizations see the importance of mentoring, they are becoming more inclined to embrace it, as it lends itself to be beneficial and profitable (Grindrod, 2016; Jiang & Luo, 2018). Managers must understand the role that mentoring plays in the well-being of the organization.

While the focus of an organization is to be profitable, mentoring could establish sustainability. Employee development is crucial, and mentoring can grow and evolve employees' expertise (Welsh & Dixon, 2016; Whitten, 2016). Mentoring could help improve an employee's job satisfaction. Management must decide on the appropriate mentoring program for its structure and culture to build relationships and improve employee job satisfaction (Jyoti & Sharma, 2017). Human resource departments are recognizing the importance of collaboration with managers. Human resource departments inside organizations are uniting with managers to promote relationships in giving these

resources to their employees (Lee et al., 2017). Creating successful mentoring programs could improve employee satisfaction and improve the relationships they have with management.

Lack of Mentoring in Organizations

Mentoring is essential to the future of an organization. Organizations that lack mentoring programs could face the dilemma of leadership inadequacy in their employees' succession process (Dopson et al., 2017). Managers must comprehend the need to develop employees in the expectation of future needs. Successful mentoring has shown to be helpful for leadership succession. Mentoring produces employees who can meet the organization's future demands and promote the next generation's culture and leadership style (Dopson et al., 2017). Training the next generation should be of great importance to organizations that want to stay relevant and competitive.

Organizations lacking a mentoring strategy could provoke issues related to new employee onboarding. Zhenyuan et al. (2018) showed the importance of establishing a mentoring process, especially for employees new to the organization. Research from this study conveyed the mentee's cognizance of supervisory mentoring, their emotional need contentedness, and rating of work engagement. There were 438 participants, of which 43% were men and 57% women ranging in age from 19 to 34 years. Mentoring by a supervisor was strongly linked to employee engagement and work performance, giving the mentee a sense of security and lessening the job's stressors (Zhenyuan et al., 2018). Outcomes from this study show a positive association of mentoring to engagement and

the correlation of a newcomer's engagement by increasing the fulfillment of their essential needs (independence, ability, and connection). Chi and Wang (2016) showed the importance of mentoring employees new to the organization, presenting results that directly impact new employee performance. Results showed mentoring to aid the mentee in their job performance effectiveness as it equips them with the knowledge and expertise to satisfy demands associated with the job.

Lack of mentoring in organizations could increase turnover and disengagement. By implementing mentoring strategies, it is possible to enhance engagement while lessening turnover and disengagement. Stewart and Harrison (2016) noted companies lose \$11 billion yearly because of employee turnover. More recently, research has shown mentoring programs to remedy the high percentages of turnover and employee disengagement (Jyoti & Sharma, 2017; Stewart & Harrison, 2016). As we move forward to an era of the retirement of baby boomers and millennials entering the workforce, organizations could design a plan for the two groups to coach and learn from one another. Roberts et al. (2019) pointed out the need for organizations to discover ways to engage their employees who have been long-standing while ensuring the younger workforce's development. Because millennials are known to switch jobs, mentoring and organizational support have more considerable significance (Naim & Lenka, 2017). Organizations that find ways to offer continuous learning and ensure that surroundings encourage advancement could better equip themselves for the changing workforce.

The expansion of diversity in organizations could present many challenges. Researchers examined the mentee's perception of mentoring when considering age and gender (Omanwa & Musyimi, 2016). The study sought to comprehend the perceptiveness, values, and point of view of their employees. Because not one person is the same, organizations need to recognize that values, beliefs, and the way people conduct themselves could be different. Researchers collected the data through questionnaires and found a relationship between gender, age, and mentoring perception. Employees with a mentor had favorable job experiences and feelings of significance compared to those who did not. Organizations that lack mentoring programs could have disconnected employees, but by changing the perception of mentoring, employees could be more open to engaging in mentoring programs. Another study examined the importance of matching mentors and mentees to build up self-efficacy (St-Jean et al., 2018). The study found that pairing a mentor and mentee with similarities was essential to the mentoring process. For example, typically, there are more male mentors than females. This study indicated the importance of gender matching as mentees could recognize a mentor as pertinent, approachable, and encouraging.

Benefits of Mentoring

When organizations make mentoring programs accessible to employees, it will undoubtedly provide advantages. Mentoring positively affects the organization as it creates engaged employees that stay with companies for extended periods, improving productivity and career flexibility (Grindrod, 2016; Stewart & Harrison, 2016).

Mentoring establishes confidence, professional improvement and supports the mentor in setting a good example (Jyoti & Sharma, 2017; Scerri et al., 2020). Mentoring could provoke the mentor and mentee, establishing a relationship. Konca and Tasdemir (2018) noted that during the mentoring process, the mentor acquired increased confidence and introduced an environment that contributed to learning for both participants. The participants found the mentoring process to be significant to the development of their individuality as a leader. This research shows how mentoring could develop a mentee and thrust them into leadership by branching out of their comfort zones.

Mentoring could also provide encounters that increase engagement. Ayoobzadeh and Boies (2020) noted mentoring to be rewarding to the mentor by precipitating experiences that enrich workplace gratification, thereby strengthening engagement. One study composed data from four managers with similar years of experience with mentoring (Kennett & Lomas, 2015). Researchers assembled the information through in-depth interviews, which were then analyzed to comprehend the mentor's impact. The participants divulged mentoring to be a purposeful experience that strengthened work satisfaction and attributed to their psychological development.

Knowing the culture of the organization is vital. Mentoring could provide information related to the culture and everyday changes that could occur in an organization. Mentoring aids leaders convey company culture between generations and enhance the mentor's leadership expertise (Stewart & Harrison, 2016). Particular workplace situations could require the implementation of mentoring. Dopson et al. (2017)

described mentoring to be appropriate during role realignment and leadership development. Mentoring does not have to be all-consuming, but it should be meaningful for all. Through mentoring, the mentee could gain self-awareness in understanding what they are capable of and where growth opportunities exist (Ghosh et al., 2019). Managers must realize that being a mentor requires specific people skills, such as being a trainer, initiator, and advisor.

Training mentees could allow them to excel in their workplace. Mentoring of an employee permits them to implement what they are learning in their company setting, allowing them to evolve and for the mentor to provide feedback (Welsh & Dixon, 2016). A qualitative case study that used semistructured interviewing provided additional proof of mentoring's value (Stewart-Lord et al., 2017). Respondents disclosed how mentoring advanced them individually and skillfully. They were better able to deal with demanding situations, and the support received by managers had a positive effect on the unity of the team. The study also recognized the importance of management support and the significance of having strong leadership in overseeing the program.

There are several benefits to the mentee from being mentored. Mentoring was recognized positively by the mentee as it establishes career paths and comprehension of objectives to fulfill in the workplace, consequently encouraging employee engagement (Naim & Lenka, 2017; Stewart & Harrison, 2016; Welsh & Dixon, 2016). Each stage of the mentoring process should better the mentee in several ways when the mentor possesses specific mentoring characteristics such as communication, openness, and

accessibility. Researchers noted mentoring to add value for businesspeople starting new companies (Brodie et al., 2017). The research involved five in-depth semistructured interviews of retail entrepreneurs that uncovered several themes: anticipated obstacles and support of starting a business, qualities needed in a mentor, and benefits of mentoring long-term. The study results showed mentoring to be beneficial to new start-ups. This research showed the positive aspect of mentoring early on, which could validate having a mentoring program, whether formal or informal, for new employees.

The personalities of employees are different throughout an organization, which could be concerning to a mentor. Mentors must comprehend how to deal with different individual temperaments while mentoring and supporting every employee's personal and professional growth (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2017). Mentors must be influential when dealing with several mentees and change their way of helping each individual through the mentoring process (Brodie et al., 2017). Researchers investigated how mentoring (formal and virtual) built a connection between the mentor and mentee (Evans, 2018). The study's focus was to see if a relationship could evolve between the two and if the connection established trust. The findings revealed trust to be essential to successful mentoring in both settings and that having a culture of support strengthened confidence. Mentoring aids in improving employee's self-esteem, knowledge, job success and drives them to attain organizational objectives (Brodie et al., 2017; Jyoti & Sharma, 2017). Ghosh et al. (2019) noted mentoring relationships to increase employee engagement, and organizations that establish mentoring programs would see notable changes to their

personnel's engagement levels. Mentoring relationships that are effective could provide open communication, trust, and partnerships.

Mentoring Programs

Exploration of the plans to implement mentoring programs could translate into favorable results for an organization. Mentoring programs could improve employees understanding of the job and personal commitment. Roberts et al. (2019) asserted that organizations should support mentoring programs as they strengthen the leader's ability to convey knowledge and be a role model that could increase employee engagement and retention. A mentoring program could inspire individualized learning and assist employees in coping with change throughout the organization. The applications can be formal and informal, both essential to an employee's job execution (Stewart & Harrison, 2016). Organizations should assess the value of each mentoring program style and the reasons for support.

Organizations can have formal and informal mentoring programs. Formal mentoring is distinctively designed by the organization and pairs the mentee and mentor together, while informal mentoring is voluntary (Banerjee-Batist & Reio, 2016; Brodie et al., 2017; Jyoti & Sharma, 2017). For example, Welsh and Dixon (2016) highlighted the outcome of a formal mentoring program's effect on a mentees career advancement. Researchers matched mentees with a mentor outside of their organization who were higher in management by at least two levels. Participants in the research were 342 mentees from 44 organizations. Results suggested that mentees need to apply what they

learn immediately to aid in career advancement during the formal mentoring process. Additionally, the organization's support at different levels was key to the organization receiving all the benefits a formal mentoring program offers.

Organizations are starting to realize the importance of using formal mentoring programs. Formal mentoring programs used by Fortune 500 companies are at 70%, as the implementation of these programs can build expertise and grow employees (Welsh & Dixon, 2016). Formal mentoring could be more cost-effective for organizations wishing to develop leaders. Moreno and Girard (2019) found formal mentoring acceptable in leadership expansion because it allowed the transference of knowledge distinctly to the organization. Research from this study noted leadership development to positively affect employees, build trust, and culminate the mentee for succession. Lack of leadership could potentially translate into failures that might impact productivity. Leadership development could give organizations a competitive edge and improve organizational culture. Another study examined what the mentee and mentor recognized as learning from having a formal mentoring relationship (Bear, 2018). The study's conclusions suggested that both the mentee and the mentor gained knowledge, improved skills, expertise, and perceived an increase in organizational support. Mentoring can be beneficial to all parties by helping them reach their full potential and professional goals.

Mentoring programs have evolved, and some organizations are incorporating online methods in their plans. While organizations presently include mentoring programs into business strategies, some use online instruments to implement quickly and oversee in

every part of the organization, not to replace actual mentoring but to support it (Grindrod, 2016). Implementing an online mentoring program could provide leadership growth and allow more employees to participate in the program. Harris et al. (2015) noted an online mentoring program to be cost-effective and provide a way for mentees to advance company success. Organizational support is essential to any mentoring program when achievable and clear expectations are set (Welsh & Dixon, 2016). The key to any mentoring program's success is to align with the business's objectives and provide mentors training while matching them with their mentees (Grindrod, 2016). Employing a mentoring program online could provide the mentee with additional knowledge and expertise gained from another person.

Group mentoring could be an alternative course of action for organizations wishing to establish a mentoring process. Group mentoring could provide independent growth while incorporating various mentors and mentees to accomplish organization-specific objectives. Altus (2015) noted group mentoring to be a viable choice when there is a deficiency in volunteers, rendering one-on-one mentoring impossible. To understand if group mentoring is beneficial to the mentee, participants completed assessments and participated in focus groups. The research uncovered four benefits to the mentee: comfort, safety, nonacademic, and academic support. Although this study's focus was on an educational setting, applying it to a business setting gives organizations that lack volunteers an additional avenue in providing mentoring to their employees. Another study found group mentoring to lessen barriers, allowing employees to share information

throughout the organization (Harris et al., 2015). The research revealed evidence that 87% of the mentees found learning to be enhanced by the communication they had with their mentor. The mentees furthermore rated their experiences to be moderately efficient to very productive. Group mentoring could be more cost-effective and potentially save organizations money. Organizations not having suitable budgets for individual mentoring could implement group mentoring to achieve organizational goals.

Transition

The goal of section 1 of this doctoral exploration was to show the main components of the study. The background of the problem addressed the fact that engagement is an issue in the United States, and organizations lose billions each year.

This section incorporated the problem and purpose statement, research method and design choice, and the research and interview questions. The conceptual framework used in the study was the transformational leadership theory. This section included the study's significance regarding business practice and implications for social change. After the extensive analysis of previous research, this section concluded with the literature review.

Section 2 contains information on the researcher and participants' role, research method and design, and how data were collected and analyzed. Section 3 presents the study's findings, business practice implementation, social change implications and action, and additional research guidance.

Section 2: The Project

The objective of this study was to investigate retail industry leaders' mentoring strategies to improve employee engagement. The disclosure of adequate procedures to promote employee engagement may prompt better results for an organization, such as lower turnover, more significant profit, and organizational success. Section 2 of this study incorporates clarification of the methodology and exploration procedure.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the mentoring strategies that retail industry leaders use to enhance employee engagement. The targeted population included business leaders of two retail organizations located in Virginia who have demonstrated success in developing and executing mentoring strategies to enhance employee engagement. The managers came from retail stores that sell general merchandise. The implications for positive social change include improving profitability, allowing organizations to contribute to communities supporting needy citizens.

Role of the Researcher

I was the primary data collection instrument for this study. In qualitative research, researchers are the primary instrument, immersing themselves personally in the investigation, including the settings, participants, and documentation (Yates & Leggett, 2016). A researcher directly works with the information, analyzing transcripts and other materials to identify themes and groupings to comprehend the phenomenon (Yates & Leggett, 2016). Researchers should take steps to guarantee the research's quality and

rigor for the accuracy of results (Orr et al., 2020). Data deemed unreliable could give a deceiving picture to decision-makers and how they approach a situation (Fedina, 2015). As the primary data collection instrument, I collected data by conducting semistructured interviews via video conferencing. I then transcribed and reviewed the transcripts from the interviews. I also reviewed company documentation to include the benefits of mentoring, mentoring guide, company newsletter, and mentee core assessments.

I took steps to build rapport and confidence with the participants. In qualitative studies, researchers using a traditional setting to conduct research can gain the contributors' trust and engagement (Saunders et al., 2016). The interviewing method to collect data permits the interviewee to engage in participant encounters (Orr et al., 2020; Wadams & Park, 2018). My objective with the participants was to establish trust by being transparent about the research process to obtain knowledge of the subject matter. My career in the retail industry has allowed me to be a mentee and a mentor. In a mentoring environment, I perceived my performance level, job satisfaction, and engagement to increase. I researched mentoring strategies that retail industry leaders use to enhance employee engagement because of my mentoring experiences.

I conducted my research in an honorable manner. Saunders et al. (2016) noted ethics as levels of behavior that lead to a person's conduct regarding those at the forefront or those influenced by the research. Additionally, Saunders et al. discussed that the data collection stage might present some ethical issues that could be general or specific about the techniques used in collecting the data. *The Belmont Report* (1979) outlines

fundamental moral concepts that guide human participant research to settle ethical problems that could arise. According to *The Belmont Report*, a researcher should adhere to the three underlying principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. These principles ensure the participant is (a) treated fairly, (b) respected and kept from any mistreatment, and (c) treated equally. To conduct my research ethically, I followed the *Belmont Report's* guidelines and treated all participants with uniformity, kindness, and respect.

Another role of the researcher is to alleviate bias when conducting their investigation. Researchers can help manage bias by recognizing and removing any presumed thoughts present and related to the study (Wadams & Park, 2018). I employed bracketing to reduce researcher bias. A researcher can engage a bracketing strategy to mitigate bias in their study (Wadams & Park, 2018). Researchers who reveal their beliefs initially and keep them clear through the investigation can mitigate bias (Wadams & Park, 2018). I also used member checking to reduce bias. Member checking requires confirmation from a participant verifying the accuracy of a researcher's interpretation of the collected information (Saunders et al., 2016). A researcher must acknowledge the bias they bring to the research and take steps to ensure the collected data are reliable (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To reduce researcher bias, I used bracketing and member checking.

Qualitative researchers should employ an interview protocol for uniformity with each participant. Researchers use the interview protocol as a guide throughout the interview process (Yeong et al., 2018). A researcher uses an interview protocol to collect

information surrounding the interview questions and the scripting behind a researcher's introduction and conclusion (Yeong et al., 2018). As the researcher, I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) to guide me throughout the interview procedure and guarantee uniformity with all participants throughout the interview process.

Participants

The participants in this study must have implemented mentoring strategies that improved employee engagement in the retail industry. Through the selection of participants, a researcher can draw distinct suppositions and gather credible information to use in the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). The participants in this study included leaders who oversaw a group of employees in a retail organization, had a minimum of 3 years of leadership experience and implemented successful mentoring strategies determined to have enhanced engagement. Leaders who managed people for at least 3 years could have created the skills and capability to illustrate leadership validity (Havaei et al., 2015). Experienced leaders could provide employees with moments of improvement and growth, which could encourage an environment of engagement (Swensen et al., 2016). Participants were leaders who met the criteria of this study.

My strategy to gain participant access was to identify potential gatekeepers by reviewing each organization's public website. Direct contact with the gatekeepers can give researchers access to participants appropriate for a study (Singh, 2014). I gained access to participants by contacting the gatekeepers at each organization. I emailed each gatekeeper at the retail organization when it was time to conduct my research. A

researcher can successfully gain access to a participant by building a relationship with essential personnel inside the organization (Amundsen et al., 2017). I had an initial conversation about the mentoring program and my study to start the relationship-building process. I sent the gatekeeper a formal request for consent to participate in the study and obtained a list of potential participants who matched my research criteria. After obtaining the participant list, I sent an invitation email to each potential participant to introduce myself and give a brief overview of the study. I attached the consent form to the email for potential participants to review and consent to participate in the research. Once I received consent from each participant, I established the date and time for the interview to take place.

I established a working relationship with the participants by being transparent about the interview procedure. When a researcher and participant develop a trusting relationship, they may be less reluctant and more communicative (Mohebbi et al., 2018). The perception of trust allows candid conversation between a researcher and a participant (Lee, 2016). The development of trust could provide answers that could be more truthful instead of replies considered as being ethically appealing (Lee et al., 2016). I developed trust with the participants by being supportive, open, and honest about the interview and data collection process. The participants knew their participation was voluntary and that all information would be kept confidential.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

I chose the qualitative research method for my study. When choosing a method to conduct analysis, a researcher's choices include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The qualitative approach can give a researcher better comprehension of the participants' accounts of events (Park & Park, 2016). Participants in qualitative studies can share their experiences and points of view (Antwi & Hamza, 2015) in their natural settings (Park & Park, 2016). Researchers selecting to test hypotheses or relationships between variables may choose a quantitative method. A researcher analyzes numerical data and quantifiable variables in a quantitative study (Park & Park, 2016). Data are collected in a controlled environment to secure validity and assurance that no variables outside the quantitative study are included (Park & Park, 2016; Saunders et al., 2016). I did not test a theory or examine the relationship between variables; therefore, the quantitative method was not appropriate for this study. The qualitative approach aligned with my objective to explore retail industry leaders mentoring strategies to enhance employee engagement.

Researchers who employ qualitative and quantitative elements may choose mixed methods research. Mixed methods research combines qualitative and quantitative procedures in assembling data in a study (Molina-Azorin, 2016). Mixed methods research may corroborate reliability (Saunders et al., 2016) and yield to personal explanation and researcher bias (Hagler et al., 2015). In business, mixed methods research could add

merit and improve study topics (Molina-Azorin, 2016). Mixed methods research was not appropriate for my study because it would have required using a quantitative element, which was not needed to explore retail industry leaders' mentoring strategies to enhance employee engagement.

Research Design

When using a qualitative methodology, researchers have several design choices from which to choose. After analyzing the distinctive qualitative methods, a case study design was a suitable fit for this doctoral study. Case study research examines the subject in its natural setting and from the viewpoint of those involved (Saunders et al., 2016). Case study research tackles the how and why questions regarding the phenomenon (Morgan et al., 2017; Yazan, 2015). The case study approach includes interviews and reviewing of company documentation (Yazan, 2015). Case studies reinforce examining the phenomena while giving a detailed account and comprehension (Kothari et al., 2016). Researchers use a multiple case study design to provide more validity than a single case study (Yin, 2018). A multiple case study design could give greater trust in results created from the study (Morgan et al., 2017). A multiple case study design was appropriate for this investigation to gain insight from retail industry leaders on the mentoring strategies they used to enhance employee engagement.

Further research designs taken into consideration for this study included ethnography, narrative inquiry, and phenomenological. Ethnography is used in qualitative research to understand individuals and their way of life (Ottrey et al., 2018). The

rationale behind ethnography is a genuine understanding of a group's culture and beliefs, which requires research completion in a naturalistic setting (Ladores & Corcoran, 2019; Robinson et al., 2017). The ethnographic design was not suitable for this study, as there was no need to engage in the culture to understand the phenomenon. The narrative inquiry design allows the interviewee to detail events from their accounts, through storytelling, with little assistance from the interviewer (McAloon et al., 2017). The narrative inquiry design was not appropriate as it would not enable me to gather information through interviews to gain knowledge of the business situation. The phenomenological design allows the researcher to explore participants' lived experiences to analyze a phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The phenomenology design was not appropriate for this study as I was not exploring the participants' lived experiences.

In qualitative studies, it is crucial to reach data saturation. Reaching data saturation is essential and can reflect negatively if not achieved (Fusch & Ness, 2015). A researcher must gather data until reaching data saturation (Saunders et al., 2016). Data saturation ensures sufficient data to reflect an exploration, and no extra coding is plausible (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest et al., 2020; Saunders et al., 2016). To ensure data saturation, I conducted interviews and reviewed company documents that the leaders provided until no new information or themes surface.

Population and Sampling

This qualitative study's sample size was three retail managers who implemented mentoring strategies to enhance employee engagement. The managers came from retail

stores that sell general merchandise. Researchers have not reached a consensus on normally acceptable sample sizes for qualitative studies (Johnson & Easterling, 2015; & Tran et al., 2017). Johnson and Easterling (2015) theorized an adequate sample size between 20-30 participants, while Sim et al. (2018) noted 2 to 10 to be appropriate. Additionally, Boddy (2016) discussed a sample size of 2 to 6 to be suitable for qualitative research. Therefore, three participants were sufficient to achieve data saturation for this study.

I used purposeful sampling to select participants. Researchers use purposeful sampling to purposely recruit participants based on the study criteria and knowledge of the problem explored (Wirth et al., 2016). Participants included in this study were leaders who (a) supervised a group of employees, (b) had 3 years of leadership experience, and (c) had implemented mentoring strategies that increased employee engagement. Leaders who are proficient in supervising groups of people can improve employee development and affect employee engagement (Swensen et al., 2016). I emailed a questionnaire for participants to respond to a series of questions to ensure they met this study's requirements.

Reaching data saturation is essential to any examination as it could adversely influence the research legitimacy (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Hancock et al., 2016). Data saturation occurs when there is replication in the data, no additional data analysis themes, and no new information from the assembled data (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In qualitative studies, data saturation depends on the number of

contributors required to provide validity (Malterud et al., 2016). Researchers using a case study method could reach data saturation by conducting a minimum of 3 interviews (Boddy, 2016). To ensure data saturation, I collected data until I saw replication in the information, and no new data or themes arose. I continued data analysis until there were no new codes or themes.

The interviews took place via video conferencing. When conducting interviews, the researcher should ensure the participant feels calm and contented enough to share their encounters about the phenomena (Heath et al., 2018). Due to the COVID 19 event, to safeguard the participants, I conducted interviews via Zoom sessions.

Ethical Research

I followed the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for this study. Obtaining consent was a necessary component before beginning the research process. A researcher uses the consent form to present the study's specifics (Huang, O'Conner, et al., 2016; Karbwang et al., 2018). A participant's review of the consent form will provide them with information on the researcher, the study's basis, potential benefits and risks, and their rights and responsibilities (Alkaraki et al., 2020). I emailed each participant a copy of the consent form, and the participant consented by responding "I consent" by responding to the email. The participant was allowed to withdraw from the investigation until member checking was complete. Withdrawal from the study had to be in writing and sent to me through email. There were no incentives for participating in this research.

I thanked each participant for taking part in the study and shared the research findings with them.

The ethical protection of participants is crucial. *The Belmont Report* (1979) outlines the principles to act ethically and to protect human participants. The three principles of *The Belmont Report* include beneficence, justice, and respect for persons. Researchers who follow these principles can ensure that participants get treated fairly and equally and are respected and not mistreated. To ensure participants' ethical treatment throughout the research process, I adhered to *The Belmont Report's* principles.

I took steps to ensure the confidentiality of each participant. Stressing confidentiality is imperative and saving all information to a password-protected area is essential (Surmiak, 2018). To ensure the privacy of those participating in the study, each participant should have an identifying code that is unique to them (Vogel et al., 2015) as this aids in protecting privacy (Saunders et al., 2015). Every member of the study received a distinctive number identifiable only to them (P01 through P03) to ensure confidentiality and to keep up privacy all through the exploration.

I stored data on a password-protected computer and hard drive to guarantee the ethical protection of the participants. The hard drive and any research written on paper are in a secure, password-protected fireproof safe for 5 years. Destroying all materials will commence after 5 years by shredding documents and deleting all the hard drive information. Walden's approval number for this study is 01-15-21-0758472, and it expires on January 14, 2022.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument in this doctoral study. Qualitative research requires the investigator to be the primary instrument in collecting documentation (Kaliber, 2019; Yates & Leggett, 2016). I collected the data by conducting semistructured interviews and physically reviewing company documents. In qualitative research, the researcher can independently work with the information, breaking down transcripts and other items to capture more excellent knowledge of circumstance (Yates & Leggett, 2016). My role as the researcher was to be unprejudiced and not display any personal bias in collecting and interpreting the data.

I conducted semistructured interviews via video conferencing with seven open-ended questions as a data collection method for this study. Interviewing has come to be a principal method of data collection in research (Brown & Danaher, 2019; Kaliber, 2019). Semistructured interviews permit the participant to reflect on the occurrence and give the researcher a chance to build rapport with the participants (Brown & Danaher, 2019). The researcher can gain further understanding of an event through interviewing (Brown & Danaher, 2019). Semistructured interviews allow the researcher to have a designated time and set of predetermined questions to investigate a phenomenon (Brown & Danaher, 2019). Open-ended questioning can give the participant the chance to share their experience in a nonleading way (Harvey, 2015). This study's participants underwent semistructured interviews with open-ended questioning to explore mentoring strategies that retail industry leaders used to enhance employee engagement.

During the interview process, I used my interview protocol (Appendix A). The interview protocol lays the foundation to guide the researcher when conducting interviews (Yeong et al., 2018). Developing an interview protocol is essential when interviewing for gathering vital qualitative data, aids the researcher in comprehending the participant's experience, and determining the factors that apply to the research (Yeong et al., 2018). The interview protocol can strengthen reliability and refine the data collected through the interview process (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). As the researcher, I used an interview protocol that was essential all through the interview proceedings.

I used member checking to improve the reliability and validity of my research. Allowing the participants to review the data through member checking is essential to establishing reliability (Thomas, 2017) and could support the study's validity (Saunders et al., 2016). The member checking procedure is one strategy that can bring credibility to research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Member checking allows the participant the opportunity to review the interpreted data to establish accuracy and provide feedback on what was documented (Naidu & Prose, 2018). I digitally recorded the interview, transcribed the data, and emailed my interpretation of the data to the participants for validation.

Data Collection Technique

I followed the interview protocol to collect data for this study (Appendix A). Kaliber (2019) asserted that a researcher uses interviews to obtain direct access to investigating the phenomenon. A researcher uses an interview protocol to prepare ahead

of time for the discussion elements (Brown & Danaher, 2019). I used semistructured interviews to gain knowledge of the participants' encounters and insight into mentoring strategies to enhance employee engagement. Researchers that use semistructured interviews can collect data efficiently and create datasets full of information (O'Keeffe et al., 2016). Researchers use the interview protocol to streamline the interview process in a structured and thorough way to collect information beneficial to the study (Yeong et al., 2018). I followed the interview protocol to guide me through the process in the collection of the data throughout the interview procedure.

There are advantages for a researcher when using an interview protocol and conducting semistructured interviews. Patton (2015) identified advantages to using an interview protocol to include establishing the direction for the meeting, organizes the interviewing of several individuals, and ensures the researcher best uses the time allotted for the interview. Semistructured interviews offer advantages to a researcher that include a more personal approach to gathering information and improving rapport between the interviewer and interviewee (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Shapka et al., 2016). Semistructured interviews enable a researcher to better understand the participant's viewpoint and further knowledge of the phenomena through the interviewees' sharing of encounters and feelings (Peesker et al., 2019). I maximized the advantages of semistructured interviews by following the interview protocol, which established and organized the interviewing process.

Researchers using an interview protocol and conducting interviews could face disadvantages. A disadvantage of having an interview protocol is that if not developed properly, it may not cover all research goals or give useful interview information, primarily when produced by a beginner researcher (Yeong et al., 2018). Some disadvantages of semistructured interviews are the time to conduct the interview, geographical limitations, and the participants' nonverbal cues and language, leading to the researcher's misinterpretation (Oltmann, 2016). Additionally, Opdenakker (2006) noted other disadvantages as the difficulty in choosing a time and place and creating an impression of bias. Exercising proper planning in the allotment of resources and ensuring my interview protocol covered my research objectives aided me in minimizing the disadvantages to achieve the goals of my research.

To guide my interview process, I followed the steps as noted in the interview protocol. By having an interview protocol, the researcher can ensure the data is collected during the designated time, improving the interview's efficiency (Yeong et al., 2018). I started the meeting with an introduction, and the participant received a copy of the consent form through email. I briefed each participant on the member checking process and a follow-up time scheduled for member checking. I turned on the audio recorder giving each participant enough time to answer questions and any additional information they would like to add. Upon the interview concluding, I thanked each participant for their time and informed them that I would contact them if I needed any additional information.

The interviews took place via video conferencing. Maintaining the individual's privacy and rights during the interview is crucial (Johnson & Easterling, 2015). I discussed a date and time with the participant and conducted interviews via Zoom sessions. I digitally recorded each interview. Digitally recording the conversation enables the researcher to converse with the participant and sustain eye contact (McGonagle et al., 2015). A benefit of recording the interview is that it aids in pointing out corrections in the data and maintaining the interviewee's explanation of the questions asked (Marchand et al., 2020). Recording the interview can also enhance the integrity of the data (McGonagle et al., 2015). After gaining consent from each participant, I digitally recorded and started the interview process.

I analyzed company documents that were relevant to this study. When conducting qualitative research, the analysis of documentation is a method that is accepted and gives awareness to the phenomenon (Cardno, 2018). The reviewing of documents could validate other areas of collected data in my research. Case study research calls for reviewing documents to confirm and expand upon other documentation (Yin, 2018). Moreover, document analysis aids in triangulating the data and works with different strategies like member checking (Siegener et al., 2018). The company documents that I analyzed were the benefits of mentoring, mentoring guide, company newsletter, and mentee core assessment, which provided details and guidelines of the mentoring process.

I did not conduct a pilot study. Dikko (2016) noted researchers use pilot studies to test the research instrument to identify any areas that may require adjustments. Field

testing allows the subject matter experts to validate the study's components' research questions (Grove et al., 2009). My dissertation committee vetted the research questions for this study. The use of my dissertation committee nullified the need to conduct a pilot study.

I included member checking for the participants to validate my interpretation of the data for accuracy. The member checking process allows the participant to confirm the exactness of the researcher's translation of the information (Naidu & Prose, 2018; Thomas, 2017). Member checking is a way for each participant to ensure their viewpoint is stated and not diminished by the researcher (Birt et al., 2016). By employing member checking, the research data may be seen as reliable and give certainty that the researcher operated ethically in presenting the information (Harvey, 2015). I employed member checking so that the participants could validate my interpretation of the data and, if necessary, make corrections.

Data Organization Technique

For my study, the organization and management of data were crucial. A researcher must organize the data to gain details relevant to the study's questions (Messina, 2015) and to strengthen the data's quality (Hazen et al., 2014). Because qualitative research requires data collection from numerous sources, the data's organization is crucial to using it adequately (Yin, 2018). I implemented methods to organize and manage the data. I used NVivo software to input and organized the collected data. Cypress (2019) noted NVivo software to be used in qualitative studies to

organize and analyze collected data. Oliveira et al. (2016) discussed NVivo to assist the researcher by permitting better data organization, particularly with large volumes of information. Using NVivo software allowed me to manage, organize, and modify my data in one location. I used a journal to take notes during the participant interviews. Taking notes permits the researcher to notice those participating' nonverbal cues and lessens the possibility of missing any information relevant to the research (Wilson et al., 2016). Using a journal helped to document nonverbal cues and critical points that stemmed from the participant interviews.

I studied the data to develop codes, categorize them, and then organized them by themes that appeared. Williams and Moser (2019) posited the reviewing and organization of data allow a researcher to identify codes that permit the discovery of critical themes. I assigned a code to each participant for identification during the research process (P01 through P03). Protecting the participant's anonymity is crucial, so designating an identifying code will protect their privacy (Vogel et al., 2015). The digitally recorded and transcribed interviews also reflected the same participant identification number and allowed me to keep each participant's data separate and confidential. I stored all data on a password-protected personal computer and secure, safe with combination access only. Data from the study stored on computers should be password protected to maintain the participants' privacy (Surmiak, 2018). I will store the data for five years. After five years, I will shred all paper documents and erase all information stored on my personal computer and hard drive.

Data Analysis

The data analysis method for this qualitative case study was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a technique that could give rich, detailed reporting of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Scharp & Sanders, 2019). The process of thematic analysis, as indicated by Saunders et al. (2016), can aid a researcher in understanding sizeable amounts of data, incorporating data from various transcripts and notes, recognizing themes and patterns, and producing and substantiate conclusions. Employing thematic analysis allowed me to keep the data organized during the stages of review. Brodie et al. (2017) used thematic analysis in a qualitative case study and noted this technique to give an organized strategy for analyzing the data through distinct phases. The methods used by a researcher to analyze the data can establish trustworthiness with their audience and readers (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Silverman, 2017). By using an appropriate data analysis method, I conveyed trustworthiness to the findings of my research.

There are six phases associated with thematic analysis. I used the six-phase analysis technique of Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyze the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) discussed thematic analysis to occur through steps that include (a) familiarizing myself with the data, (b) generating the initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and lastly, (f) producing the report. Throughout each phase of thematic analysis:

1. I familiarized myself with the data for the first phase of analysis. I immersed myself in the data, reading through the information multiple times to look for

reappearing ideas and patterns. Reviewing the data aided me in the coding and detection of themes to understand the phenomena. Clark and Vealé (2018) and Cleland (2017) stated that researchers engaging in a qualitative approach must inundate themselves in the data, take notes, and identify patterns and themes that direct the analysis technique.

2. During the second phase, I developed codes. I developed the codes by reviewing the entire data set and distinguishing any compelling characteristics of the evidence. Nowell et al. (2017) noted that coding permits the researcher to streamline and concentrate on the data's detailed attributes. Qualitative researchers often use data analysis software to code, categorize, and examine information (Cypress, 2019). I used NVivo software to organize the data to help discover themes and codes to understand the phenomena. While some qualitative data investigations still use manual coding, qualitative researchers are more inclined to use NVivo software for data organization and analysis (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Cypress, 2019; Woods et al., 2016).
3. Braun and Clarke noted the third phase to include searching for themes. I took the initial coding of data and constructed possible themes. Percy et al. (2015) discussed this stage of analysis to support the researcher to look for overarching themes from the coded data. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) asserted that themes are patterns that capture something important about the information related to the research question. I assembled the coded data and arranged it into primary themes

and sub-themes. This process created themes that conveyed particulars about the research questions.

4. The fourth phase of analysis was to review the themes. I reviewed and refined the themes and sub-themes that I established in step three. During this phase, a researcher decides if themes precisely reflect the data and could lead to themes not being used in the research because of insufficient or excessive data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). I reviewed the themes to determine which ones provided answers to the research question. At the end of this process, I had a grouping of themes and sub-themes that summarized the data.
5. The fifth phase of analysis was to define and name themes. I defined and gave names to each theme during this phase. Braun and Clarke (2006) noted a researcher at this phase to figure out the data each theme is capturing and each theme's specifics. Nowell et al. (2017) suggested that researchers should conduct and compose a comprehensive analysis of each theme and recognize the story that each theme tells. I studied each theme and sub-theme to distinguish what each one meant relating to the research questions. I decided how each theme worked in the study.
6. The last phase is to produce the report. I wrote a report on the findings. Nowell et al. (2017) expressed that writing the report happens after the researcher has entirely determined the themes and is prepared to start the concluding analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that the summary should be concise, reasonable,

coherent, and nonrepetitive, giving a compelling account of the information across themes. After the themes were established and analyzed thoroughly, I composed a comprehensive analysis of the findings.

In qualitative studies, data collection from multiple sources is essential. For case studies, Yin (2018) noted various evidence sources to be fundamental in compiling data. Researchers can attain triangulation when information is gathered from multiple sources throughout the data collection process to establish the validity of analysis and results (Abdalla et al., 2018; Saunders et al., 2016; Yin, 2018). Researchers of qualitative studies can integrate several data collection sources to include interviews, documents, and member checking (Johnson & O'Hara et al., 2017). According to Abdalla et al. (2018), the four kinds of triangulation include (a) data triangulation, (b) theoretical triangulation, (c) researcher triangulation, and (d) methodological triangulation. The triangulation of data was necessary for enhancing my research.

I used methodological triangulation to gain a better understanding of the collected data. Methodological triangulation requires the researcher to employ several techniques to collect data, such as interviews and observation (Abdalla et al., 2018; Joslin & Müller, 2016). Using various methods allows information to be compared and divulge different details of the phenomenon giving a complete view (Johnson & O'Hara et al., 2017; Joslin & Müller, 2016). As noted by Fusch et al. (2018) and Marshall and Rossman (2016), methodological triangulation is favorable in contributing to enhanced validity, diversified data, and greater comprehension of the circumstance. To attain

methodological triangulation, I used semistructured interviews and physically reviewed company documentation that included a mentoring guide, benefits to mentoring, and mentee core assessments for analysis.

Reliability and Validity

Researchers can establish reliability and validity by producing results that are trustworthy and precise. Reliability and validity are essential in analyzing any tools used for quality research (Mohajan, 2017). To strengthen reliability and validity in qualitative research, a researcher should use an assortment of methods to collect data to gain accurate information (Mohajan, 2017). To enhance reliability and validity, I used multiple approaches to collect data. Using numerous data collection methods can help a qualitative researcher to incorporate practices like member checking and triangulation (Yeong et al., 2018). I employed multiple data collection methods, member checking, and triangulation in my study to establish reliability and validity.

Reliability

Researchers that put precise practices in place could establish reliability in their studies. A researcher can establish reliability by ensuring the research process is valid and precisely documented (Connelly, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I used an interview protocol for uniformity with each participant interview. Yeong et al. (2018) noted that a researcher uses an interview protocol to provide consistency throughout the interview process to gain information that would give understanding to the phenomenon. I conducted member checking with each participant. Through member checking, the

participants can review the researcher's interpretation of the data for accuracy (Birt et al., 2016; Iivari, 2018), which could endorse the information's reliability (Saunders et al., 2016). I applied methodological triangulation by digitally recording the interview, taking notes, and reviewing company documents. Using methodological triangulation can strengthen and enhance the research's dependability (Fusch et al., 2018). Using several data collection methods, a researcher can get a more detailed understanding by using methodological triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I used appropriate data collection procedures throughout my study to establish reliability.

Validity

The validation of research is essential. Establishing validity in qualitative research will convey information credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Connelly, 2016). Qualitative studies are viewed as trustworthy when researchers provide protocols in collecting and interpreting the data to establish the merit of a study (Connelly, 2016). A researcher can ensure credibility by exemplifying commitment, monitoring, and creating audit trails (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Using multiple sources of evidence was an essential tool in my data collection process. Marshall and Rossman (2016) and Yin (2018) proposed that the use of numerous sources would bring credibility to your research. Triangulation requires using multiple data sources and collection methods to establish validity and refine the study (Saunders et al., 2016). A researcher can use triangulation to gather data from different sources that likewise can substantiate a similar finding (Yin, 2018). By allowing the participants to check my interpretation of the data,

my research is more credible. Marshall and Rossman (2016) posited member checking as a way to bring credibility to your work. I employed triangulation and member checking as ways to establish the credibility of my research.

Researchers can use the results of a study to decide the transferability of the research. The transferability of findings makes sure that the data applies to other environments and persons (Hadi & Jose Closs, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). For a researcher, the study results should hold validity to people outside of the research (Connelly, 2016). To increase the transferability of findings in this study, I used triangulation. Marshall and Rossman (2016) discussed triangulation as a method to strengthen a study's transferability. Additionally, research that incorporates various cases, participants, and several methods to gathering data may corroborate the research effectiveness in other environments (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I conducted a multiple case study with various participants and data sources, so this study's results could be transferable to other retail managers desiring to enhance employee engagement.

Creating confirmability is essential to qualitative research. To guarantee confirmability, a researcher must provide evidence that depicts the participants' responses, excluding any researcher bias and perspective (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Marshall and Rossman (2016) noted creating an audit trail to be vital in collecting information. I substantiated this study's results by reporting each step in the compilation, organization, and data analysis. By providing a comprehensive account of the process, and developing an audit trail, establishing confirmability was possible.

Researchers can bring validity to their studies by reaching data saturation. Fusch and Ness (2015) pointed out the importance of reaching data saturation, as neglecting to do so can negatively affect the research's validity. Reaching data saturation means no new patterns are surfacing, and there is enough data to duplicate a study, and when no additional coding is possible (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I collected data until I saw replication in the information, and no new data or themes surfaced.

Transition and Summary

This qualitative study intended to explore mentoring strategies that retail industry leaders use to enhance employee engagement. Section 2 incorporated the motivation behind this doctoral investigation, my job as the researcher, participation requirements, the research method and design, data collection and analysis procedures, and strategies to distinguish reliability and validity. Section 3 incorporates the research findings, applications for this examination, social change implications, and suggestions for additional research and conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the mentoring strategies that retail industry leaders use to enhance employee engagement. Employee engagement has proven to be a significant problem in the workplace, leaving managers to deal with challenges that affect an organization's success (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). With workplace disengagement at 70% (Rastogi et al., 2018), leaders have found mentoring can help build relationships (Jyoti & Sharma, 2017) and improve employee engagement (Grindrod, 2016; Stewart & Harrison, 2016). Therefore, retail industry leaders' mentoring strategies are important to increasing employee engagement in organizations.

In this study, data were collected from three leaders from two retail organizations located in the state of Virginia. P01 and P02 represent the first retail organization, and P03 is from the second retail organization. The findings suggest that retail industry leaders seeking to enhance employee engagement should implement (a) mentoring practices, (b) engagement techniques, and (c) organizational leadership roles. Included in Section 3 is a more comprehensive presentation of the findings, application to professional practice, and social change implications. Also discussed are recommendations for further action and further research, and this section ends with my reflections and conclusion.

Presentation of the Findings

This study's primary research question was: What are the mentoring strategies retail industry leaders use to enhance employee engagement? To answer the research question, I conducted semistructured interviews via Zoom with three retail industry leaders. The leaders responded to open-ended questions, explaining how they implement mentoring strategies to increase employee engagement. I reviewed company documentation the leaders provided, which included (a) benefits of mentoring, (b) mentoring guide, (c) company newsletter, and (d) mentee core assessment. I used the six-phase analysis technique of Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyze and recognize themes and patterns in my data. I used NVivo software for data organization and analysis. I identified three primary themes from the data collected from the three retail industry leaders through my analysis: (a) mentoring practices, (b) engagement techniques, and (c) organizational leadership roles.

Theme 1: Mentoring Practices

The first theme that emerged from the data was mentoring practices. Each participant shared strategies they have used when mentoring their employees to increase engagement. Based on my analysis of the data, two subthemes became evident concerning practices to increase employee engagement: emotional support and mentoring approaches. The findings of the theme seem to answer the research question.

Emotional Support

Leaders who show a firm stance toward emotional support increase an employee's growth and engagement to meet organizational goals. Study participants described the different ways they provide emotional support to their employees: building them up, encouragement, inspiration, and having teaching and guiding moments. P01 shared, "We should build people in a way that not only contributes to the company but to themselves personally." Additionally, P03 shared, "Through my encouragement, I hope to have my team keep an open mind while instilling fearlessness in exploring the unknown, all while knowing I am there to support them and go to bat for them." P02 discussed how teaching and guiding moments could give mentees an understanding of organizational processes and the chance to do things themselves. P02 also shared a document on mentoring benefits, which outlined emotional support, including the mentor being an emotional anchor to the mentee. When mentors share skills and knowledge, the mentee can combine them into their way of thinking and practice. P02 additionally shared that through inspiration, mentees may achieve something they did not think was possible, and that shows the long-term gains.

Furthermore, P02 and P03 discussed encouragement and patience to build up employees and keep them engaged. P03 noted encouraging the team has been a successful technique for increasing engagement. P03 shared, "I encourage my team to explore the unknown, to think outside the box. Through encouragement, I have helped establish a lot of confidence in my team's abilities." While building confidence is

essential, P03 discussed patience as a driver in building the team's confidence in pursuing organizational goals. P03 shared that through confidence building, the team becomes engaged and collaborates on business decisions. An organizational newsletter shared by P03 showed the employees ranking the organization as Number 1 because of their dedication to collaboration, innovation, and employee wellness. P02 shared a mentoring guide document that expressed a mentor's role to help build self-confidence, be a source of encouragement, and help a mentee identify with the organizational environment.

Mentoring Approaches

Through successful mentoring approaches, the mentor and mentee develop a connection. The mentoring approach may be different for each person. P03 discussed the need to get to know your team and likewise let them get to know you. Becoming familiar with the team can help the leader when deciding what mentoring process to use. P03 shared, "It is the knowledge of a growing and learning process for both sides." Also, P01 shared, "It depends on the person who I am engaging and how I chose to mentor them based on their response. The strategies used by leaders will be different for each person because people are different and will respond differently." P01 shared a document used to assess each mentee regarding how they view themselves in recognizing their strengths and opportunities for improvement in their work duties. Organizations that create assessments for employees allow them to develop a mentoring plan specific to the individual.

Leaders can approach mentoring through programs that are formal or informal. The mentoring guide document shared by P02 discussed creating informal mentoring approaches that pair a mentor and mentee to promote the nurturing, coaching, and growth of employees. P02 spoke about mentoring through an approach called the “three Cs”:

The three Cs stand for leadership being a consultant, counselor, and cheerleader all at the same time. Sometimes we must talk the employee through the situation, counsel them through problems to overcome obstacles, or cheer them on when they are doing well. Choosing the proper role without overstepping boundaries will help to develop them.

P02 noted that when someone new initially joins the team, they receive one-on-one mentoring. After the initial pairing with senior leadership, the mentee is paired with the best leaders available, such as high-level associates and department supervisors. P02 shared that mentoring helps all parties meet their highest potential and career goals when leaders lead by example.

Mentoring across teams provides information on the daily changes of the organization. P01 discussed mentoring employees from other teams to create collaboration throughout the organization:

When you mentor across teams, you see how things interact daily within the company and better understand how the organization’s processes work together. It creates excellent collaboration and provides the mentor and mentee with seeing things differently than they might have before. Mentoring across teams opens the

door for better collaboration and communication across teams, thereby improving engagement.

The knowledge of company culture is necessary for both leaders and employees. P02 noted the importance of displaying the company culture to employees. According to P02, when you mentor, you are not limited to just teaching and coaching; you display the organization's culture. A document shared by P02 noted understanding the business culture to help the mentee in how they approach making decisions and solving problems. A leader displaying the traits and features of the organization's culture can give the mentee an understanding of what is acceptable and accelerate success for the mentee to apply their learnings.

Theme 2: Engagement Techniques

The second theme that emerged from the data was engagement techniques. Each participant shared techniques they have used to engage employees. Based on my analysis of the data, three subthemes became apparent regarding engagement techniques: employee development, team-building, and engagement assessments. The findings of the theme seem to answer the research question.

Employee Development

The development of employees is crucial to improving engagement in the workplace. All three participants expressed the importance of employee development to keep employees engaged. P01 talked about holding people accountable and using diversity inclusion training that requires participation and engagement. P02 divulged that

taking the extra time to show employees how to do something makes for excellent teaching moments. P03 discussed work as a continuous process, and providing direction to keep each team member moving forward is essential.

While each approach is different, looking for moments that can develop the employee would notably affect engagement. P01 shared that implementing like strategies from other departments provided training that crossed over all areas. P02 discussed having mandatory 6-week training for employees and stated that the mentoring aspect continues as long as they are with the company. Additionally, P02 discussed training that allows employees to be the manager to observe and take notes. This training moment allows employees to put themselves in the manager's position and report back on whether they would have done things differently and how. P02 shared, "I get satisfaction from sharing expertise and helping people make wise decisions from just guiding and coaching people. The goal is to give the mentee the best information and all the tools they need to do the job."

Team Building

Leaders who manage teams must come up with ways to keep everyone engaged. P01 and P03 discussed how Covid-19 has changed how you can engage with your associates and how important it is to engage and make them feel a part of the team. One activity that P01 shared is a once-a-week virtual coffee talk that gets everyone together to engage and build team camaraderie. P01 shared, "Team-building activities are essential to keep everyone engaged." P01 also shared how working outside of your team can create

collaboration between teams, increasing engagement outside your team and department. Also, P03 discussed the importance of instilling confidence in your team to think outside the box. P03 articulated, “For anyone to grow, they have to be creative and willing to test new things, so instilling confidence is what has been effective in building up my team.” P01 discussed that when senior managers participate in the company activities, others usually get on board. Having required activities and some that are fun can provide you with having team participation. P02 addressed when building your team; management must understand the role that they play with the associate. P02 shared, “Knowing which role to play as a leader will help in building up your team. Whether you are coaching or offering support, the leader should find ways to build confidence, encouragement, and support innovative thinking.”

Engagement Assessments

All three participants support assessments as a tool to gather feedback and develop plans to improve engagement. P01 shared that they gauge the needs of the employees through assessments. P02 discussed engagement surveys to assess the employee’s well-being. P02 shared how the survey questions address how satisfied employees are with leadership and if they feel that management goals line up with company goals. These surveys also help to address any challenges that may arise. A newsletter shared by P03 disclosed how the employee feedback from an objective survey that scores them on work environment and overall job satisfaction helps them support and keep their employees engaged. P03 discussed how the employee’s well-being is essential,

and the assessment helps develop strategies to ensure each employee's wellness and engagement.

Theme 3: Organizational Leadership Roles

The third theme that emerged from the data was organizational leadership roles. The theme of organizational leadership roles emerged from discussing a leader's role in implementing engagement strategies. The thorough analysis of participant responses and company documents recognized the leader's role as an effective retail industry strategy. The subtheme that became evident during analysis is leadership communication and commitment. The findings of the theme seem to answer the research question.

Leadership Communication and Commitment

Leaders who are open to communicating initiate engagement with employees. P01 and P02 discussed leadership's role to recognize the need to mentor and speak more about it. P01 shared, "Leadership has said this is something that we need, and we realize that our employees want, and have taken initiatives internally to speak more and implement from a leadership standpoint." P02 shared, "Leaders must first recognize the need for mentorship. We communicate by sharing best practices through conference calls, in-person conferences, and networking." P01, P02, and P03 discussed communication on company-wide initiatives as a strategy in their organizations. P01 talked about how company-wide initiatives get more people involved. P01 shared, "Company-wide initiatives have shown to produce higher engagement levels because there are more eyes on them. You will see it on our internal interfaces and websites." P01

also discussed creating special mentorship programs for select groups, which has given higher participation because of the desire to be a part of them. P02 and P03 communicated when the direction comes from the top-down, plans get developed, and leaders are committed to implementing them. Additionally, P03 shared the importance of getting all leaders on board which makes the implementation process smoother.

P02 and P03 discussed the nature of commitment with leaders in the organization. P02 shared, “The leaders involved in mentoring display the best qualities possible.” The mentoring guide document shared by P02 detailed that mentors should be selected based on a genuine desire to help the mentee grow and be committed to the time it will take to do so. P03 disclosed how senior managers approach commitment. P03 shared, “The higher-ups from the executive team down are very nurturing and positive with employees.” A newsletter shared by P03 shows this to be a great way to increase engagement as the leader’s commitment to nurturing and positivity has impacted their employees to stay, on average, 14 years.

Relevance to the Literature

My analysis of the data emerged three themes to answer the research question: What are the mentoring strategies that retail industry leaders use to enhance employee engagement? The themes included mentoring practices, engagement techniques, and organizational leadership roles. The retail industry leaders’ responses indicated that they used these strategies to enhance engagement in their organizations. As it pertains to the literature, Welsh and Dixon (2016) discussed that when leaders develop strategies that

include mentoring, organizations see their employees evolve. Organizations that decide on strategies best suited for them to increase engagement could see better organizational outcomes.

Mentoring practices are the first theme to emerged from data analysis. The participants revealed emotional support and mentoring approaches as practices to increase employee engagement. As it pertains to the literature, leaders' choices have a notable effect on followers (Paolucci et al., 2018). Employees who feel they have a leader's support show better engagement (Krishnaveni & Monica, 2016). The positive effects of mentoring improve the growth of an employee. Ghosh et al. (2019) discussed how mentoring helps the mentee discover their capabilities and growth areas. When mentored, the mentee gains confidence and develops the skills to do their jobs (Scerri et al., 2020). Mentoring benefits the mentee and the mentor. The literature disclosed mentoring relationships to help both the mentor and mentee increase knowledge, skillfulness, proficiency and perceived organizational support (Bear, 2018). Based on the study results, leaders who develop mentoring practices can increase employee engagement in the organization.

Engagement techniques are the second theme to emerge from data analysis. As it pertains to the literature, Krishnaveni and Monica (2016) shared that when organizational leaders want to improve engagement, they should establish strategies around components that cause employees to become engaged. The participants disclosed employee development, team building, and engagement assessments to be essential techniques to

increase engagement. Organizational leaders who emphasize employee development enhance employee engagement (Lu et al., 2016). These findings are consistent with Milhem et al. (2019) that connected an employee's engagement to job development.

Leaders who take steps towards the development of their employees will see levels of engagement rise. Retail industry leaders can improve employee engagement when they create environments that support building up their teams. This statement aligns with Matthews et al. (2018), who discussed how leaders creating a team environment could increase employee engagement. When employees are engaged, it positively impacts the organization through high team spirit, collaboration, and higher dedication levels (Johnson & Park et al., 2018). Based on the study results, leaders who develop engagement techniques can increase employee engagement in the organization.

Organizational leadership roles are the third theme to emerged from data analysis. As it pertains to the literature, management and company practices directly correlate to engagement (Saks, 2019). Engaged employees are more involved and committed to achieving company goals (Menon & Priyadarshini, 2018). The participants disclosed leadership communication and commitment to be vital to enhancing employee engagement. These findings are consistent with Jiang and Luo (2018), who discussed effective and open communication by leaders to improve employee engagement. When leaders communicate, they create an environment of transparency that improves engagement throughout the organization. Internal communication by leaders promotes engagement by strengthening the relationship between the leader and employee (Tkalac

Verčič & Pološki Vokić, 2017). Leadership commitment is crucial to an organization getting the commitment and engagement of employees. A leader's commitment displays support of the organization (Ladyshevsky & Taplin, 2018). Based on the study's results, leaders who effectively communicate and show commitment can increase employee engagement.

Relevance to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the Transformational Leadership Theory. I used the transformational leadership theory to understand strategies retail industry leaders use to enhance employee engagement. Burns (1978) introduced the transformational leadership theory to describe how leaders influence their followers to work together and meet organizational goals. Huang and Weng et al. (2016) discussed how idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, all components of transformational leadership, strengthen mentoring characteristics. When leaders engage in the mentoring process, they display transformational leader's attributes (Mahmood et al., 2019). Buil et al. (2019) affirmed that positive effects on engagement include the employee's development and mental stimulation. P01 asserted that leaders must develop employees to better themselves and the organization, while P02 posited that leaders support the employee to meet personal and professional goals through teaching and coaching. P03 maintained that leaders who encourage their teams could achieve company goals. The participants' responses aligned with Burns's transformational leadership theory that a leader's behavior can motivate

followers to work together and, through their development and mental stimulation, engagement could rise.

The themes identified in the study were mentoring practices, engagement techniques, and organizational leadership roles, which show a link to the conceptual framework of transformational leadership. Burns (1978) stated that transformational leaders serve as role models and are a critical component of the mentoring relationship. The sub-themes that emerged showing most vital to increase engagement were emotional support, employee development, and communication. These sub-themes tie directly to the behavioral attributes of a transformational leader.

A leader's behaviors of inspirational motivation and individualized consideration emotionally support the employee. The leader's inspirational motivation enhances confidence and could cause engagement to increase (Salas-Vallina & Fernandez, 2017). Bass (1985) noted the leader's individualized consideration to develop the employee and has the most significant mentoring connection. Leaders who exhibit behaviors of intellectual stimulation develop the employee. The leader's intellectual stimulation prompts the employee to think outside the box and tackle issues (Brown et al., 2019). Leaders displaying intellectual stimulation behavior could see engagement enhanced in the organization (Change, 2019). Communication is essential to achieving organizational goals. Leaders who communicate the organization's vision and values display characteristics of idealized influence (Langat et al., 2019). The leader's idealized influence behavior helps employees identify with the leader and improve engagement

(Change, 2019). Therefore, mentoring practices, engagement techniques, and organizational leadership roles are all strategies that retail industry leaders can use to enhance employee engagement.

Effective Business Practices

The findings appear to show that mentoring strategies are an effective business practice to enhance employee engagement. Disengagement is costly to organizations and impacts the employee's efficiency (Chawla, 2019). Engaged employees have higher retention, job satisfaction, and commitment (Johnson & Park et al., 2018; Orgambídez & Almeida, 2020). According to Matthews et al. (2018) and Milhem et al. (2019), high employee engagement results from effective employee development, building teams, and management support, which is related to all three themes in the study. Therefore, the alignment of mentoring practices, engagement techniques, and leader behaviors appear to show a direct alignment with Matthews et al. and Milhem et al.

Document Analysis

I reviewed the participants' documents, including a mentoring guide, mentoring benefits, company newsletter, and mentee core assessment. The documents provided by the participants added support and credibility to their narrative in answering the research question. Leaders who use assessments can create development plans that address the strengths and weaknesses of a mentee. Leaders who use mentoring documents will have greater clarity on their role and the steps to take in the mentoring process. The use of the company newsletter document supported the conclusion that leadership involvement is

vital to increase engagement. The participants' documents revealed the inner workings of the policies and procedures relating to mentoring practices, engagement techniques, and leadership roles.

Triangulation of Data Sources

I employed methodological triangulation to understand better mentoring strategies retail industry leaders used to enhance employee engagement. Abdalla et al. (2018) recognized that researchers use methodological triangulation when using multiple data collection techniques. I conducted semistructured interviews via Zoom. I transcribed and summarized the data and used member checking to ensure my interpretation of the data was correct. I reviewed company documentation provided by the retail industry leaders to include benefits of mentoring, mentoring guide, company newsletter, and mentee core assessment. Johnson and O'Hara et al. (2017) posited that methodological triangulation allows the collected data to be compared and can disclose individual details about the phenomenon. I used methodological triangulation to synthesize and analyze the data and combine the collected information to substantiate my research question.

Applications to Professional Practice

Employee engagement is an ongoing issue for organizations. Unless leaders implement strategies to keep employees engaged, organizational performance and bottom line profits could lower (Babakus et al., 2017). Mentoring of employees could benefit leaders by increasing engagement. Leaders who mentor enhance employee growth, performance, and engagement (Ghosh et al., 2019; Jyoti & Sharma, 2017). This study's

findings are relevant to retail industry leaders who want to develop and execute mentoring strategies to enhance their organizations' engagement.

Employee engagement is essential for leaders who want to reach their business objectives. The results of the study denote that to increase employee engagement, retail industry leaders should implement (a) mentoring practices, (b) engagement techniques, and (c) organizational leadership roles. Leaders who apply the study's results could improve employee engagement throughout the organization. Engaged employees stay with the organization longer and have greater job satisfaction (Orgambídez & Almeida, 2020). Retail leaders may use this study's results to enhance mentoring strategies that would provide support, training, and development to employees, notably affecting engagement.

Implications for Social Change

Stable organizations may have more resources available to improve society's welfare by supplying better merchandise and services. The supply of higher quality merchandise and services could provide citizens with an improved living standard (Spodarczyk, 2019). When organizations are profitable, leaders can benefit communities through grants and scholarships to improve educational opportunities. Organizational leaders who contribute to educational purposes increase education quality (Ngiik-Hoon Loh, & Siti Shukhaila Bt Shaharuddin, 2019). Increased employment opportunities may strengthen communities' economic stability (Syapsan, 2019). Leaders may consider the strategies helpful to offer more training programs to local communities, such as

internships and workshops for adults and children. Retail industry leaders may use this study's results to improve organizational profitability, allowing them to give to the community through better goods and services, employment, and educational opportunities.

Recommendations for Action

Retail industry leaders who seek to enhance employee engagement through mentoring may find the study's results valuable. Retail industry leaders may additionally obtain understanding into mentoring strategies that can increase the engagement of their employees. To increase employee engagement, I suggest that retail industry leaders develop mentoring strategies that incorporate (a) mentoring practices, (b) engagement techniques, and (c) organizational leadership roles. The participants in the study noted these strategies to be vital to increasing employee engagement. As a result, including these strategies in the mentoring process can help retail industry leaders enhance their organizations' engagement.

My first recommendation is for leaders to develop mentoring practices. Two primary practices that emerged from the research were emotional support and mentoring approaches. Leaders who provide emotional support would allow the employee to grow and engage. Iqbal et al. (2017) noted support through mentoring to provide emotional support and help employees grow and develop. The correct mentoring approach, such as one-on-one mentoring, would develop a connection between the mentor and mentee, boosting employee engagement.

My second recommendation is for leaders to develop engagement techniques. Engagement techniques should develop the employee, build up teams, and incorporate using assessments. Matthews et al. (2018) discussed teambuilding to be essential to increase engagement. The use of assessments would help the leader tailor strategies specific to employees for development and teambuilding. A leader's development of engagement techniques should be a continual process.

My third recommendation is to define organizational leadership roles in the mentoring process. When a leader openly communicates about mentoring and creates initiatives that span across the organization, engagement could increase. Tkalac Verčič and Pološki Vokić (2017) acknowledged communication to impact employee engagement positively. Additionally, leaders who agree to mentor employees should be committed to the tasks to have the best outcomes. The mentoring process could improve engagement when the leader's role is clearly defined.

Future researchers might find the study beneficial to gain knowledge on mentoring strategies to enhance employee engagement. Retail industry leaders could receive the results of the study through conferences, training, or workshops. Other student researchers and scholars may access the study in the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database.

Recommendations for Further Research

Retail industry leaders struggle with keeping employees engaged in the organization due to the lack and implementation of mentoring strategies. The literature

specified that retail industry leaders experience higher disengagement levels because of a lack of mentoring plans in place for employees. I performed a multiple case study to address and determine what mentoring strategies retail industry leaders used to enhance their employees' engagement. The following are recommendations for further research into understanding mentoring strategies that retail industry leaders may use to enhance employee engagement in their organizations.

My decision to use only retail leaders was a limitation of this study because of the inability to generalize results to other industries. Future researchers could incorporate other industries' leaders to gain a different perspective on mentoring strategies to increase engagement. The expansion of research to a broader range of organizations can help generalize the result findings (Jena et al., 2018). The organizational size was also a limitation. Larger organizations could have more established practices to understand mentoring strategies better to increase engagement. The interviews conducted were in two organizations. Future researchers might consider involving more leaders in a multiple case study to gather more knowledge on mentoring strategies implemented to increase engagement. My sample size was three retail industry leaders. Kaur (2018) noted that larger sample sizes contribute to a study significantly. Future researchers should use a larger sample size to produce more vigorous details and gain greater comprehension from a broader group of participants. Also, I chose to conduct my research in Virginia. Future researchers looking to explore mentoring strategies used by retail industry leaders to

enhance employee engagement could conduct their research in other geographical regions.

Reflections

As I reflect upon my doctoral journey with Walden University, I am grateful for the increased knowledge and improvement in my critical thinking and writing skills. During this period, I learned how to manage my time wisely to meet my goals. When the process became overwhelming, my doctoral committee, peers, and family played a vital role in working through the frustration by supporting me in the process. I found it very helpful to do annotated bibliographies, which made writing my literature review more efficient. The collaborative learning environment through the sharing of information helped me to become a better researcher and writer.

My doctoral research has strengthened my comprehension of mentoring strategies that retail industry leaders used to enhance employee engagement. When thinking about my doctoral journey, I did not permit my 30 years of retail experience to cloud my judgment in the process of data collection and analysis. On the other hand, I was led by how the data evolved during the analysis procedure. The exploration of mentoring strategies to enhance employee engagement in the retail industry has given me a greater awareness of leaders' processes to develop and execute them. My doctoral study has permitted me to collect data and present findings that retail industry leaders may find beneficial in enhancing employee engagement in their organizations.

Conclusion

Finding ways to increase engagement has impacted organizations. Previous research indicated employee engagement to be problematic in workplace environments. To increase engagement, retail industry leaders must address the issues by implementing mentoring strategies. The findings indicated that retail industry leaders wishing to better employee engagement in the organization should employ (a) mentoring practices, (b) engagement techniques, and (c) organizational leadership roles. Retail Leaders who develop and implement mentoring strategies could position the organization to have better engagement and organizational success outcomes.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Title: Mentoring strategies to enhance employee engagement

The meeting will start with a welcome and introduction.

A consent form would have been given in advance to participants requesting an e-mail back, giving the authorization to participate in the research.

Each participant will receive a thank you for playing a part in the study.

Each participant will receive information on the member checking process of the transcription and interpretation of data. I will schedule follow-up times for the interview participant to review to ensure the data's reliability and validity.

I will turn on the audio recorder and notate the interview's date, time, and location.

I will code the participants' distinguishable data by listing 'P01' and so forth on the audio recording and consent form, at which time the interview will start.

Time will be given to each participant to thoroughly answer the questions in detail, including the follow-up questions and any additional information they want to supply. The interview questions are as follows:

- What mentoring strategies do you use to keep employees engaged?
- What relevant factors of your strategies did you find were most effective to increase employee's engagement?
- What critical challenges did you encounter when implementing your strategies to keep employees engaged?

- How did your organization address the key challenges to implementing its strategies to keep employees engaged?
- How did you work with other leaders in the organization to develop and execute your mentoring strategies to keep employees engaged?
- What role does leadership play in the execution of mentoring strategies to keep employees engaged?
- What additional information would you like to provide regarding mentoring strategies used to enhance employee engagement?

At the end of the meeting, I will thank each participant for their time and interest in the study.