2020

Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies That Engage Employees and Increase Productivity.

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Alvin Sidney Moton Jr.

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2021

Abstract

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M.B.A., American InterContinental University, 2011

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Low employee engagement can negatively impact productivity for small fast-food restaurants in the United States. Small fast-food restaurant managers who do not engage employees experience decreased employee productivity. Grounded in Hofstede's cross-cultural dimensions theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies managers of small fast-food restaurants managers use to improve employee engagement. Participants were four small fast-food restaurants manager within the southern region of the United States who used cross-cultural strategies to successfully engage employees. Data were collected through semistructured interviews and internal company documents and were analyzed using thematic analysis. Four themes emerged: (a) developing relationships, (b) empathy, (c) mindfulness and respect for others, and (d) training and communicating. A key recommendation is for managers to implement cross-cultural communication training for employees. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to enhance economic growth that supports family well–being in local communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate my overall research to YHVH because God is everything, my every thought, and every idea in life. I dedicate this Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) to my beloved late grandparents, Rev. Elijah and Melinda Moton, who instilled the spirit of leadership and love in me for all humankind. I dedicate this study to my mother and father, Aurelia, and Alvin Sidney Moton, Sr. Moreover, I dedicate this study to all my children: Lekeisha, Cornelius, Destin, and Crystal. Each child contributed in a unique way to encourage me through the program processes. As a father, I always wanted my children to have a living example of grittiness or the vision of never giving up under any circumstance. To my siblings Michael Jerome Moton and Jatyra Moton-Jones, how you both encouraged me and dared me not to settle for anything less than excellence and to make sure I reach all my dreams and desires. Dr. Lisa Leveque, I dedicate my outcome of this research study to you because I remember the day of our CU Colloquium; I ended my Doc process, and you inspired me to continue. Your words and spirit played a crucial role in my restart and completion (Thank you and your Mickey Mouse ears).

Moreover, I want to dedicate my research study to Uncle Larry Moton, who always believed and trusted that I could achieve every one of my dreams and desires. Lastly, (drum roll please), I want to dedicate this research to my one and only wife and my queen, Jacqueline Lewis–Moton, who has sacrificed more than life personally and professionally to avail me the opportunity to enhance and further my education. Jacqueline, God bless your soul, my little lady.

Acknowledgments

Professor Michael Faraday prayed, "Lord, help me to think only of others to be of use to mankind. Help me be part of the great circle that is your work and love, Lord; I am your servant." Albert Einstein stated that "Anyone who becomes seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that there is a spirit manifest in the laws of the universe, a spirit vastly superior to that of man."

Jeremiah 29:11 stated, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." I want to acknowledge those who had a helpful hand and played an intricate role in my success throughout this DBA journey. To my dissertation committee members: Dr. Rollis Erickson (Chair), Dr. Janie Hall (Second Chair), and Dr. Gwendolyn Dooley (URR). Thank you all for your keen and enthusiastic support and feedback. I like to especially thank Dr. Rol for his encouragement and concern in completing this DBA program (my last Chair).

I want to acknowledge a few important people who poured into my life during this process and are Adrienne Arceneaux, Dr. Kola Sonaike, Dr. Williams, Larry and Bonnell Seals, Doc Edwards, Dr. Gian Andrea Manzoni (A dear classmate), Sherale Bell, Shalondra Moore, Lilly Larry, Evelyn Rose Williams, Dickson K. Molulon, Sherri Williams, Annie and Earl Fletcher-Williams, Joseph Walker, Fredrick Benton, Mattie Moton-Mitchell, Joel (Joe) F. Love, Dr. Yusuf Uthman Khalil, Glenn E. Spellings, Clarissa Rosano, Sherri Williams, Old Forest Community and St. Peter Baptist Church (Oakdale, La), Mt. Ararat Baptist Church, Dr. Guy E. White, and Dr. Larry Parker.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

A business or restaurant manager responds to employee engagement; the successful implementation of cross-culture communication strategies could become the means to improving employee engagement and increasing productivity. Cross-culture communication is a prerequisite for complex cultural challenges impacting relationships, processes, procedurals, and results (Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2019). Managers do not always know the need for cross-cultural communication strategies. Small fast-food restaurants sometimes fail because managers lack cultural communication strategies to engage employees and increase productivity. This study aimed was to explore cross-cultural communication strategies that some small fast-food restaurants use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity.

This section includes topic–areas such as the background of the problem, problem statement including the specific business problem, cross-cultural communication strategies used by small fast-food restaurant managers, the research question, and the interview questions. Moreover, this section of the study emphasizes the business' contribution, the social impact of this qualitative multiple case study, and critical analysis and synthesis of the professional and academic literature related to the research problem.

Background of the Problem

Businesses in the United States that employ cross-cultural communication strategies significantly impact enhanced employee performance and see a positive effect on the businesses' financial bottom line (Kutz, 2012). According to Walden et al. (2017), managers trained with proper cross-cultural communication strategies can create an environment with fewer cross-cultural communication barriers.

Cross-cultural communication strategies stand in sharp contrast to the globalized world and the fast-food industry (Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2019). Managers of fast-food restaurants who execute cross-cultural communication strategies expect to create social and cultural communication and fewer mistakes during an exchange or oral communication (Kosareva et al., 2019). According to Kosareva et al. (2019), 60% of employees confirm that employee manuals have inadequate information about cultures and social communication standards. There are numerous reasons for the low levels of employee engagement in the United States. Gabel-Shemueli et al. recommended that addressing fast-food restaurant managers' strategies to conduct successful cross-cultural communication may help develop ways to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. Business managers in the United States who employ cross-cultural communication strategies could significantly impact and enjoy enhanced employee performance and see a positive effect on the businesses' financial bottom line (Kutz, 2012). According to Walden et al. (2017), professionally training managers in cross-cultural communication strategies could lead to an environment with fewer cross-cultural communication barriers. For example, communication can be interdisciplinary in that communication can be a message, a culture, and a different context of a conversation.

Problem Statement

The inability among managers in U.S. organizations to form a working connection with their employees through cross□cultural communication strategies is prevalent (Walden et al., 2017, pp. 73–74). In 2017, a lack of employee engagement and managers performing unprofessionally with inefficient cross-cultural communication strategies resulted in an estimated loss of $450 billion (Ciulla, 2017; Mumford & Higgs, 2020; Rastogi et al., 2018, p. 63). The general business problem is that small, fast-food restaurants with ineffective cross-cultural communication strategies have decreased employee engagement and lowered productivity. The specific problem is that some small fast-food restaurant managers lack cross-cultural communication strategies to engage employees and increase productivity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore cross-cultural communication strategies that some small fast-food restaurant managers use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. The target population consisted of four managers from four small fast-food restaurants in the United States' southern region who have successful strategies to engage employees and increase productivity. The implications for positive social change include the potential to improve the local economies with higher–paying jobs, which may increase household income in the restaurants' communities.

Nature of the Study

Researchers use the three primary methods qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Crane et al., 2018; Maxwell, 2016; Yin, 2018). For this study, I used the qualitative approach. Qualitative researchers use this method for validly and in–depth data to address a research question (Gibson & Sullivan, 2018; Park & Park, 2016; Runfola et al., 2017). The qualitative researcher can access data to gain knowledge relating to the specific phenomenon by asking what or how questions when using a qualitative method (Bansal et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). I used a qualitative approach because it was the most appropriate way of answering the overreaching research question through engaging interviews.

In contrast, quantitative researchers use the quantitative method to test constructs using hypothesis–testing or a deductive approach (Saunders et al., 2016; Yin, 2018). A quantitative method was unsuitable because I was not examining correlation values or standard deviations or testing theories. Qualitative researchers using multiple case studies can validate constructs and measure a study's purpose, and a multiple case study can be used to discover and determine the links between constructs that generate insight into the research (Choudhary & Sangwan, 2019; Yin, 2018). I used a multiple case study design for this qualitative study to explore and accomplish an in–depth analysis of the overreaching research question.

Mixed–methods researchers combine quantitative and qualitative data to analyze in–depth, sophisticated style phenomena (Dubbelman et al., 2018). Moreover, a mixed–methods researcher combines qualitative and quantitative components within a single study (Arifin, 2018; Yin, 2018). A mixed–method research was not appropriate for this multiple case study because I did not include a quantitative component.

The three most common qualitative research designs or methodologies are case studies, phenomenology, and ethnography (Yin, 2018). Researchers who want an in–depth, detailed study of individuals to understand a set of events use the case study design to ask what and how questions without controlling the responses and outcome (Yin, 2018). Therefore, the case study research design was appropriate because I explored small fast-food restaurant managers who implement cross-cultural communication strategies to improve employee engagement and increase productivity.

Qualitative researchers use a phenomenological design or the meaning of their lived individual experiences through extended, in–depth interviews to gain the complete picture of their phenomenon (Ceridwyn & Debra, 2005; Chan et al., 2015; Sanchez 2018; Stainton, 2018). The phenomenological design was not appropriate because I was not looking to explore the participants' lived experiences. Sanchez suggested not using an ethnography design to seek an in–depth understanding of a phenomenon. I did not select an ethnography design for this study, nor did I use an ethnography design approach to observe and study group members' interactions about their daily lives or performing regular duties. Stainton (2018) stated that an ethnography design focuses on life stories and cultural groups' rituals. I did not use an ethnography design for this study because I did not make any naturalistic empirical and observation of the different cultural groups' rituals.

Research Question

What cross□cultural communication strategies do some managers of small fast-food restaurants use to engage employees and increase productivity?

Interview Questions

1. What cross-cultural communication strategies did you use within your uncertainty avoidance culture or employee culture that either accepted or avoided change that engaged employees and increased productivity?
2. How did you overcome any power distance barriers or differences when practicing cross□cultural communication strategies that engaged employees and increased productivity or a culture that consists of a hierarchical and democratic society?
3. How did you incorporate or factor individualism or collectivism mindsets into your implemented cross-cultural communication strategy that engaged employees and increased productivity?

4. How did you provide ongoing support after implementing cross□cultural communication strategies to engage employees, increase productivity, and explain if employee expressions were indulgent or restrained?
5. How did you anticipate and prepare for the outcomes of cross□cultural communication strategies in the context of short–term or long–term orientation?
6. What additional information would you like to share or add relating to developing and practicing cross□cultural communication strategies to improve employee engagement to increase productivity?

Conceptual Framework

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory was the conceptual framework for this study. The 1980 publication of Hofstede's theory collected data from attitudinal surveys from International Business Machines' (IBM's) corporate subsidiaries within 72 countries from 1967–1973 (Hofstede, 1980). Power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, indulgence, and restraint are the six dimensions of Hofstede's theory that could help researchers understand the findings to address the overreaching research question (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017). First, however, the six questions that correlate with the constructs from Hofstede's theory were analyzed and aligned with the conceptual framework.

According to Beugelsdijk et al. (2017), cultural and cross-cultural researchers use Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory to understand diverse cultures and how Hofstede's theory coexists within the workplace and outside work culture. For example, researchers in various disciplines, from higher education, political arenas, and socio backgrounds, have used Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory to understand the culture. However, values affect employees' and managers' and their philosophical view of success and accomplishment, work performance, leadership, and diverse social relationships is relevant to Hofstede's theory (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017). Managers of small fast-food restaurants accessing a better understanding of cross-cultural communication within their organization can use Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory to address disengagement. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is appropriate when small fast-food restaurants fail to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. Therefore, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory was used to help with the findings of this study.

Operational Definitions

Cross-cultural communication: A conversation between people from the same nationality from a different culture or age but communicates face–to–face or verbally, or nonverbally (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013; Jakučionytė, 2020; Kosareva et al., 2019).

Cross-cultural differences: Managers that focus on the broader diversity differences of people like gender, age, different nations, regions, and ethnicities bridge together employees (Schmidt et al., 2020).

Employee engagement: Employee engagement is when employees' minds are captivated and involved with their job displaying passion, vigor, dedication, and absorption (Eldor, 2017; Luan, 2020; Nienaber & Martins, 2020).

Indulgence versus restraint: The indulgence dimension relates to a society with free gratification of having essential and natural human desires of enjoying life and living with the sense of absolute autonomy of fun or having fun (Mohammed & Tejay, 2017). A high–restraint culture is a controlling and high–restraint love controlling and regulating people's gratification of needs by applying strict social norms (Mohammed & Tejay, 2017).

Masculinity versus femininity: Does not relate to male and female people but the values and emotional roles associated with either gender (Mohammed & Tejay, 2017). Masculinity–femininity has individual characteristics to differentiate each meaning's benefits; the assertive-strong culture is masculine, and the modest–caring culture is feminine (Mohammed & Tejay, 2017).

Uncertainty avoidance: Feelings and stress of society when faced with the unknown future and measures from weak to strong the extent of ambiguous situations or tolerance of an unfamiliar situation (Cho & Kim, 2017; Hofstede, 1980).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions in research consist of what a researcher accepts as accurate without having concrete proof (Cypress, 2017; Ellis & Levy, 2012; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Moreover, assumptions can fundamentally affect the entire research process, including collecting data, and a researcher's assumptions can help direct the nature of knowledge generated from each participant (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The critical aspect of assumption within research is the presumption of truth and accuracy from each participant (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The first assumption was that the participants understood the interview questions presented to them during the interview exchange. The second and last assumption was that interviewees from my target geographical area would provide accurate information to apply to the research question.

Limitations

Limitations are uncontrollable threats that affect the internal validity of research, which affects the ability to duplicate and expand on a study (Bishwakarma, 2017; Ellis & Levy, 2012;

Neuman, 2016; Pai, 2017). Therefore, qualitative researchers must provide a plan or intention to address limitations that could negatively impact the study (Fusch et al., 2017). One of the limitations in this study was that interviewees could withdraw at any time. Additionally, the participants may not represent the actual population because of geographic limitations or the data collected from restaurant managers in one geographic area. Yin (2018) stated that participants must exhibit trustworthiness. An additional limitation was that some participant–interviewees might have provided responses to satisfy the interviewer. Participants responding to satisfy the interviewer could obstruct data collection and distort the findings to help answer the research question.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the research scope, and the researcher defines delimitations in a study (Ellis & Levy, 2012; Fusch et al., 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Delimitations are boundaries that define the guideposts for objective and subjective thinking during a case study (Casado-Diaz et al., 2017; Cavalcanti, 2017). This research's delimitation and scope targeted small fast-food restaurant managers in the United States' southern region. The participants stemmed from four small fast-food restaurants. Cross-cultural communication was the central theme of the literature review, and other critical themes of focus were cross-cultural communication, communication, employee engagement, and fast-food restaurants.

Significance of the Study

The results of this research could help organizational managers understand and develop strategies for fast-food restaurant managers to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. Restaurants are vital to strengthening communities and restoring economic structure (Dorobanțu & Dumitrescu, 2018). This study's possible social benefit is that thriving restaurants are essential to strengthening communities' commercial and economic structures.

Contribution to Business Practice

Business managers of small fast-food restaurants could benefit from this study by understanding successful strategies that improve employee engagement and increase productivity. A business that facilitates leadership support of cross□cultural engagement can improve productivity and profitability (Kolodinsky et al., 2018). Therefore, by managers offering information on cross-cultural communication strategies, small fast-food restaurants may improve employee engagement and increase productivity, leading to increased profits (Kolodinsky et al., 2018). This study's findings are crucial to restaurant managers, understanding and enhancing employee engagement and increasing productivity. Dempsey and Assi (2018) noted that connecting cross□cultural communication to an organization's strategic goals could improve engaged employees and increase productivity. Therefore, restaurant managers could increase their business goals and take relevant actions to improve cross-cultural communication to enhance employee engagement and increase productivity.

Implications for Social Change

Potential implications for positive social change that could arise from this study include identifying cross-cultural communication strategies to improve employee engagement and increase productivity in the United States' southern region. In addition, this study may enhance economic growth and enhance the cross-cultural relationships among a company and community residents regarding restaurant managers' efforts to improve cross-cultural communication strategies. Economic growth is the motivating influence for income levels in all groups and links between high average income and income equality (Wanga et al., 2018).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the cross-cultural communication strategies that some managers of small fast-food restaurant managers use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. The overreaching research question was: What cross-cultural communication strategies do some managers of small fast-food restaurants use to engage employees and increase productivity? An extensive analysis of sources relating to Hofstede's six cultural dimensions and cross-cultural communication is a specific core aspect of this literature review. The leading theory within the cross-cultural communication literature is Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory that establishes the premise for understanding cross-cultural communication and organization cultures (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017). According to Dempsey and Assi (2018), restaurant managers' success in cross-cultural communication can improve employee engagement. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory effectively supports workplace or organization cultures (Borisova et al., 2017; Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Hofstede's seminal works and input have over 40,000 citations and 25 most cited books in social sciences (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017; Mohammed & Tejay, 2017). Applying Hofstede's theory could help answer the overreaching research question.

This research study was conducted to address the lack of employee engagement and the effects of productivity on U.S. employees. Fewer employees are engaged and productive in their job leading to less creativity, less inclination to share critical knowledge with peers, and less profitability for businesses (Eldor, 2017; Rastogi et al., 2018). Shuck et al. (2016, 2017) argued that U. S. businesses face an employee engagement crisis, and managers can be significant in solving the problem by executing cross-cultural communication strategies. This literature review includes a critical analysis and synthesis of the literature related to Hofstede's theory and cross-cultural communication strategies.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory could be used to address small fast-food managers' strategies to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. Hofstede's theory constraints can be used to understand broad cultural and cross-cultural communication differences within a business (Minkov, 2018). Managers must know the importance of cross-cultural communication and its strategies to improve employee engagement and increase productivity within their business culture (Dempsey & Assi, 2018; Dung et al., 2019; Rutishauser & Sender, 2019). Exploring the effects cross-cultural communication strategies have on employee engagement and productivity through the lens of Hofstede's theory could resolve the business problem of employee engagement and lack of productivity (Minkov, 2018; Shuck et al., 2016, 2017). The following topics within the literature review section include syntheses and summaries of specific themes.

Literature Review Organization and Strategy

The analysis from this literature review section consists of relevant studies relating to Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. The literature review begins with a detailed overview of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, related and contrasting theories, cross-cultural communication and communication, cross-cultural communication relations and effectiveness, performance, employee engagement, and fast-food restaurants. The databases I used through the Walden University library in this study included: ProQuest Central, PsycINFO, Education

Source, Communication & Mass Media Complete, Social Sciences Citation Index, Supplemental Index, Complementary Index, Directory of Open Access Journals, and Academic Search Complete databases.

Keywords and phrases used to search included *professional development* and *managers*, *business culture* or *corporate culture*, *personality* and *leaders*, *individual personality*, *national characteristic* or *personality trait* or *cultural characteristic*, *cross-cultural communication effectiveness*, and *direct and indirect communication.* Additional keywords and phrases included *stereotyping*, *ethnocentrism* and *cross-cultural communication*, *parochialism, communication workplace*, *barriers to cross-cultural communication*, *cultural studies* and *communication*, *cross-cultural communication* and *cross-cultural differences* and *cross-cultural studies, cross-cultural communication, fast-food restaurants, and productivity.* The review contains citations from 54 peer–reviewed articles and six books published between 2017 and 2021. The literature review sources include 60 references, and 90% of the sources were from peer–reviewed articles published within 5 years of my expected commencement. However, the final 10% are books and peer-reviewed articles published earlier than 2017. Table 1displays additional details of the sources used in the literature review.

Table 1

Literature Review Sources

Sources	Older than 5 years	2017 or later	Total
Books	4	2	6
Peer-reviewed articles	2	52	54
Total	6	54	60
Percentage of total	10%	90%	100%

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory was used for this study–to–study cross-cultural communication strategies that some small fast-food restaurants use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. Hofstede conducted the first large–scale study using data from the IBM corporation (Lo et al., 2017). In 1980, Hofstede developed cultural dimensions theory. Researchers from various disciplines have used this theory to understand links relating to people's messages and dominant cultural values (Cho & Kim, 2017). The Hofstede theory is crucial for a theorist to understand a work culture (Borisova et al., 2017). Compared to other cross-cultural theories, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is the primary source over other cross-cultural theories because of its impact on culture and how it shapes human activities in a workplace (Borisova et al., 2017; Gibson & Sullivan, 2018; Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). As a result, managers use this theory to implement proper cross□cultural communication strategies (Borisova et al., 2017). The study findings could help discover cross-cultural communication strategies that some managers of small fast-food restaurants use to engage employees and increase productivity because of Hofstede's theory.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory plays an essential role in understanding cultural differences and individuals' different values. The purpose of Hofstede's theory is for persons to understand the cultural differences, understand business cultural differences, and determine and discover the different (i.e., six) dimensions in cultures (Lu et al., 2018). Cross-cultural communication scholars have used Hofstede's cross-cultural communication theory to understand how to discern personalities and those differences in people’s perceptions that influence employees' interpersonal and cross-cultural communication approach (Lu et al., 2018).

Managers applying the elements and approaches of Hofstede's theory within their organization could identify cultural distinctions based on Hofstede's theory's six specific dimensions (Lu et al., 2018). Managers initiate a set of values like normative and compatible values when businesses implement Hofstede's theory (Eisend et al., 2016; Hwang et al., 2019). However, applying normative beliefs and compatible values leads to favorable outcomes like increased employee engagement and increased profits (Eisend et al., 2016; Hwang et al., 2019). Therefore, Hofstede's theory and framework help businesses establish a cross-cultural communication culture within their work culture (Eisend et al., 2016; Hwang et al., 2019). Furthermore, Hofstede's theory has a reputation for understanding cultural differences and restaurant managers' values that help codify culture.

Hofstede's theory initially had to codify culture before it could evolve as a complete theory. Based on Borisova et al. (2017), Hofstede's theory developed into a complete theory and then started the venture to codify culture. For example, Hofstede originated the first four dimensions of Hofstede's cross-cultural theory and initiated codifying culture and understanding cross-cultural communication differences within organizations (Borisova et al., 2017; Lo et al., 2017). The four original dimensions of Hofstede's theory are (a) power distance, (b) uncertainty avoidance, (c) individualism–collectivism, and (d) masculinity–femininity (Borisova et al., 2017; Lo et al., 2017; Vasile & Nicolescu, 2016). Hofstede went on to add and expand two dimensions to the original theory, such as indulgence–restraint, which is often favored by cultural researchers (Farivar et al., 2016; Lo et al., 2017). Indulgence–restraint culture explains the scope of individuals trying to control their desires and impulses related to childhood nurturing experiences (Hofstede et al., 2010). The indulgence dimension is used to measure the level of authoritarian or fostering of work culture. In contrast to restraint, a culture believes a conviction of satisfaction needs controlling and suppression with strict norms and rules (Hofstede et al., 2010; Mohammed & Tejay, 2017). For example, an indulgent culture explains freedom of speech as essential, but a restraint culture suggests that freedom of speech is not a primary concern. Restraint use to represent a culture that follows the rules and norms.

According to Farivar et al. (2016), to appreciate and understand the multidimensional phenomena of cross-culture communication that functions on six spectrums or dimensions, cultural researchers must examine through the lens of cross-cultural communication theory. Hofstede suggested the core proportions of a cultural value system relate to how a culture systematically identifies along Hofstede's six cultural dimensions (Borisova et al., 2017). A synopsis of each six dimensions of Hofstede's theory is within the following section.

Power Distance Dimension

The first dimension of Hofstede's theory is power distance culture and how the use of the power distance dimension attempts to help managers explore the inequality of power distribution with the least powerful or to create solutions to address the inequality among various members of the organization (Borisova et al., 2017; Solmazer et al., 2016). Mulder, a Dutch researcher, and an experimental social psychologist, coined the term and spoke about power distance theory relating to societal, cultural differences and how employees behave in power distance situations (Mulder et al., 1973). The Mulder power theory claims power distance reduction tendencies personify the relationship between an employee and a manager, and the theory gave specific people different power relations (Hofstede et al., 2010; Mulder et al., 1973). In 1980, Hofstede amended the concept and term to provide an understanding of the differences between national societies or people's attitudes toward disparities and hierarchy in their own culture (Cho & Kim, 2017). Therefore, power distance is Hofstede's first dimension of the theory, and the design of this dimension is to resolve the disparity among employees within the organizational culture.

There are various ways to measure culture using the power distance dimension. In most cultures, the opposition of two extremes is somewhere between low or high–power distance (Cho & Kim, 2017). Cho and Kim (2017) stated that psychological, mental power leans toward high context cultures or self–focused and low context, and mental power tends to focus more on others or people. Business employees from countries like China score high in power distance. China scored 80 of 100, and a high–power distance culture conforms easily to specific authoritative style managers (Cho & Kim, 2017; Ferraro & Briody, 2017; Enkh-Amgalan, 2016). However, low power distance employees can be found in the United States that scored a 40, and the Australians a 36 from a possible 100 showing the U.S. exhibits an unequal culture similar to Australia (Cho & Kim, 2017; Ferraro & Briody, 2017; Enkh-Amgalan, 2016). Low power distance employees can adapt quickly to a village–oriented business culture (Cho & Kim, 2017). The distinction between high and low power distance could help managers understand employees' subjective views on inequality and equality based on those dissenting authorities of power.

However, a power distance culture consists of a hierarchical society or a democratic society. The power distance dimension conveys how much power distance exists between individual relationships or employees' and employers' relationships (Hofstede, 2011). Table 2 lists the differences between small and large power distance societies or cultures associated with Hofstede's power distance dimension.

Table 2

Nine Differences Between Small and Large Power Distance

Small Power Distance	Large Power Distance
Use of power should be legitimate and is subject to criteria of good and evil	Power is a basic fact of society antedating good or evil: Its legitimacy is irrelevant
Parents [manager] treat children as equals	Parents teach children obedience
Older people are neither respected nor feared	Older people are both respected and feared
Student–centered education	Teacher–centered education
Hierarchy means inequality of roles, established for convenience	Hierarchy means existential inequality
Subordinates expect to be consulted	Subordinates expect to be told what to do
Pluralist governments based on majority vote and changed peacefully	Autocratic governments based on co–optation and changed by revolution
Corruption rare; scandals end political careers	Corruption frequent; scandals are covered up
Income distribution in society rather even	Income distribution in society very "uneven"

Note. Adapted from *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the mind* (3rd.ed.), by H., G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M., 2010, pp. 76–83. Copyright 2010 by McGraw-Hill.

There are several possible contributing factors to a power distance culture. A power distance culture represents the relationship between a manager and their employees and how managers can identify a power distance culture (Ferraro & Briody, 2017; Mulder et al., 1973). The two extremes are low–power and high–power distance cultures; with high–power distance, culture easily conform, but in low–power distance, adapts easily (Cho & Kim, 2017; Enkh-Amgalan, 2016; Ferraro & Briody, 2017). Hofstede's power distance dimension–constraint is crucial to exploring cross-cultural communication strategies to improve employee engagement and increase productivity.

Uncertainty Avoidance Dimension

The second cultural dimension is uncertainty avoidance culture, and an uncertainty avoidance culture focuses on questions of the unknown that relate to the future. The uncertainty avoidance dimension is the degree of a cultured member who feels threatened by unknown situations. Uncertainty avoidance is about cultural members or employees feeling threatened by unknown situations (Hofstede et al., 2010; Kwon, 2019; Mohammed & Tejay, 2017). For example, uncertainty avoidance dimensions cultures impact individuals' decision behaviors and patterns because of their feelings (Gilboa et al., 2020). The uncertainty avoidance dimension describes two extremes concerning different national cultures: (a) uncertainty avoidance culture–society or (b) uncertainty accepting culture–society (Cho & Kim, 2017). For example, an uncertainty avoidance culture is a stressful worried type of society because an uncertainty avoidance culture tries to minimize risk and change.

However, in an uncertainty–accepting society, culture has lower levels of anxiety and less stress. Bere and Rambe (2016) and Gan and Balakrishnan (2014) applied Hofstede's cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance using mobile wireless technology in a higher education setting or a professor lecturing. For example, the professor discovered uncertainty avoidance attributes and how uncertainty avoidance is linked to dependency and misused students during the learning exchange. Managers can learn from this illustration because the occurrence is an example of how the uncertainty avoidance dimension behaves when using smartphones in a culture. The behavior exhibited showed that embracing each other's unfamiliar beliefs could cause limited relationships between cultures (Bere & Rambe, 2016; Gan & Balakrishnan, 2014).

The cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance deals with the unknown future or the fear of the unknown and the two ways to measure uncertainty avoidance cultures.

A significantly too high uncertainty avoidance tends to emphasize local terminology rather than perfect translation but approaches uncertainty avoidance in a manner that leads to better results within business cultures (Cho & Kim, 2017). The uncertainty avoidance dimension currently experienced minimum efforts from survey scores triggering business areas like marketing, advertising, and customer behavior (Minkov & Hofstede, 2014). According to Minkov (2018), the expectation uncertainty avoidance is better associated with the importance of job security but less with interpersonal trust. The national–level measured anxiety levels high and positively correlated with the ideology that all laws must strictly follow (Minkov, 2018; Mohammed & Tejay, 2017). One key characteristic of high uncertainty avoidance is their careful process of changes taking them step by step to implementing rules and regulations, and Cultures with low uncertainty avoidance are comfortable with changeable environments with fewer rules (Mohammed & Tejay, 2017). Table 3 consists of 10 differences between weak uncertainty avoidance and strong uncertainty avoidance.

Table 3

Ten Differences Between Weak and Strong Uncertainty Avoidance

Weak uncertainty avoidance	Strong uncertainty avoidance
Minimize change-risk (accepting culture)	Accept change-risk (avoidance culture)
Go with the flow	Control Future
Ease, lower stress, self–control, low anxiety	Higher stress, emotionality, anxiety, neuroticism
Tolerance of deviant persons and ideas: what is different is curious	Intolerance of deviant persons and ideas: what is different is dangerous
Changing jobs, no problem	Staying in jobs even if disliked
Dislike of rules–written or unwritten	Emotional need for rules–even if not obeyed
In politics, citizens feel and are seen as competent towards authorities	Competent towards authorities In politics, citizens feel and are seen as incompetent towards authorities
Teachers may say, 'I don't know.'	Teachers supposed to have all the answers
In religion, philosophy, and science: relativism and empiricism	In religion, philosophy, and science: Belief in ultimate truths and grand theories
Higher scores on subjective health and well–being	Lower scores on subjective health and well–being

Note. Adapted from *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the mind* (3rd.ed.), by H., G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M., 2010, pp. 203–221. Copyright 2010 by McGraw-Hill.

Minkov and Hofstede emphasized and confirmed that the uncertainty avoidance dimension could be a motivating factor for researchers from business administration and business management to invest and expanded studies around uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede et al., 2010; Hofstede, 2011). The only way researchers could improve uncertainty avoidance is to provide knowledge that could help direct managers to apply uncertainty avoidance appropriately within a business culture and expect the improvement of cross-culture communication (Alipour, 2019; Bere & Rambe, 2016; Hofstede et al., 2010; Zaman, & Abbasi, 2020). Therefore, uncertainty avoidance dimensions should become a motivating factor for business researchers can improve managers' understanding of their business culture.

Individualism Versus Collectivism Dimensions

Hofstede's third cultural dimension is individualism versus collectivism, and this dimension is cultures that relate to how individuals define themselves with employees or people being a common typology in cross–cultural psychology (Farivar et al., 2016). The constraint of individualism versus collectivism style culture can reflect the sorting and arrangement of groups within the same group, and individualism–style cultures are self–centered, focusing on their self-image (Borisova et al., 2017; Farivar et al., 2016; Solmazer et al., 2016). Some examples of identifying a collectivist culture are recognizing values, training programs, excellent skills, and exemplifying authentic harmonies of family relationships like Korea, which scored 18/100 (Chakraborty, 2017; Hsieh, 2015). However, individualistic cultures like the United States scored 80/100 on being self–pursuing, and each person focused on their own identity and inclined to their independence from other individuals (Chakraborty, 2017; Hsieh, 2015). Therefore, individualism versus collectivism is two different cultural extremes of how individuals define themselves within a work culture.

Understanding masculinity versus femininity cultures is a fundamental approach to culture because it can distinguish and understand independent or dependent viewpoints. However, the distinctions between masculinity and femininity cultures are regularly confused with the distinction between individualism and collectivism (Hofstede et al., 2010). Based on Hofstede et al. (2010), masculinity–femininity and individualism–collectivism is not the same because individualism–collectivism distinctions are I and we, with one having independence within–groups versus a culture having dependence within-groups or in–groups (Hofstede et al., 2010). Based on Hofstede et al. (2010), an example of femininity but not collectivist values are the Good Samaritan story taken from the Bible, which helps someone in need from a diverse ethnic group cultural feminist but not values of a collectivist. Table 4 consists of six distinctions of individualism–collectivism associated with Hofstede's theory.

Table 4

Six Differences Between Collectivist and Individualist

Individualism	Collectivism
Everyone is supposed to take care of themselves and their immediate family only	People are born into extended families or clans which protect them in exchange for loyalty
"I" —consciousness	"We" —consciousness
Right of privacy	Stress on belonging
Speaking one's mind is healthy	Harmony should always be maintained
Others classified as individuals	Others classified as in–group or out-group
Personal opinion expected: One person one vote	Opinions and votes predetermined by in–group

Note. Adapted from *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the mind* (3rd.ed.), by H., G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M., 2010, pp. 113–130. Copyright 2010 by McGraw-Hill.

Understanding an individualistic versus collectivist culture may improve employee engagement so managers can implement cross-cultural communication strategies. Individualism and collectivist culture are extreme opposite or referred to by cultural scholars regarding the I and we dimensions. (Borisova et al., 2017; Hofstede et al., 2010; Hsieh, 2015). For example, individualism is an I culture because the focus is self–achievement, and collectivist culture is about we or characteristics like values and training programs (Chakraborty, 2017; Hofstede et al., 2010; Hsieh, 2015). Managers of businesses that implemented cross-cultural communication strategies and employed the phase of continuous improvement to empower employee engagement and increase productivity will experience a culture desiring to learn when applying this Hofstede's construct (Binder, 2019; Farivar et al., 2016; Minkov, 2018). Individualistic and collectivist cultures must improve employee engagement and manage a cross-cultural communication strategy for small fast-food restaurants.

Masculinity versus femininity dimensions

The masculinity versus femininity reflects how genders respond and react based on gender distinction or between masculinity or femininity cultures. Hofstede's fourth cultural dimension is masculinity–femininity. Hofstede's fourth dimension does not have anything to do with gender but the characteristics of each gender. Table 5 consists of Hofstede's list of the differences between Hofstede's theory's feminine and masculine social cultures (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede et al., 2010). Based on Hofstede et al. (2010), an example of femininity but not collectivist values are the good Samaritan story taken from the Bible, which helps someone in need from a diverse ethnic group, illustrates a cultural feminist, not the values of a collectivist. Hofstede's fourth dimension has to do with the range and scope of how society emphasizes achievement or nurture. Chakraborty (2017) and Hsieh (2015) regarded the dimension of masculinity versus femininity as gender roles in culture. Masculine society values principles like being successful, competitive, and imposing aggressive behavior (Borisova et al., 2017; Farivar et al., 2016; Hofstede et al., 2010; Solmazer et al., 2016). However, feminine society–cultures respond to characteristics like caring, relationships in their environment, and quality of life.

Table 5

Five Differences Between Feminine and Masculine Cultures

Feminine	Masculine
Relationship-oriented	Ego oriented
Balance between family and work	Work prevails over family
Cooperative	Competitive
Success	Quality of life
Enjoy work	Need to be the best

Note. Adapted from *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the mind* (3rd.ed.), by H., G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M., 2010, pp.156–165. Copyright 2010 by McGraw-Hill.

In this section, I analyzed and outlined how Hofstede's fourth cultural dimension, masculinity versus femininity, is a generalization of certain character traits not associated with gender and how the masculinity versus femininity dimension differentiates values relating to business culture (Degens et al., 2017; Hofstede et al., 2010; Lu et al., 2018; Minkov, 2018). According to Hofstede et al. (2010), Japanese culture is highly masculine, and the reason is that Japanese culture requires everyone's success. Cultures considered masculine as a zero gender gap, but a feminine culture and genders are dissimilar (Hofstede et al., 2010; Lu et al., 2018; Minkov, 2018). According to Minkov (2018), the related gender differences of individualism and collectivism links to the idea that freedom is greater within an individualistic culture. Minkov suggested that managers understanding the masculinity–femininity dimension of culture could help cross-cultural communication strategies improve employee engagement and increase productivity.

Short-Term Versus Long-Term Orientation and Indulgence Versus Restraint Dimensions

The last two dimensions of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory are short-term versus long-term orientation and indulgence versus restraint, linking expression and passion. In Hofstede's final two cultural dimensions, short–term versus long–term orientation and indulgence versus restraint, each expresses individuals' passion (Farivar et al., 2016; Solmazer et al., 2016). The motive for adding short–term versus long–term orientation cultural dimension is to discern the different thinking between the Eastern and Western worlds, and the etymology of short–term and long–term orientation stems from the teaching of Confucian denoted as Confucian Dynamism (Chakraborty, 2017; Hsieh, 2015; Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). According to Lo et al. (2017), the Chinese culture connection discovered the fifth dimension of culture, Confucian dynamism, and later renamed short–term orientation and long–term orientation. For example, Table 6 is Confucian Dynamism contrasting values and how each value represents a distinctive orientation.

Table 6

Confucian Dynamism Values

Long-term orientation	Short-term orientation
Persistence/ perseverance	Personal steadiness and stability
Ordering and respecting relationships by status	Protection of ones' face'
Thrift, saving for investment	Respect for tradition
Having a sense of shame, concern with self–image	Reciprocity of greetings, gifts, [favors]

Note. Adapted from *Cross-cultural communication: Theory and practice*. by Hurn, B., & Tormalin, B., 2013, p. 39. Copyright 2013 by Palgrave Macmillan.

Short–term versus long–term orientation is one of Hofstede's six dimensions for understanding culture. The way Hofstede distinguishes short–term versus long–term orientation as a short-term orientation society is a culture that expects and desires rapid feedback from decision-making areas like quick profits, job evaluations, and employee promotions (Hofstede et al., 2010; Hurn & Tormalin, 2013; Mohammed & Tejay, 2017). According to Hurn and Tormalin (2013), Hofstede's view of long–term orientation focused on long–term goals and the outlook on setting those long–term goals. For example, the world is in flux, and people always need to prepare for the future. Hofstede's theory dimensions predict life's philosophies, strong creeds, and education achievement (Hofstede et al., 2010; Hofstede, 2011). Short–term versus long–term orientation places one's efforts on a now or later approach. For example, cultural research refers to the short–term dimension as normative and the long–term as pragmatic (Hofstede et al., 2010; Hofstede, 2011; Mohammed & Tejay, 2017). As shown in Table 7, the listing of contrasting differences between short–term versus long–term orientation cultures and Table 7 magnifies the motivation behind the interchangeable terms for each dimension.

Table 7

Seven Differences in Short-Term Versus Long-Term Orientation

Long-term orientation	Short-term orientation
Stability	Immediate
Durability	Temporary
Save money	Spend money
Most important events in life will occur in the future	Most important events in life occurred in the past or take place now
A good person adapts to the circumstances	Personal steadiness and stability: A good person is always the same
Family life guided by imperatives	Family life guided by shared tasks
Trying to learn from other countries	Supposed to be proud of one's country

Note. Adapted from *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the mind* (3rd.ed.), by H., G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M., 2010, pp. 243–275. Copyright 2010 by McGraw-Hill.

Hofstede's final cultural dimension is indulgence versus restraint. The argument of indulgence versus restraint dimension culture has a high indulgence rate that freely fulfills the essential needs and aspirations (Hofstede et al., 2010; Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Alternatively, Hofstede defined restraint culture as less happy, but they love following strict social behavior norms (Minkov, 2018). The suppression of their desires and ambitions that regulate and curve their action's freedom is a restraint culture (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013; Minkov, 2018). As shown in Table 8, the five contrasting differences between indulgence versus restraint cultures related to Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory.

Table 8

Five-Differences Between Indulgence Versus Restraint Cultures

Indulgence	Restraint
More likely to remember positive emotions	Less likely to remember positive emotions
Maintaining order in the nation is not given a high priority	Higher number of police officers per 100,000 population
Higher percentage of people declaring themselves very happy	Fewer very happy people
Leisure time	Work
Release desires	Control desires

Note. Adapted from *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the mind* (3rd.ed.), by H., G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M., 2010, pp. 291–297. Copyright 2010 by McGraw-Hill.

Restraint culture seeks to answer the question of employees expressing feelings. The underlining question for a restraint culture is how much an employee can express feelings? An example of indulgence versus restraint cultures are countries like Japan and the United States (Hofstede et al., 2010; Hofstede, 2011). Japan is a restrained culture because the ruling class and culture dictate and control the ordinary people's desires, but in the United States, people's desires and aspirations are permissible (Hofstede, 2011; Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). For example, people from the United States can speak and think their true genuine feelings at any time, unlike Japan.

Hofstede's cultural dimension theory (1980) was the theoretical framework for this study, and Hofstede's theory consists of six dimensions that managers could use to effect cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural communication strategies. The six dimensions are (a) power distance, (b) uncertainty avoidance, (c) individualism–collectivism, (d) masculinity–femininity, (e) short–term and long–term orientation, and (f) indulgence–restraint (Ha, 2020; Hofstede et al., 2010; Jakučionytė, 2020; Mohammed & Tejay, 2017). I overviewed each of the six dimensions within this section to understand the effect of cross-cultural communication strategies that improve employee engagement and increase productivity. Minkov suggested that managers using Hofstede's constraints–dimensions could help explore the cross-cultural communication strategies by understanding business culture's norms within a diverse work environment. In the following section, I discussed related and contrasting theories of the topic of cross-cultural communication.

Related and Contrasting Theories

There are several relating and contrasting theories to choose from, but Hofstede's cultural dimension theory fulfills this study's desired framework. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory relating to cultural differences or cross-cultural communication is the most used in cultural researchers (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017; Hofstede et al., 2010). Based on past cultural theorists adopting Hofstede's theory, this research is employed and implemented as the theoretical basis for this study. Cross-cultural communication strategies communicate effectively across different cultures and cultures within a culture (Jakučionytė, 2020). Implementing and applying cross-cultural communication strategies within an organization create a medium or a common ground for understanding (Jakučionytė, 2020). For example, organizational leaders and managers should know how to maintain open communication lines within a cross-cultural workplace environment. Cross-cultural communication consists of many elements and aligns with several theories and conceptual frameworks (Jakučionytė, 2020). Therefore, I chose Hofstede's theory to explore managers' strategies to engage employees and increase productivity. The three contrasting theories, transformational leadership theory, anxiety/uncertainty management theory, and attribution theory, are the alternative theories discussed in this section.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory has some characteristics that apply to this study. First, it focuses on transforming others in the context of the relationship between managers and employees as followers, whether individually or collectively (Esmi et al., 2017; Jackson, 2017; Kwan, 2020). I contemplated but did not select the transformational leadership theory by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) based on several factors. First, transformational leadership is about managers and leaders who focus on transforming people to respect everyone within their organization (Kwan, 2020). Second, Bass identified the theory and characteristics by four components or expressed the letter "I" (Kwan, 2020). The four components expressed by the transformational theory are (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration (Kwan, 2020). However, business researchers and businesses used transformational leadership and transformational leadership theory to substantiate the various developmental aspects of managers in an organization (Jackson, 2017). Therefore, transformational leadership theory did not address cross-cultural communication strategies within the organization's culture, and because of this lack of focus on cross-cultural communication, I did not choose this theory for the conceptual framework.

Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory

The second alternate theory considered but not use for this study is anxiety/uncertainty management theory (AUM). Gudykunst theorized that AUM theory generally underlines communication between people from different cultures and individuals of the same cultures whom Gudykunst coined as strangers (Lund & Walston, 2020; MacIntyre, 2019; Neuliep, 2012). Anxiety/uncertainty management theory originated in 1990, but Shannon's 1948 information theory inspired Gudykunst's and the AUM theory (Chen, 2020; Lund & Walston, 2020; MacIntyre, 2019; Neuliep, 2012). According to Neuliep (2012) and Lund and Walston (2020), AUM theory is a cross-cultural and intercultural communication theory that focuses on uncertainty and anxiety reduction to uncertainty and anxiety management. However, intercultural encounters will reduce uncertainty (Lund & Walston, 2020). Business managers can employ effective communication to manage anxiety levels and correctly perceive their employees' attitudes and actions (Presbitero & Attar, 2018). Anxiety/uncertainty management theory was not used for this study because it underlines communication between cultures.

AUM theory is limited to interpersonal and intergroup with general constraints. Managers can use AUM to support effective communication and better understand uncertainty at a sociocultural level (Chen, 2020; Neuliep, 2012). Chen (2020) suggested a social endeavor of a sociocultural level that encompasses controversy like the cross-cultural differences among individuals. Gudykunst (1990) widely used AUM theory as a source for studying interpersonal and intergroup communication effectiveness. AUM theory includes anxiety and uncertainty constructs that influence communication effectiveness (Lund & Walston, 2020; Presbitero & Attar, 2018). Anxiety/uncertainty management theory stipulates that people have minimum and maximum thresholds or boundaries for uncertainty and anxiety (MacIntyre, 2019). Communication effectiveness is compromised when the thresholds are above maximum and below minimum because effective communication can only happen within the minimum and maximum thresholds (MacIntyre, 2019; Neuliep, 2012). The maximum level threshold is the highest amount of uncertainty or anxiety one can experience and still believe they can predict a stranger's traits and maintain comfort communicating (MacIntyre, 2019). The minimum threshold of uncertainty or anxiety is the lowest, which relates to the behavior before the maximum levels' threshold (MacIntyre, 2019). For example, the minimum uncertainty threshold or anxiety experiences a lack of motivation, unlike the maximum levels of uncertainty or anxiety experienced (MacIntyre, 2019; Neuliep, 2012). The general constraints are the minimum and maximum thresholds to how managers manage effective communication.

There are various strategies for managing cross-cultural communication within organizations to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. Managers must manage effective communication because anxiety and uncertainty may happen during a cross-cultural dialogue (MacIntyre, 2019). The communicative strategies managers use for the reduction and management of uncertainty vary across cultural lines. For example, low and high-context cultures and individualistic–collectivistic cultures seek to find some of the better ways to reduce and manage uncertainty demonstrated in earlier research (Neuliep, 2012). I did not select anxiety/uncertainty management theory because AUM theory underlines the communication process between people from different cultures and individuals of the same cultures but is more relevant to reducing or reducing uncertainty (Lund & Walston, 2020). Consequently, the AUM theory is not relevant to support the cross-cultural communication strategies within organizations to improve employee engagement and increase productivity.

Attribution Theory

The third alternate theory considered but not use for this study is attribution theory. Heider theorized that attribution theory seeks to understand how individuals make causal explanations or how they analyze and respond to others' behaviors (Lowery & Burrow, 2019; Méndez López, 2020; Ruybal & Siegel, 2019). Attribution theory originated from the 1958 seminal works of Heider but was expanded by Weiner in 1980, focusing on helping behavior, and Weiner offered an attribution–emotion–action model of concern–caring (Méndez López, 2020; Ruybal & Siegel, 2019). The diversity of businesses entails different cultures, emotions, and stereotypes, but each aspect relies on others' views to interpret a response (Mahboobi et al., 2018; Teece, 2018). The concern relating to attribution theory is people's explanation of their how and why or make sense of the empirical of someone's actions, behaviors, and decisions (Martinko, 2018; Méndez López, 2020). The attribution theory was not selected for this study's framework because it focused on how individuals analyze and respond to others.

Understanding cross-cultural communication and the strategy of cross-cultural communication requires more than people's behaviors and actions. Using attribution theory as a framework, communication researchers want to understand better the meaning of people's behaviors and specific actions (Heider, 1958; Martinko, 2018). Individuals tend to have a general viewpoint of people's behavior or a naïve psychology explaining an individual's personality traits (Martinko, 2018). Heider (1958) explained that attribution is a process of information used to infer the cause of a behavior, event, and decision. Heider's (1958) theory has two attributions or types: Internal attribution and external or explanatory attribution (Heider, 1958; Martinko, 2018). Based on Heider (1958) and Lowery and Burrow (2019), internal attributions (IA) are an internal perception of other individuals, and external attributions (EA) relate to the actor's environment explaining their actions. Attribution theory is proven to be functional within various industries and fields like psychology and the criminal justice context (Lowery & Burrow, 2019). However, the mindset of external attributions actors eventually stereotypes–consistent and generalize others with the same behavior as attribution literature calls the action prior probability (Lowery

& Burrow, 2019). A disadvantage of attribution theory is that it makes stereotypical assumptions about why events occur (Méndez López, 2020). I did not select the attribution theory because I wanted to identify managers' strategies to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. However, attribution theory was not selected for this study's framework because the attribution theory aims to understand how people make causal explanations or better understand others' meanings and specific actions.

Hofstede's theory is appropriate for exploring cross-cultural communication strategies that some small fast-food restaurants use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. However, Jakučionytė suggested using a theory like Hofstede's cross-cultural communication dimensions to understand better cross□cultural communication strategies some managers use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. Therefore, managers could use Hofstede's theory and six dimensions to understand cross□cultural communication and cross□cultural communication strategies.

Communication

Communication is integral and appropriate for understanding the dynamics of any cross-culture communication strategies within an organization. When managers articulate the need and relevance for strategies, employees support the initiative (Rosengren, 2000). According to Vidales (2017), the communication model is an equation with two active components: Listening equals speaking. For example, a communication exchange happens between two or more individuals, leading to a vibrant organizational culture (Bhayani, 2017; Bormane & Šķiltere, 2018; Marlow et al., 2017). Communicating transparently about the various aspects and results is vital to succeeding with cross-culture communication strategies.

Managers are cognizant that inefficient communication and the effectiveness of intercultural business communication are among the most common challenges of unsuccessful communication exchanges between workers within a work culture. Managers should meet these challenges from future employees' perspectives with a global mindset and are culturally comfortable in an intercultural business communication environment (Ai et al., 2018). Most miscommunication or inefficient communication within an organizational culture stems from managers' inability to communicate one–on–one and nonverbal communication with employees (Josan et al., 2019). Based on Josan et al. (2019), the optimal communication process is from the employee's perspectives of an excellent or poor listener, compliant to the exchange, obedient to the individual's meanings, having efficient or inefficient communicating skills. Abayadeera et al. (2018) contended that managers must intensely involve themselves in the intercultural communication process with employees to overcome cross-cultural communication challenges or diverse cultures. For example, managers who exhibit an inadequacy in dealing with the anxiety and issues within an intercultural or diverse business culture could hamper the communication effectiveness or communication problem.

Business relevance between managers and employees is an integral part of cross-cultural communication strategies and reaching cultural goals. Therefore, managers' knowledge of communication is one critical strategy to successfully implement cross-culture communication strategies (Zhu & Fu, 2019). Manager's critical strategy is to be conscious of their communication and communication flow because it could help them focus on crucial attention areas while communicating (Alcaide-Muñoz et al., 2018; Smallwood, 2020). The organizational culture experiences a lack of productivity, the suffering of quality, and resentment among workers when the necessary flow of communication does not occur (Alcaide-Muñoz et al., 2018). Managers should frequently enhance their cross-culture communication strategies with their employees because communication is ever–flowing, whether the communication flows upward to senior management or downward to front–line employees.

Managers are responsible for all training and messages communicated about cross-culture communication strategies to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. The theme communicated should always be about implementing strategies during any training process (Baylor et al., 2019). Baylor suggested that manager refers to cross-culture communication strategies while developing and training employees. Based on Van den Heuvel et al. (2016), the outcome of communication creates attributes like short and long–term goals, camaraderie, and measuring critical success when developing and managing cross-culture communication strategies. Communication is a skill needed for positive outcomes and training to enhance confidence, and the skill of communication is at the forefront of organizations (Chater & Courtenay, 2019). The managers should correlate and entail knowledge and goals to facilitate any training discussion of the various communication approaches and means to attain employees' designed goals (Botez, 2018). Managers provide information and training to subside any potential doubts about the unforeseeable future and gather valuable input (Botez, 2018). Managers who communicate or communicate about cross-culture communication within their organization culture could successfully implement and continuously improve cross-culture communication strategies.

Managers actively communicate the vision and cultural tone while developing and managing cross-culture communication strategies. The true meaning of the information or message emerges when individuals develop the capacity to communicate with a high priority (Pilditch et al., 2020). Botez (2018) reminded employees that communication is the highest priority for employees to exchange messages easily. The exchange of messages balances agreements or disagreements and cooperation and consensus (Botez, 2018; Pilditch et al., 2020). Botez suggested that managers that acknowledge the science of communication could, in return, help build consensus with employees on the implementation of cross-culture communication strategies.

Communication styles

Understanding and the awareness of communication styles help managers accurately perceive a person and learn to adapt to their communication style. For example, managers recognize any cross-cultural communication style exchange and understand if the conversation was successful or unsuccessful. Based on Tomalin and Nicks, communication is a process of exchanging thoughts, information, and instructions between people, and one partner uses a foreign language (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013; Kutz, 2012). Communication styles consist of three dimensions, and Kutz defines and explains these dimensions of communication.

According to Kutz (2012), communication has three different styles and different meanings for each style. For example, the three dimensions of communication styles are (a) verbal, (b) nonverbal, and (c) paraverbal communication (Kutz, 2012). Based on Kutz (2012) and Predoiu et al. (2019), verbal communication is the face–to–face communication, and it is the interaction between two people. Nonverbal communication is interpersonal and parallels with verbal communication that cross-cultural conversations rely on to communicate. For example, body language and eye contact between two people form nonverbal communication during a face–to–face exchange or conversation. Paraverbal communication relates to voice tone and how fast a person speaks volumes (Kutz, 2012). Those three different communication styles are what individuals need to communicate, and the three communication styles are verbal, nonverbal, and paraverbal communication.

Direct and indirect communication are aspects of dimensions to communication styles (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Tomalin and Nicks established a framework to understand the critical distinguishing aspects and extremes of communication, and the two aspects and extremes are direct and indirect communication (Arroyo et al., 2017, 2020; Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Based on Hurn and Tormalin (2013), the direct communicator projects their message to be direct and speak their mind without editing them to fit the receiver or reader. For example, direct–style communication is verbal communication used to influence others they encounter and communicate daily (Arroyo et al., 2017, 2020). The second extreme is an indirect communicator who bases their concern on protecting a person's dignity, and their primary concern is to avoid being offensive to anyone (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). For example, indirect communication style behavior is empirically noticeable and beneficial during a conversation or exchange (Arroyo et al., 2017, 2020). However, managers should understand direct and indirect communication and the difference between verbal and nonverbal exchanges to avoid offending and insulting.

Managers' method to understand the communication framework that distinguishes an individual’s communication style helps recognize and understand a direct and indirect conversation. The practice of indirect communication style in organizations supports self–styled leadership and process time during an exchange between a manager and employee (Vatankhah & Vatankhah, 2017). Hänninen and Karjaluoto (2017) argued that employees' perception of their administrators' value dictates employee loyalty to an organization, but the perception prefers behavior to be indirect and direct. Familiarity is a normal process with an indirect communicator exchanging their role as direct communicators (Xiaowen & Xiaohui, 2017). Based on Xiaowen and Xiaohui (2017), when the average level of interactions occurs between cultures, and if the methods are orthodox and familiar, the average level of interactions can affect the company's communication culture.

Communication styles are a fundamental function of cross-cultural communication strategies and continuous improvement in organizational culture. According to Tripathy (2018), communication is a skill most companies view as an expensive asset. There are a smaller number of risk factors, such as reducing communication flaws with the manager speaking with confidence and clarity (Tripathy, 2018). The diversity within the human resource of business today commands the attention of communication style (Tripathy, 2018). Diverse styles are critical to connecting and communicating with internal and external organizations (Ramlan et al., 2020; Tripathy, 2018). Usunier (2019) stated two impacts of interpersonal communication styles, and Usunier suggested that managers learning these styles will increase employee productivity. The styles are negation style and tough and soft strategies (Usunier, 2019). Ramlan et al. suggested that managers seeking impact with internal culture negotiation derivative apply these styles because employee culture is more than an obstacle.

Negation style

Businesses and managers are continually in negotiation with the social relations of their employees. Negotiation is not a universal term about a legal and business matter like contractual arrangements but the quality of individuals and social relations (Usunier, 2019). One of intercultural business negotiations' critical areas is relationship–oriented cooperation and building a productive working culture (Putri, 2018; Usunier, 2019). Usunier (2019) concluded that managers employing a negation style within an organization comprehensively support their employees. Cultural complexity managers can communicate and understand cultural complexity in a granular stage (Usunier, 2019). Based on Ramlan et al. (2020), U.S. businesses are individualistic compared to China, which is low in uncertainty avoidance, and their communication style is indirect, where U.S. businesses are direct. Usunier suggested that understanding the impact of a negation style of communication will help managers properly negotiate their direct and indirect approaches with their internal work culture at the right time.

Tough and Soft Strategies

Tough and soft strategies are ways to communicate a cross-cultural communication strategy to engage employees and increase productivity. Tough and soft strategies impact a sophisticated communication style of negotiation with intercultural and cross-cultural employees (Usunier, 2019). Based on Usunier (2019), this strategy has to do with managers potentially faced with tough and soft strategies or intercultural conversations, and internal business negotiations are challenging. For example, the strategy was being an indirect communicator that cautious offending and protecting dignity. Managers must be aware of uncomfortable and inappropriate situations (Ramlan et al., 2020; Usunier, 2019). Furthermore, managers' communication style is soft, diplomatic, humble, and unaggressive (Usunier, 2019). The internal impact may affect the cross-cultural communication strategies that enhance employee engagement and increase productivity when managers apply these two styles of negation style and tough and soft strategies.

Cross-Cultural Communication

Cross-cultural communication research is a recent research field but derived from various disciplines because of changes demographically. Cross-cultural communication research first came on the scene in the United States after the Second World War (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Hall, an anthropologist, was a charter member established for people going overseas, the training from Foreign Service Institution (Allen, 2017; Hurn & Tormalin, 2013; Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990). Members of the Foreign Service Institution were from various disciplines like linguistics, anthropology, and psychology (Allen, 2017; Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Cross-cultural communication researchers borrowed theories from those diverse fields that were members of the Foreign Service Institution. The interdisciplinary perspectives explain communication phenomena because communication deals with verbal and nonverbal messages, cultures, and contexts (Allen, 2017; Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990). Cross-cultural communication intertwines with concepts, ideas, theories, and scholarship topics like cultural studies and cultural diversities, but the manager's fundamental goal is to help appreciate the relationship between culture and communication (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013; Nguyen-Phuong-Mai, 2020). The United States, after the Second World War, understood the change of demographics, and they established the Foreign Service Institution to train a diverse group of cultures and individuals from various fields of studies.

There are two components of the discipline of cross-cultural communication that alters beliefs. According to Allen (2017), two primary components of cross-cultural communication that alter beliefs are culture and communication; and cultural researchers suggested two fundamental components and stages of cross-cultural communication. The first stage for researchers to understand is cross-cultural communication and explaining crucial components of culture and communication. Based on Conway (2017), businesses and employees today work in a globalized age called globalization. Scholars in cultural studies are loquacious and motivated about the intriguing topic of culture and communication or cross-cultural communication. The use and aspiration of Hofstede's framework in international and cross-cultural businesses in the United States are increasing among cross-cultural communication scholars and managers because of cross–cultural settings within the last decades (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017; Nguyen-Phuong-Mai, 2020). The two components of cross-cultural communication that alter beliefs are culture and communication, and these components stem from globalization.

What is culture, and what is the function of culture? Hofstede defines culture as a collective programming of minds to differentiate one group from another (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017; Hofstede et al., 2010). However, Hofstede shared an empathetic view about the various societies' communities and how people valued those empathetic views (Richter et al., 2016). Hofstede's view of culture and national cultures relates closely with the concepts of informal institutions that are intellectual but focused on social values identified through the behaviors of individuals who learned social interactions from communities and their childhood upbringing (Richter et al., 2016). However, Beugelsdijk et al. (2017) described culture as the motivator of interaction, mutual understanding of the distinct groups, defining and gauging social norms and expectations, and shaping behaviors in an organization. For example, formal or less formal concepts help institutions and organizations manage policies and best practices regarding addressing cultural values (Richter et al., 2016). Contrarily, communication helps researchers identify a starting point but relies on works found from seminal essays concerning cultural studies by a Jamaican scholar–author named Hall (Conway, 2017; Curthoys & Docker, 2016; Roman, 2015). Hall's seminal works were the basis for a materialist approach to the notion of semiology that later gave way to conceptual tools needed in a two–way conversation or while communicating (Conway, 2017; Roman, 2015). Communication researchers noted that communication is the exchange of mere words and the concept of listening and speaking (Vidales, 2017). Understanding culture and communication helps to grasp cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural communication strategies (Vidales, 2017). Culture is the collective programming of minds to differentiate one group from another or a society (Hofstede, 1980).

Cultural and cross-cultural communication researchers have identified that two crucial components involve cross-cultural communication and how leaders recognize cultural values and relate communication values beyond words to communicate through verbal and nonverbal exchanges are culture and communication (Vidales, 2017). Vidales suggested that communication and communication advancements have various forms, and one form is cross-cultural communication (Vidales, 2017). However, cross-cultural communication is critical to managers within an organization's work culture (Vidales, 2017). Therefore, the two crucial components that involve cross-cultural communication are culture and communication and how they are necessary for communicating.

Cross-cultural communication and managing the transition after learning to communicate cross-culturally are necessary for connecting distinctive business cultures and their employees' diversity within an organization that focuses on cross-cultural relationships (Lifintsev & Wellbrock, 2019; Vidales, 2017). According to Primecz et al. (2016), the discovery of cross-cultural communication and administrative style research made way internationally from a macro–comparative perspective and the seminal works of Hofstede. The purpose of early cross-cultural communication researchers is to install an idea that initiated and influenced managers to understand the diverse cultures of the organization to connect correctly with each culture (Primecz et al., 2016). For example, managers must employ diversity in their management style and unique strategies to experience a better outcome (Primecz et al., 2016). Managers must learn to communicate cross–culturally within the distinctive business cultures connect correctly with each culture.

Cross-cultural adaptation is another aspect of cross-cultural communication management, and cross-cultural adaptation understands others' unique needs within work cultures that accurately achieve all functionalities related to a working society (Chen & Feng, 2017; Nguyen-Phuong-Mai, 2020). Researchers noticed how societies were deeply rooted in two different perspectives when they reviewed the meaning and the effect of cross-cultural communication within the world's culture (Fu et al., 2007). The two perspectives are groups versus individuals and how they interact with general communication, like Canada and China. For example, both Canada and China may view human character the same, but each country's resolutions or outcomes are incredibly different (Fu et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2018). The Western world emphasizes and focuses on their rights and freedoms, like having the freedoms or the right to protest (Fu et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2018). Cross-cultural communication adapts to others' unique needs within work cultures and how different cultures interact with general communication.

The central theme of this section correlates with the understanding of communication and cross-cultural communication. Nguyen-Phuong-Mai (2020) explained that cross-cultural communication intertwines with essential elements like concepts, ideas, theories, and scholarship topics. Those scholarship topics are cultural studies and cultural diversities, and the primary aim is to embraces the connection between culture and communication (Nguyen-Phuong-Mai, 2020). One crucial aspect is listening and speaking (Hastall, 2019; Smallwood, 2020; Vidales, 2017). Therefore, communication is the key to cross-cultural communication because it intertwines with essential elements like concepts, ideas, theories, and scholarship topics.

Barriers to cross-cultural communication

The barrier to effective cross-cultural communication is language, and language is the focal issue needed to address cross-cultural communication barriers. According to Kutz (2012), individuals that participate in a communication exchange between two or more persons must understand and speak to each other’s cultural language. Therefore, barriers to cross-cultural communication become evident during a cross-cultural conversation that entails individuals who do not speak each other's cultural language or local accent.

The United States has increased growth with racial–ethnic minorities, affecting how managers communicate with the new diverse population of employees. According to Ko et al. (2016), population growth in the United States of racial–ethnic minorities proliferated and caused an awareness of culturally appropriate communication or cross-culture communication within the restaurant industry. Furthermore, U.S. Businesses' inability to distinguish proper communication with employees within their diverse cultures has led to unengaged employees (Ko et al., 2016). For example, managers who lack the knowledge and misunderstanding of diverse cultural languages or local accents could lead to a work culture that hinders communication flow and produces language barriers (Ramlan, 2018; Van den Muijsenbergh et al., 2014; Van Loenen et al., 2018). In this section, the barriers to effective cross-cultural communication could help managers and individuals understand diverse cultural languages within the same culture or outside a specific culture.

A crucial example of cross-cultural communication barriers and how those barriers exist is when individuals or managers speak the same language but lack the understanding of an employee or person's cultural and cross-cultural language. However, cross-cultural communication barriers could distress employee engagement within an organization's culture (Van Loenen et al., 2018). Therefore, the best example of overcoming cross-cultural communication barriers could be understanding the different cultures.

Appropriate and effective cross-cultural communication is when managers respond in a culturally diverse manner but are less focused on sending correct directions or messenger. For example, a Southeast Asian proverb talks about misunderstanding and how communication is an illusion, but its failure does exist (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Communication takes on a verbal and nonverbal exchange, and that exchange translates for meaning. For example, an exchange process includes coding, transmission, and feedback to complete the communication transfer (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Hurn and Tormalin (2013) described a misunderstanding of a conversation with two or more people dialoguing, and the receiver improperly decodes the information received. The sender is the encoder to decode the message, but a misunderstanding occurs if the receiver receives any aspect of the encoded message improperly or decoded improperly. Moreover, the communication process problem results from distorted messages between cultures, and international–style conversations are liable for a failed message or misunderstanding in the exchange process (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Appropriate and effective cross-cultural communication is when managers understand the culture and can communicate in a cross-cultural manner.

Managers must learn and enhance their cross-cultural communication skills to communicate with their employees effectively. Keyton (2017) articulated a philosophical perspective of communicating within an organization is to appreciate temporal interaction processes that expand interdisciplinary collaboration that enhances managers' desire to learn how to communicate in a cross-culture manner with employees. For example, high context communicators seek to maintain a peaceful work environment, but low context communicators create disharmony and damages relationships (Ward et al., 2016). Therefore, effective cross-cultural communication is significant for managers to recognize when communicating within a culturally diverse work environment. As discussed in the previous literature, safe and effective cross-cultural communication is imperative for managers to appreciate when communicating culturally diversely because of proper communication but understand that communication is culture. Moreover, managers knowing the exchange process like coding, transmission, and feedback understand temporal interaction processes and recognize interdisciplinary collaborators and managers communicating in a high context.

The importance of managers understands the barriers of cross-cultural communication when communicating with employees. Cross-cultural communication has barriers that hinder global-style conversations and elevated misinterpretations (Hentschel et al., 2019; Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). According to Hurn and Tormalin (2013), communication barriers are parochialism, ethnocentrism, and laziness. For example, parochialism does not want to be embarrassed when faced with conflict (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013; Kou & Stewart, 2018). Ethnocentrism relates to cultural ignorance or having zero knowledge of another's culture (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013; Nameni, 2020). The last barrier is laziness, or when managers stereotype cultures other than their own culture (Baur et al., 2017; Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). These design barriers allow managers–employees to differentiate cross-cultural communication or conversations (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). For example, global style hinders like conscience behaviors: The absence of agreeing during struggles, the illiteracy of other cultures, and belief system of attitudes people have against members of other distinct groups (Baur et al., 2017; Hurn & Tormalin, 2013; Kou & Stewart, 2018; Nameni, 2020) To gain a deeper understanding of each barrier, the manager must analyze and comprehend the discourse provided in the next section.

Parochialism

The embarrassment and anxiety of conflicts related to an absence of agreement during struggles is the act of parochialism (Kou & Stewart, 2018). For example, the notion of parochialism is someone in a mental state of narrow mindedness. Parochialism consisted of social, psychological perspectives relating to behaviors (Kou & Stewart, 2018). For example, from 1895–1896, Le Bon took morality to respect chronic problems for suppressing selfish impulses (Kou & Stewart, 2018). The Le Bon interpretation is an example that may have something to do with the humanity of judgment, a personal moral code of judgment that emerged to show the welfare given to narrow–minded people and culturally constructed is the key to uncovering the moral fabric to understand morality (Purzycki et al., 2018). Parochialism is a state of mind that focuses on individuals' macro and not the micro aspects (Kou & Stewart, 2018). For example, the individual is narrow–minded or narrow in scope when related to issues because of their lack of embarrassment and anxiety when faced with conflict during struggles.

Consequently, the conclusion could be that parochialism is a platonic ideal. However, parochialism has misconstrued meaning, and the term is frequently used as judgment to define a personal moral code. The idea of parochialism is that some managers cannot correct their deficiency of cross-cultural communication and humiliation that manifests with conflict from the hate of the out–group that leads to in–group conflicts (Aaldering & Böhm, 2020; Thielmann & Boehm, 2016). According to this perspective, managers would interpret that all behaviors stem from parochialism.

Ethnocentrism

According to Hurn and Tormalin (2013), Summer, in 1906, was the first to expose and cite in social science research the coining of the term ethnocentrism. The term and concept of ethnocentrism mean the illiteracy of other cultures (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Individuals with ethnocentrism ideals believe that one’s own culture overrides other cultures and is one of the critical issues of managers in understanding people's attitudes towards other cultures or ethnicities (Hosseini et al., 2016; Jacobi, 2018; Nameni, 2020; Neuliep, 2012). The climate of current businesses and organizations is of collaboration and communication among people from diverse cultures and ethnicities. Managers understanding ethnicities within their organization could become dominant in this globalized world, but they must possess a working knowledge of intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication crucial for any business (Bizumic, 2019; Hosseini et al., 2016; Jacobi, 2018). Taylor, a cultural researcher, understood that ethnocentrism is a barrier to effective communication because of information close–

mindedness (Abayadeera et al., 2018; Jacobi, 2018). For example, ethnocentric people ordinarily place their culture as the standard to judge other cultures (Bizumic, 2019; Jacobi, 2018). Cultural researchers acknowledge that ethnocentrism is universal, and as a result, this culture is prevalent in today's society (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013; Jacobi, 2018; Nameni, 2020). Another example is ethnocentrism only views their culture as a perfect society and different cultures as inadequate and subdominant culture (Bizumic, 2019; Hosseini et al., 2016; Nameni, 2020; Neuliep, 2012). Therefore, ethnocentrism could hamper communicational effectiveness with intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication. According to Logan et al. (2016), ethnocentrism is constants like biases of distinct cultures and the behavior impacts and causes a lack of enthusiasm for individuals wanting to communicate in a cross-cultural communication manner, whether verbal or nonverbal.

From this analysis, one could conclude that ethnocentrism obstructs the effectiveness of a culture of cross-cultural communication because they believe that no other culture exists. This perspective suggested that no other culture can interact with another culture because other cultures are inferior, results in a mindset of close–mindedness and false cultural views. For example, ethnocentrism in the United States creates ethnic problems, resulting in hate crimes leading to male leadership within corporate businesses. In addition, the mindset of ethnocentrism could cause an inappropriate culture of cross-cultural communication and managers' communication with their employees or the close–mindedness of other cultures (Logan et al., 2016). Therefore, ethnocentrism is the best way to hinder effective cross-cultural communication because they maintain the mindset that there is no other culture besides their own culture.

Laziness

Laziness is an effortless way out for managers to recognize a learning tolerance of actual cultural differences. Hurn and Tormalin (2013) defined laziness as stereotyping and viewed as a belief system of attitudes against other distinct groups. Stereotypes are sometimes harmless in a heuristic context, but cruel and xenophobic are regarded as an absolute truth about distinct groups of other individuals (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Stereotypes consist of value judgment because listening and watching mass media create behaviors like those from their social group (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). According to Baur et al. (2017), stereotypes are cognitive-mental imageries representing a belief system having expectations of social groups based upon assuming socially valued characteristics, common biases, and prejudices towards cognitive symbols or subgroups. As a result, stereotypes and presumed symbols of stigmatized individuals lead to discrimination and undesirable outcomes (Baur et al., 2017). Laziness is one effortless way managers understand a learning tolerance of actual cultural differences and why to understand laziness as a communication barrier.

The consciousness of ageism is age discrimination and carry out in society. The ideology of ageists is negative stereotypes, beliefs, and attitudes toward a person’s age (Raymer et al., 2017). Baur et al. (2017) explained how negative stereotypes of stigmatized felons are lazy, dishonest, harsh, killer, and disrespecting the law. Braman’s explanation reflects corporate businesses' work culture and how managers stigmatize employees; prejudice or age bias leads to a process of stigmatization to discrimination (Baur et al., 2017). Managers should be aware of and recognize distinct cultures' learning tolerance and not display an effortless way out as a manager.

One can assert that laziness is an effortless way for managers to recognize a learning tolerance of actual cultural differences from the literature. The view is that laziness is a belief system about other groups of people, and laziness can lead to cruel and xenophobic behaviors. Furthermore, a leader could interpret laziness to create a work culture process that changes stigmatization to discrimination. According to Hurn and Tormalin (2013), barriers could reduce effective cross-cultural communication by enhancing listening skills to aid managers in assuming words' meaning or making meanings out of context. Managers can then execute cross-cultural communication's effectiveness and strategies when managers gain the ability or skill of listening to words and understand the true cultural meaning (Baur et al., 2017). The literature asserts that laziness is an effortless way for managers to recognize a learning tolerance of actual cultural differences because laziness is a belief system about different ethnicities.

Cross-Cultural Communication Relationships and Effectiveness

Managers need to understand the influences of cross-cultural communication because the different contexts of cultures within the work community present new communication challenges. For example, behaviors defined as problems are different in distinct cultures, and communication exchanges among the various languages are known as activities related to race, religion, and educational level (Mega, 2017). Based on Mega (2017), managers' effectiveness consisted of cultural sensitivity, cultural biases, and culturally responsive skills. The inspiration for cross-cultural communication effectiveness stems from an individual personality, national characteristics, an employee's business culture, and professional development (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Each characteristic is part of improving cross-cultural communication effectiveness that relates to the different personalities.

Individual Personality

There is a twofold meaning to personality to better understand individual personality. The term personality is a twofold concept, and the type of individuals who help define personality are continually asking the question about the meaning of personality (Colchen et al., 2017). The first concept of personality definition maintains steady behavior over time (Colchen et al., 2017). However, the second concept and description are individual behaviors that fluctuate in different environmental contexts or cultures (Colchen et al., 2017). For example, one can observe personality in the form of an abusive manager who exercises nonphysical, verbal, or nonverbal aggression to their employees in public humiliation (Breevaart & de Vries, 2017). The organization will suffer from employee engagement because of managers' abusiveness and authoritarian personalities (Breevaart & de Vries, 2017). The twofold meaning of personality maintains a steady behavior over time and individual behaviors that fluctuate in a different environmental culture. For example, managers express these actions in nonverbal manners.

Personality and individual personality are twofold concepts because a person’s behavior could be the same. However, over periods, a person’s behavior can vary or fluctuate based on the environment (Breevaart & de Vries, 2017). Those actions are transferable. However, personality manifests and acts out in nonphysical, nonverbal, or verbal aggression (Breevaart & de Vries, 2017). I revealed that personality is two–fold, and one individual’s personality is firm, and the other changes because those forms of actions can dictate a manager's behavior within a corporation based on the research's understanding.

National Characteristic

National characteristic is one of the inspirations for cross-cultural communication effectiveness stems from an individual personality. The national characteristic is what Hofstede called masculinity–femininity to comprehend the national level of irrational fears within organizations (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Papageorgiou et al. (2017) and Kardum et al. (2019) concluded by defining the personality cluster called The Dark Triad (DT), which consists of three overlapping traits: Narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. The Dark Triad trait narcissism has elements from clinical syndromes like impressiveness, entitlement, dominance, and superiority (Kawamoto et al., 2020; Papageorgiou et al., 2017). The second trait, psychopathy, is a recent version of a subclinical sphere (Papageorgiou et al., 2017). Subclinical psychopaths have a high impulse, love living on the edge, and a person known for having a minimum or no empathy and anxiety (Kawamoto et al., 2020; Papageorgiou et al., 2017). Machiavellianism is parallel with manipulation, and current research indicates that high scores display characteristics like being social with peers like well–adjusted, and skillful (Hart et al., 2019; Kawamoto et al., 2020; Papageorgiou et al., 2017). For example, The Dark Triad traits or three overlapping traits: Narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism, helped discover that narcissism traits relate to higher ratings of creativity when rating by self and a broad range of emotional intelligence (Kawamoto et al., 2020; Papageorgiou et al., 2017). In contrast, psychopathy and narcissism are creative, confident achievers that are good at conflict-style thinking (Kawamoto et al., 2020; Papageorgiou et al., 2017). National characteristic inspires cross-cultural communication effectiveness of an individual personality, and Hofstede called national characteristic masculinity–femininity to comprehend the national level of irrational fears within organizations.

The Dark Triad helped comprehend the national characteristic and inspired the cross-cultural communication effectiveness of one's personality. Each Dark Triad's elements provide unique features resulting from possessing a specific trait (Hart et al., 2019). However, the understanding of each Dark Triad could help to discover elements of narcissism creativity.

Business Culture

Business culture is an organizational culture with a history, norms, and values to understand employee behaviors. According to Lyu and Zhang (2017), organizational culture is a business system that consists of values and norms that help understand employees' attitudes and behaviors. The definition is key to an organized approach to maintaining innovative and competitive leadership (Lyu & Zhang, 2017). Organizations must be aware of organizational culture and how the importance of past experiences relating to management playing a significant role in assisting with positive outcomes or having business success (Foster et al., 2017). The past business experiences represent the Deoxyribonucleic Acid (i.e., DNA) of an organization's culture, and past experiences provide an excellent source of strength for that business (Foster et al., 2017). Lyu and Zhang (2017) viewed initiatives as incentives that develop a philosophy and nurture an organizational culture. The outcome could create meaningful and complimentary relationships between employees and employers within an organization that maintains company loyalty (Lyu & Zhang, 2017). When an organization powerfully highlights successful past practices, those cultures encounter elevated productivity levels, experience fixed human resource strategy, and have pure wholesomeness among workers (Foster et al., 2017; Lyu & Zhang, 2017). Business culture consists of history, norms, and values for understanding employees' behaviors. Managers play an essential role in assisting with positive outcomes or having business success in the business culture.

This section assessed how business culture is a set of system norms and values because of its history. Foster suggested that organizations need standards to assess employees' attitudes and behaviors to improve an innovative and competitive leadership style. Moreover, Foster suggested that organizational standards could help understand and reinforce an organizational culture to build positive relationships between staff and employees. The result of building a positive culture could contribute to employee longevity and company loyalty.

Professional Development

Managers focus now on professional development because professional development provides proper guidance for employees. Gentry and Sosik (2010) and Johnson and Ridley (2018) discovered that a manager's role is becoming progressively significant and looks more like a career–related mentor. A manager who seeks professional development has the same roles as coaches and teachers because those values motivate managers to create organizational culture-style relationships (Gentry & Sosik, 2010; Johnson & Ridley, 2018). Seibert et al. (2017) believed that professional development and experienced managers display self–efficacy style leadership and a mentor network to resolve poor relationships between job challenges and promotability. An added benefit is having managers develop professional indirect positive relationships that reflect leadership effectiveness within an organizational culture (Seibert et al., 2017). Professional development provides proper guidance for employees and professionals to develop managers to display self–efficacy style leadership.

Professional development can be valuable for cultural relationship building. Having managers participate in developmental programs builds relationships with direct reports or employees (Gentry & Sosik, 2010; Johnson & Ridley, 2018; Seibert et al., 2017). Businesses with developmental programs or professional development benefit managers because of the positive relationships between mentor networks and standard display as a self–efficacy leadership style.

Cross-Cultural Communication Effectiveness Relating to Performance

Leadership is a factor that has a relationship with the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication and performance. The leader within an organizational culture plays an essential and decisive role in performance (Cambridge & Hawkes, 2017; Purwadi et al., 2020). Performance is an employee's achievement within their work or tasks and responsibilities to achieve their desired cultural vision, like cross-cultural communication (Cambridge & Hawkes, 2017; Hendri, 2019; Purwadi et al., 2020; Sabuhari et al., 2020). Sabuhari et al. (2020) believed that employees' performance adapts to the organizational culture of cross-cultural communication, and cross-cultural communication that adapts to the organizational goals plays a vital role in performance. The effectiveness of cross-cultural communication and performance.

Employee Engagement

Organizations require employee engagement and managers to understand the meaning and reason for employee engagement. Definitions of employee engagement showed up in literature in 1990, but Kahn was the first to define and describe engagement (Nienaber & Martins, 2020). After Kahn described and illustrated the idea of engagement, management researchers expanded the definition to employee engagement, and Kahn described engagement as employee motivation and an expression of a person's preferred behavior that promotes work (Bridger, 2015; Eldor, 2017; Nienaber & Martins, 2020). Later, in 1900, new business researchers coined employee engagement and defined it with specific vital elements. For example, contemporary business scholars define employee engagement with elements such as active, motivational, work–related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Eldor, 2017; Naidoo et al., 2019). Business researchers agreed to view employee engagement as an energetic, positive psychological state driven by passion directed by cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy (He et al., 2019; Shuck et al., 2016, 2017). Driven positive energy exemplifies employee engagement's external evidence (Shuck et al., 2016, 2017). However, I presented a definition and description of employee engagement, with elements like vigor, dedication, and absorption being the psychological core.

Employee engagement is vital for businesses and their managers to focus daily because employee engagement makes good business sense, and they should devote their energy to managing to improve employee engagement. For example, Rastogi et al. (2018) confirmed that 70% of unengaged and uncommitted employees within the United States workforce. Furthermore, Rastogi et al. (2018) stated that 70% of the workforce employees are passively or actively disengaged, resulting in organizations' enormous financial burden. Based on Jha & Kumar (2016) and Knight et al. (2017), the conversation of work engagement with businesses is widespread, and one reason is the relationship or the comfort and performance of employees. The belief of employee engagement has always been a significant factor and part of human capital, using strategies that affect two–way exchanges relating to how high-performing businesses attract and keep their best employees (Delaney & Royal, 2017). An example of an employee engagement culture or business is employees always having conversations relating to its mission statement and using it as a standard (Knight et al., 2017; Naidoo et al., 2019). Managers that experience employee engagement within their work culture often sees a maintained lively culture and hear various dialogs that could lead to increased productivity and a suitable work environment.

The role and responsibilities of managers are to continue staying pace with the evolving business climate. Business and managers' roles and responsibilities are difficult to distinguish because of the ever–fast–changing work environment (Eldor, 2017). The concept of employee engagement somehow enmeshed into distinct roles but weak distinctions about leadership that companies lost because of the misguided concept and an employee engagement framework. Businesses within the United States view employee engagement as collaborative and active in their working profession (Bridger, 2015; Mumford & Higgs, 2020; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Eldor (2017) expounded about employee engagement's perceived characteristics and how employee engagement in businesses and observed employees that were energetic or full of energy, enthusiastic, and intrigued by their job. Macey and Schneider described employee engagement in their conceptual framework as an employees' desire to go beyond and embrace change based on one doing more or different than the norm (Eldor, 2017; Naidoo et al., 2019). Furthermore, Kahn was known for the concept of employee engagement, and he pioneered the idea that employees that are physical, cognitional, emotional, and expressions are engaged workers (Knight et al., 2017). As discussed in the literature, businesses view employee engagement as actively involved with their work and highly intrinsically physically, cognitively, and emotionally involved with their job duties.

Businesses have always professed employees as essential stakeholders because of their overwhelming commitment to the company or business. Kang and Sung (2017) concluded that employees' keen devotion to their organization could cause havoc and be highly vocal when policies do not meet employees' expectations. Kahn added a critical social constructivist perspective to the idea of employee and employee engagement. Kahn's amendment boosted a psychological perception of employee engagement within businesses from reports indicating when employee engagement levels are above average, like superior psychological climates and widespread organizational citizenship behaviors throughout work cultures (Shuck et al., 2016, 2017). For example, a definite relationship between employee engagement and all aspects of the business functioning at impressive levels, managers categorize their organization's work culture as total capacity (Shuck et al., 2016, 2017; Delaney & Royal, 2017). Businesses with proactive employees add value because of their characteristics that personify and exemplify a caring disposition. Wang et al. (2017) explained that the interwoven distinctive dispositional characteristic and relevant required outcomes because employees exhibit the related behavior of acting enthusiastic about creating a positive work culture. Based on a theoretical perspective, the relationship between a proactive personality can lead to career success because entrenched exchanges promote diverse psychological viewpoints (Wang et al., 2017). The communication exchanges are mature acceptance of each person's views relating to the cultural character in a work environment (Wang et al., 2017). Businesses viewing employees as essential stakeholders based on commitment may cause havoc to policy changes or highly vocal employees about what does not meet the employees' expectations.

The participant at this point demonstrates maturity when voluntarily communicate with each other. Grunin, a top leadership researcher, argued about some outstanding, proactive-type employees who are superb with communication skills that support their organization (Kang & Sung, 2017). Firms with proactive employees could increase the organization's value because the employees who personify a unique disposition characteristic have communication skills to generalize a dynamic work culture for employees and business profitability. Restaurant managers are instrumental in properly implementing cross-cultural communication strategies that engage employees and an active cross-cultural communication strategy to increase employee engagement. Furthermore, restaurant managers should be concerned about improving cross-cultural communication among their employees because it could directly impact employee engagement and increase productivity. Managers are responsible for executing and maintaining cross-cultural communication strategies that increase employee engagement and increase productivity (Wen et al., 2018). Wen et al. suggested that companies developing and training managers on cross-cultural communication strategies could increase employee engagement.

Improving cross-cultural communication within an organizational culture could enhance employee engagement and increase productivity. Caniëls et al. (2018) indicated that organizations might have staff turnover or new employees. However, managers handle innovative techniques to maintain cross-cultural communication strategies that engage employees and increase productivity. Restaurant managers acknowledge the diversity of international cultures within the workforce and the demands to communicate cross-culturally appropriately. Employee engagement has always played a critical factor in maintaining their best employees (Delaney & Royal, 2017). Employee engagement motivates business cultures that maintain a work environment with employees engaging and productive (Knight et al., 2017). Managers must develop and manage cross-cultural communication so employees can remain engaged (Gabel-Shemueli et al., 2019; Rutishauser & Sender, 2019; Shuck et al., 2016, 2017). Cross-cultural communication within an organization could increase employee engagement and increase productivity because managers continue developing innovative techniques to maintain essential cross-cultural communication strategies.

Fast-Food Restaurants

Many possible contributing factors need and desire for fast-food restaurants. The fast-food restaurant model is mainly known for providing quick service to consumers who do not want to defer their time (Namin, 2017). The fast-food businesses–restaurants model, is the same as the quick–service restaurants model, and the foodservice industry defines fast-food and quick-service restaurants as equivalent (Mathur & Patodiya, 2016; Namin, 2017). For example, one fast-food restaurant product mix may entail only fried chicken, and another fast-food restaurant product mix may provide only hamburgers. The foodservice industry rates a restaurant operation based on service speed (Mathur & Patodiya, 2016). However, fast-food restaurants are quick-service restaurants because both concepts provide consumers with a food product at a faster pace (Mathur & Patodiya, 2016). Therefore, fast-food or quick–service restaurants contribute factors like the speed of services and quick choices like hamburgers and fried chicken.

Fast foods provide consumers with a choice of eating styles that they desire. Saunders et al. (2016) and Mathur and Patodiya (2016) depicted and defined fast-food businesses–restaurants as eateries with no long waiting serving foods like burgers, pizzas, sandwiches, and french fries. Consumers expect a speedy process or process order completed adequately when a consumer attends a fast-food restaurant. Speedy service means that fast-food restaurant managers must continuously declare a correct approach to meet consumers' expectations of receiving a speedy service experience (Cho & Kim, 2017). I learned from the literature that fast-food restaurants provide consumers with their eating style corresponding to their wants and desires.

Employees of Different Cultures with the Highest Degree Entry–Level Workers

The field of fast-food tends to attract specific cultures, entry–level employees. According to Cha and Borchgrevink (2019), the highest number of entries–level employees stems from European American culture, and this American culture makes up about 15%. Like African American culture, other cultures follow a close second at 12% Human resource population. The fast-food industry makes up about 16.5 million entry–level employees, and managers and females make up a higher percentage of those fast-food workers (Cha & Borchgrevink 2019; Onufrak et al., 2019). However, the fast-food industry is changing and may influence the cultural climate (Franco, 2019). European American culture has the highest degree of entry–level workers–employees after exploring the literature.

The Customer Culture Has a Broader Cultural Representation

Customer culture, or representing the purchasing power, is a crucial aspect of fast-foods (Xiao et al., 2018). Based on Xiao et al. (2018), the Generation Y culture represents the most robust presence within the fast-food market because of their eating habits that influence their eating preference. The Generation Y culture group from 18–24 years of age was the highest among all groups, and within these groups, females outnumbered males 57%–41% (Xiao et al., 2018). Ylitalo et al. 2019 argued that it is not the age culture with broader cultural representation but environments in low–income and race–ethnic minority neighborhoods that are part of the broader cultural representation. The contrasting views may not contrast because Generation Y (e.g., Gen Y) represents that culture. The broader cultural representation consists of Gen Y's are low–income and race–ethnic minorities.

The Clientele of Fast-Foods

It is essential to understand the difference in clientele as a consumer and how fast-food differs. The clientele of the fast-food establishment is different from fine dining establishments (Namin, 2017). Fine dining tends to target wealthier consumers, so fine dining offers ambiance and upscale service (Bartsch et al., 2018; Namin, 2017). The consumer that tends to dine at a fine dining restaurant may want to impress for whatever reason. However, the fine dining and fast-food industries do not directly compete, but casual dining restaurants could be competitors (Namin, 2017). A customer eating at either of the two types of an establishment can dress casually or formally dressed (Bartsch et al., 2018). Fast-foods is a diverse clientele within the foodservice industry but has some of the same characteristics as fine dining restaurants.

Specific Challenges in Some Fast-Food Industries

In recent years, the fast-food industry has faced many challenges because of changing and stipulating businesses' locations. Based on Ahmed et al. (2019) and Asirvatham et al. (2019), fast-food restaurants' internal structure faces socio–cultural challenges that regulate the food environment. For example, female entrepreneurs face higher challenges than male counterparts, like complex barriers to entry, unequal access to resources, financial resources, and networks that are all important to survive (Ahmed et al., 2019). The socio–cultural constructs of engendering economic burden on female entrepreneurial (Ahmed et al., 2019). The societal changes within the fast-food industry are socio–cultural challenges that regulate the food environment.

Fast-food restaurants around schools increase the desire for students to participate in eating unhealthy foods. Fast-food around the school links obesity because students are always looking for food (Asirvatham et al., 2019). Fast-food restaurants are around most schools, attracting students (Asirvatham et al., 2019). An alarming obesity rate is mostly among children-students plaguing the U.S. and linked to the fast-food industry (Asirvatham et al., 2019). However, Asirvatham (2019) suggested that the main challenge is that fast-food restaurants will need to reposition their location strategy for not operating near schools. Fast food research believes that the closer the distance to the school, the higher rate of obesity. (Asirvatham et al., 2019). The challenges fast-food restaurants must endure could burden their decision–making teams (Asirvatham et al., 2019). The next step is fixing challenges because these are just a few of the many challenges.

Some Fast-Food Chains Make Essential Decisions

Fast-food chains are finding ways to serve healthier foods for consumers (Mohammadi-Nasrabadi et al., 2020). The optimum goal for restaurants is to assist customers in making healthier choices with fewer efforts, which will change availability and variety (Mohammadi-Nasrabadi et al., 2020; Ringling et al., 2019). The fast-food restaurant managers know that it is wise to improve their nutritional quality based on today's consumers' food climate (Ringling et al., 2019). Managers are finding ways to facilitate progress through cross-disciplinary and cross-sector collaborations, and these approaches could help solve significant gaps like delivering a healthier menu for customers (Mohammadi-Nasrabadi et al., 2020; Ringling et al., 2019). These are some examples of the things done by food chains and fast-food chains.

Degree of training in Some Fast-Food Restaurants

Managers and most employees must meet the required food safety training in fast-foods. According to Elobeid et al. (2019), most developing countries, like the U.S., suffered the most food-related illnesses within the foodservice and fast-food industry. Therefore, food safety training is vital in fast-food restaurants to training their managers and employees (Gruenfeldova et al., 2019). The degree of training managers and employees' areas is often every two years based on that employee's expired testing date (Elobeid et al., 2019). In addition, the city or county regularly does health inspections of fast-food restaurants to help prevent unsafe practices and certify that the consumer's food is safe to eat (Elobeid et al., 2019; Gruenfeldova et al., 2019). The cost of serving unsafe food is 110 billion dollars and a loss of productivity (Elobeid et al., 2019). Elobeid suggested that training and training for food safety for fast-food restaurants is an ongoing task, and managers must implement training with their employees daily.

Impact on Service and Productivity in Some Fast-Food Restaurants

Customer service and employee productivity are aspects and required of a fast-food restaurant's culture. One of the ways fast-food restaurants achieve revenue growth while at the same time reducing the cost is by improving service and productivity within the organization (Aspara et al., 2018). Fast-food restaurants continually seek to provide excellent customer service and increase productivity by compromising service quality (Aspara et al., 2018). Fast-food restaurants experiencing desired services and increased productivity is service quality and maximizes profits (Aspara et al., 2018; Lee, 2017). As I discussed in the literature, the impact of service and productivity in some fast-food restaurants has better profit margins.

The Target Age for Fast-Food and Casual Dining Customers

Based on Namin, the target age for fast-food customers is the 16–35 age group, and casual dining targets that same group. Both fast-food and casual dining can compete because of quality, consistency, and delivery (Bartsch et al., 2018; Namin, 2017). However, to the customer, the lines between fast-food and casual dining are not clear. As I uncovered from the literature, one must believe that both entities compete for each other's (e.g., consumers) business. The fast-food and quick–service restaurant model is equivalent to the foodservice industry (Mathur & Patodiya, 2016; Namin, 2017).

The importance of fast-food and quick–service restaurants model derived from catering establishments losing their customer base because of lower pricing and quicker service (Butler & Hammer, 2019; Esfarjani et al., 2018; Folch et al., 2018). Therefore, the relevance of understanding the fast-food restaurant in this literature review is to establish background knowledge and its differences to other types of food establishments like fine dining.

Productivity or Employee Productivity

The concept of productivity or employee productivity is better known as workforce productivity but broadly defined as a worker's efficiency or a performance gauge that measures an employee's efficiency and effectiveness (Lee et al., 2017; Ma & Ye, 2019; Simpao, 2018). Based on Lee et al. (2017), productivity within the services industry, such as restaurants, is operationalized to measure values, cultures, and communication strategies reflected as a different strategy. A high–performing organizational culture encourages employee involvement (Lee et al., 2017). For example, when employees and employees support each other, and employees exemplify interdependency amongst themselves.

Productivity or employee productivity in today's global marketplace, like the service industry, enhances their efficiency and productivity levels to increase their bottom line (Kim & Jang, 2019; Lee et al., 2017). However, the challenge is achieving productivity gains by creating engaging employees (Kim & Jang, 2019; Lee et al., 2017; Simpao, 2018). Increase productivity or employee productivity levels within the service sector; most businesses steer away from the concept of achieving more with less but adopting a productivity–efficiency orientation and a quality–revenue orientation (Lee et al., 2017; Plotnikova & Romanenko, 2019; Simpao, 2018). A manager employing a productivity–efficiency orientation focuses on the achievement of cost reductions and internal efficiencies. However, a quality–revenue orientation relates to high customer satisfaction for revenue growth (Lee et al., 2017). Lee et al. (2017) stated that the two orientations present a desired challenge for the service industry: Productivity growth. Managers applying general performance and measurable productivity predictors is one of the noted ways to evaluate their employee's effectiveness, and those predictors are (a) quality, (b) innovation, and (c) efficiency (Cesário & Chambel, 2017; Yaakobi & Weisberg, 2018). Productivity in the workplace is essential for several reasons, and investing in human capital helps engage employees.

Employees being productive within the organization could increase profitability. Organizations–businesses allocating and investing capital in human resources into training and engagement strategies are valuable to increasing productivity (Cesário & Chambel, 2019; Yaakobi & Weisberg, 2018). Cesário and Yaakobi suggested that businesses implementing training programs are prone to increase productivity or employee productivity. Several service companies like coffee shops and many other restaurants implement a dual–emphasis strategy to increase profitability (Lee et al., 2017; Ritsri & Meeprom, 2020). Service organizations prioritize productivity efficiency by adding knowledge management training (Ritsri & Meeprom, 2020). Kim and Jang (2019) suggested a relationship between organizational structure and knowledge application, and productivity. Kim and Jang (2019) identified that improving employee productivity improves a company's bottom line.

The field of organizational psychology suggested that behaviors like employee attitudes and satisfaction influences organizational productivity. The notion is that businesses that better pay and care for their employees increase employee productivity (Kim & Jang, 2019). Kim and Jang suggested that increasing employees' wages expeditiously for them to experience those results. Increasing wages every two years is one method restaurant managers should focus on to implement initiatives to maximize productivity (Kim & Jang, 2019). According to Kim and Jang (2019), professionals consistently raising the wages among the industry is conducive to the U.S. in terms of overall productivity gains. Kim and Jang suggested that an increase within diverse work cultures stems from organizations implementing cross-cultural communication strategies that improve employee engagement and increase productivity. The following section is the transition.

Transition

Section 1 begins with the foundation and a background description of the study, the Problem and purpose statement, the nature of the study, and the research question. Moreover, the section contains the conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and the research's delimitations. The significance of the study complements the implications for the social changes section and enhances business practices. After providing and discussing the interview questions, I concluded the section with a professional and academic literature review.

Section 2 included a comprehensive analysis of the purpose statement, the researcher's role, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, instruments and technique used during data collection, data organization technique, data analysis, reliability, and validity. Finally, Section 3 summarized this study’s findings relating to the business practice applications relating to social change implications, potential future research opportunities, and future action recommendations.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I restate the study's purpose and describe my role as the researcher, the qualitative research method, and the multiple case study design. Next, I provide a comprehensive outline of the selection of participants. Next, I include a discourse on protecting participants' confidentiality, ethical research, validity, reliability, data collection, analysis, and organization. Finally, in Section 3, I present findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for further research, reflections on the research experience, and the study's conclusion.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore cross-cultural communication strategies that some manager of small fast-food restaurants uses to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. The target population consisted of four managers from four small fast-food restaurants in the United States' southern region who have implemented successful strategies to engage employees and increase productivity. The implications for positive social change that could result from this study include the potential to improve local economies with higher–paying jobs, which may increase household income in the restaurants' communities.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher for a qualitative study is the primary instrument (Yin, 2018); consequently, I am the primary research instrument for this study. This study involved collecting data relating to the research topic from interviews, using an interview protocol for accuracy, analyzing the data, and presenting the findings. A researcher's role includes safeguarding participants' data, implementing analysis, communication, and continual collaboration between researcher and participants when conducting a qualitative study (Kelly et al., 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The investigator must ensure selected participants aligns with the research question and the research topic during data collection (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Yin, 2018). Researchers' added roles ensure the sampling identifies the phenomenon and aligns with the research question (Kelly et al., 2018). In addition, the investigator understands if the participant's insights and behaviors align with the research during the eligibility and permission process (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Finally, the researcher facilitates and extracts information and encourages participants to talk about their lived experiences (Levitt et al., 2017). I helped each participant talk about their lived experiences; I structured, organized, and performed the research process; I collected and analyzed the findings. I explained each participant's process, monitored the process, and extracted any misinterpreted data from the interviews to provide valid information for any future researcher or business leader.

The researcher's role is to address and minimize biases from the study's results. Qualitative researchers must address any biases influencing the study outcome (Anderson, 2016 & Ross, 2017). A researcher's bias could dictate the process of recording and interpreting the data (Wadams & Park, 2018). I took extreme measures to mitigate personal biases in this study. A qualitative researcher must disclose any associations that may skew the research outcomes and any previous connections that may create a harmful bias (Ross, 2017). A qualitative researcher should eliminate bias and ensure validity by cross–referencing multiple data sources (Weller et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). Ross et al. (2018) recommended that a qualitative researcher must mitigate bias. Based on Ross et al.'s recommendation, I mitigated bias by using professional discretion, an interview protocol, member checking, triangulation, and data saturation.

I had no prior relationship with the participants, and I had no previous experience with the topic, participants, or cross-cultural communication. I had no ties to organizations or organizational managers who could provide results to the study. The Belmont Report includes a combination of three overarching principles in research involving human subjects: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). I adhered to those overarching principles. I completed the National Institutes of Health web–training course on protecting humans or research participants during a study. Researchers must use ethical protocols to obliterate ethical concerns (Yin, 2018). Ethical protocols may entail protecting a person's privacy and confidentiality, impartial selecting participants, and preventing deceptive practices (Yin, 2018). I provided an informed consent form to support adherence to the Belmont Report's principles for participants for this study. The content of each consent form consisted of the participant's rights, the purpose of the study, the participant's duration of the interview, the participant's potential risk, and the benefits of consenting to participate in the research inquiry.

A qualitative researcher can mitigate bias is to interview each participant using the same questions and method to guide the process (Ross et al., 2018; Shaw & Satalkar, 2018; Weller et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). I used an interview protocol, and I asked each interviewee the same questions to mitigate bias when conducting interviews. I was not part of the phenomenon, and I did not use biased interview tactics for the desired outcome; I followed the interview protocol consistently.

An interview protocol is a script that researchers use to help them stay on track and know what to say during an interview (Stuart et al., 2018). The role of the researcher is to use the interview protocol throughout each interview. An interview protocol is a researcher's guide to perform structured interviews and enhance the quality of each interviewee's responses (Castillo-Montoya, 2016 & Saddour et al., 2020). A significant aspect of an interview protocol is for the investigator to thank their participants. In a high–quality case study, the interview protocol can help a researcher ask the right questions, be an attentive listener, be adaptive to any culture, discard bias, and clearly understand the problem under study (Yin, 2018). I used an interview protocol to systematically ask each participant the same questions to enhance the data quality. I treated each participant in the same manner, asking the same order of questions, recording each interview, and conducting member checking to confirm each participant's response.

Participants

Selecting an appropriate participant is critical to a study as respondents must provide rich data and offer distinct perceptions to the qualitative researcher (Chen, 2016; Su et al., 2019). Yin (2018) suggested that a researcher should select proper participants who will offer rich data. In addition, a researcher needs to be fair and uphold ethical practices (Sibinga, 2018). In the selection process for participants, a researcher must be fair and uphold ethical practices and standards (Chen, 2016; Su et al., 2019). Therefore, I used fair and ethical practices during the selection and data collection processes. Hardin et al. (2017) indicated that a researcher must select a participant pool that resembles the study because participants will reply to interview questions differently or about the study intellectually. The importance of researchers selecting a pool of confident and knowledgeable participants in their practice and understanding the research topics is a potential benefit (Chen, 2016; Su et al., 2019). Therefore, I selected confident and knowledgeable participants who practiced and understood the research topic, potentially benefiting.

The study participants were managers of small fast-food restaurants who have successfully used cross-culture communication strategies to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. Qualitative researchers conducting a case study understand how vital it is to select a specific set of participants to explore the research topic or phenomenon (Sharma, 2017; Yin, 2018). The critical aspect of researchers is to set limits or bounds to a research study because the participant selection impacts the strength of the research study (Yin, 2018). Therefore, I set limits and boundaries to this study by selecting participants to impact this research study's strengths. The participants' eligibility criteria included (a) the participant is a manager in a small fast-food restaurant, (b) the participants is a manager who has successfully implemented cross-cultural communication strategies within their small fast-food restaurant, and (c) the participant must be from a small fast-food restaurant with a staff that ranges from 1–16 employees. According to Yin (2018), researchers need to select participants for a study involved in the case or phenomenon to answer the overarching research question. Therefore, I selected participants who had successfully implemented cross-cultural communication strategies that engaged employees and increased productivity.

To gain access to the managers of small fast-food restaurants, I identified potential participants by searching Google, LinkedIn, and food or business association websites for companies that successfully use cross-culture communication strategies. Before commencing research. I received approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (i.e., IRB;

approval number 04-06-21-0663115). I visited those various small fast-food restaurants and spoke with a manager who could decide to set up an appointment to pre–screen; gained contact information; obtained content information of the company; obtained a physical address met with the decision–maker. I asked each owner questions to confirm eligibility and identified which manager would be most appropriate based on the criteria. I explained the reason for choosing their organization to employ field research. Researchers gaining access to a participant involves networking and interaction with gatekeepers (Carey & Griffiths, 2017). Receiving recommendations from professionals proves research to be a suitable method (Bailey, 2019). However, a researcher must be selective and reliant on a social network to attract prospects to interview with valuable information relating to the research inquiry (Bailey, 2019). The participants' recruitment took place in two steps. In the first step, I made direct contact with each facility to speak with a restaurant manager to call their owner to approve study participation and set up an informational interview. In the second step, I met with the manager at their suggested location and time.

Qualitative researchers who build rapport with participants and maintain association keeps participants from forfeiting their agreement to the data collection process (Isik, 2018). The interview process involves processed two phases: Building rapport and recounting experiences (Danby et al., 2017; Gagnon & Cyr, 2017; Whiting & Price, 2017). In building rapport, qualitative researchers must determine the best information and communication technologies that fit their research design to ensure a positive relationship with participants (Salmons, 2016). Researchers who use the internet to communicate and build relationships accept the trend of relationships and information intertwining (Kokla & Guilbert, 2020; Salmons, 2016). I ensured a positive relationship with each participant using collaborative approaches to communicate with each participant, like emails and telephone, to build trust during the investigation process. Furthermore, I developed a rapport by explaining the study's purpose and objectives, why it is essential, and answering questions. The aim and goal were to develop a trusting relationship with participants.

A researcher's key reason and aim for establishing a working relationship with each participant are to maintain their volunteer ship and honor each participant in a research study (Isik, 2018; Walton et al., 2018). The researcher must personify and exemplify the value of each person's voluntary participation in the study to ensure relationships (Isik, 2018; Walton et al., 2018). Rapport–building is critical for convincing participants and maintaining the enthusiasm and desire to provide the researcher with a favorable exchange of rich raw data (Goodman-Delahunty & Howes, 2016).

Research Method and Design

Researchers use qualitative, quantitative, or mixed–methods and decide which research method to use based on the pending research question (Yang, 2016; Yin, 2018). I selected a qualitative method as the most appropriate choice to address the research question in this study. According to Clark-Carter (2018), researchers use a research method to structure and organize their approach.

Research Method

I selected a qualitative research method for this research study. Yin (2018) suggested that a qualitative approach is the best option for researchers to find the why through semistructured interviews to understand phenomena. Based on Yin's recommendations, I used a qualitative method as the most appropriate for this research because I attempted to answer what and how questions. Gerring (2017) and Yin (2018) stated that researchers using the qualitative research method seek to explore and grasp participants' meanings of a human problem from an interview. The qualitative data can include the participants' experiences and situations (Le Roux, 2017). However, Runfola et al. (2017) stated that researchers employing a qualitative research method have the chance to analyze various data to understand the phenomenon of interest. A researcher uses a qualitative method to develop theory rather than logical deductions (Peterson, 2019). Researchers using a qualitative method can conduct semistructured interviews to gather data and gather additional data from organizational documents or website information relating to the organization (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Qualitative researchers use open–ended questions as a method to obtain data (Yin, 2018). Therefore, the qualitative research method is the most appropriate to address the research question due to interacting with participants to probe successful cross-cultural communication strategies. I explored the how and what questions of the phenomenon.

The quantitative method is a statistical deductive approach in which the researcher tests hypotheses through analyses (Scuotto et al., 2017). According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), a quantitative method is an etic approach. Researchers want to observe the phenomenon from an outside approach and measure the phenomenon of a problem without any interactions (Scuotto et al., 2017). For example, a researcher observes the problem from the outside to form an objective view (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Quantitative researchers use a quantitative method to seek statistical computation factored from numerical values (Reuter & Spielhofer, 2017).

The quantitative method is the statistical interaction of groups or comparisons of variables, and a quantitative method uses close–ended questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2018). A quantitative research method deals with predictions and interprets variables from a statistical approach (Park & Park, 2016; Hodis & Hancock, 2016). According to Reuter and Spielhofer (2017), quantitative researchers use a quantitative method as numerical data to accept or reject one or more hypotheses. The quantitative method consists of factors and variables with numerical values for statistical computation (Scuotto et al., 2018). I did not choose a quantitative method for this study because a quantitative method is used with predetermined hypotheses or relationships between multiple variables. I did not use close–ended questions to obtain data relating to the research question. Furthermore, I did not statistically predict any variables for this study, and I did not gather numerical data from participants to explore cause–and–effect relationships.

A mixed–methods approach includes qualitative and quantitative methods or integrates the two approaches (Yin, 2018). Researchers using a mixed–method seek to obtain data from both qualitative and quantitative methods. For example, Molina-Azorin (2016) asserted that a mixed-methods researcher collects data, performs analysis, and mixes open–ended and closed-ended quantitative data for a research outcome. I did not use mixed–methods research because I did not need a quantitative component to obtain numerical data or test a hypothesis. I did not use mixed-methods research because I did not use a research question that requires a quantitative component to address this study's purpose. The qualitative method was suitable for this study because I explored cross-cultural communication strategies to understand the small fast-food restaurant sector.

Research Design

Researchers using a case study design can provide a deeper understanding of the phenomena; the context should relate to solid context–dependent knowledge (Ridder, 2017). The researcher should explore each design's relevance to draw a precise conclusion for an investigation when choosing a proper research design (Nagata & Suzuki, 2017; Park & Park, 2016). I considered narrative design, ethnography design, phenomenological design, and case study design.

The narrative research design is a method used by researchers using psychological theories relating to a social phenomenon, and researchers use a narrative design to obtain details of personal experiences, internal–external relationships, and life events of the participant (Carless & Douglas, 2017; King et al., 2018). A narrative approach's roots originate from and through biography and life history (Carless & Douglas, 2017). Narrative researchers do not focus on constructs, opinions, or abstractions but the individual's experience of concrete-real events (Carless & Douglas, 2017; Thompson Long & Hall, 2018). A narrative research design is about individual experiences using a storytelling approach to a sociocultural context (Carless & Douglas, 2017; Thompson Long & Hall, 2018). I did not use a narrative research design because it requires storytelling from the participant. Likewise, I did not use a narrative research design because this study intends to explore cross-cultural communication strategies. A narrative research design is inappropriate for this study because I did not seek personal experiences, internal–external relationships, and participant life events.

Researchers who use an ethnographic design focus on life stories guided by anthropological questions that ask why or relate to practices and rituals about cultural groups

(Hyland, 2016; O'Connell, 2018). The ethnographic researcher focuses on the participant's culture (Hyland, 2016; O'Connell, 2018). Qualitative researchers use an ethnographic design to observe, interact, and interview participants for protractive periods (Tracy, 2020). I did not collect data relating to cultural phenomena because an ethnographic design is when a researcher seeks to understand cultural groups' practices and rituals.

Qualitative researchers use a phenomenological design to explore and capture participants' subjective experiences of a phenomenon or specific worldview (Deepa & Panicker, 2016; Mohajan, 2018). Researchers who use a phenomenological design approach desire to understand those specific experiences and capture each participant's natural meaning of their lived individual experiences through extended and interviews for a complete picture (Deepa & Panicker, 2016; Mohajan, 2018). Moreover, a phenomenological researcher seeks first-hand information from participants to gain knowledge from each participant's lived experience (Deepa & Panicker, 2016; Mohajan, 2018). Based on Hailemariam et al. (2017) and Marshall and Rossman (2016), researchers use a phenomenological approach to collect data and first-hand information from participants who lived the experience and help researchers explore the mental phenomenon. However, a phenomenological approach was unsuitable for this study because I did not explore individuals' and groups' lived experiences.

Qualitative researchers use a case study design to gather participant information with a logical approach to generate and discover themes, and the researcher conducts semistructured interviews to understand and add input (Yin, 2018). According to Gammelgaard (2017) and Ridder (2017), the objective for qualitative researchers who use a case study approach often seeks inductively to explore an unknown phenomenon. Qualitative researchers use a case study to explore a phenomenon through each participant's experiences (Yin, 2018). Therefore, a case study design was appropriate for this study, supporting the study's objective. A researcher that uses a case study design veers to investigate a phenomenon within a real–world context and helps the qualitative researcher answer the how and what questions (Fagerholm et al., 2017; Yin, 2018). Qualitative researchers who use a case study design could develop new theories and generate hypotheses (Crowe et al., 2011). Based on Aagaard (2017), research that uses a case study design intends to explore real–world situations of an event, specific activity, and problems using a single case or multiple case study.

Qualitative researchers must explore how vital it is to identify and understand the purpose of each design methodologically and intellectually combined with its different impacts and outcomes between a single case study versus multiple case studies during the methodological phase (Crowe et al., 2011). Based on Alavi et al. (2018), a researcher using a single case study only explores one unit using specific methods to collect and analyze the research problem under examination. The methodological process consists of making the best decision or choosing a proper research design, and the researcher must study the purpose of each research design to decide better (Guetterman & Fetters, 2018). Furthermore, qualitative researchers must understand that the design purpose addresses the research question (i.e., phenomenon or problem) that helps the researcher develop and generate themes (Guetterman & Fetters, 2018).

I chose a multiple case study to gain in–depth knowledge from managers–participants relating to this study’s business problem or phenomenon of cross-cultural communication strategies. Using a multiple case study design, the qualitative researcher could understand managers' experiences when implementing and executing strategies within their organization and how employees behave from those implemented strategies (Eriksson et al., 2017). Multiple case studies are becoming the research design of choice within management research. Lochrie (2016) and Silverman (2017) insisted that multiple case studies gain popularity within management research. Eriksson suggested using a multiple case study as an ideal approach for this study. Based on Eriksson's recommendations, I used a multiple case design for a holistic and in–depth explanation, specifically from semistructured interviews, understanding that semistructured interviews could gain richer–more profound knowledge from each unit or participant from businesses.

Qualitative researchers who use multiple case studies develop an in–depth knowledge of the research phenomenon and provide extensive explanations for a business problem (Eriksson et al., 2017). Furthermore, those qualitative researchers often benefit from a multiple case study because they ask the same open–ended questions that allow the participant to expound without restrictions (Kenno et al., 2017; Windsong, 2018). In addition, the qualitative researcher establishes interview questions that later result in determining data saturation (Windsong, 2018). Therefore, deciding to use a multiple case study as the research design provides crucial raw data and information to answer the research question for this research study and investigation.

Data saturation

Data saturation is a critical element to a case study, and data saturation arises when no new theme emerges for several participants or interviews (Bobby, 2016; Kindsiko & Poltimäe, 2019; Park & Park, 2016). I interviewed participants until there was no new content arose and achieved data saturation. Marshall and Rossman (2016) indicated that data saturation is when a researcher has no additional ideals, themes, or new categories emerging from the last participant interview. I selected specific participants who interacted and exchanged information that enriched the research data. I did not continue the interview process when the redundancy of data or data saturation was evident. I ensured data saturation by interviewing until no added information during interviews or themes during analysis appeared. The interview process ended when I reached data saturation.

Population and Sampling

The population selected for this qualitative multiple case study included a purposeful sample of four small fast-food restaurant managers that have successfully used cross-cultural communication strategies to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. Qualitative researchers use purposive sampling to gather and collect data aligned with a study's purpose (Ames et al.,2019; Benoot et al., 2016). Qualitative researchers use purposeful sampling for the identification and selection process to gain valuable information about the phenomenon that the researcher will explore (Ames et al.,2019; Benoot et al., 2016). Participants successfully addressed cross-cultural communication strategies to improve employee engagement and increased productivity. Based on Bobby (2016), researchers have the critical task of making sure their participants mirror or closely represent the intended population and sample. Researchers that use a case study design use a smaller sample size to obtain detailed descriptions of the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). According to Bobby (2016) and Yin (2018), the recommended minimum number of participants for data saturation in a case study is three to four. Bobby and Yin suggested that proper population and sampling could provide insight into managers and employees with diverse cultures who share distinct cultural experiences. Based on Bobby and Yin's suggestion, I used four participants to collect data from small fast-food restaurant managers who employed cross-cultural communication strategies to improve employee engagement and increase productivity.

Qualitative researchers use purposeful sampling to evaluate and choose participants who meet specific study requirements (Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). Therefore, a researcher must consider reaching data saturation when determining a multiple case study's proper sample size (Bobby, 2016; Kindsiko & Poltimäe, 2019). Moreover, researchers must have an initial plan to interview participants from different companies to reach data saturation (Lochrie, 2016). Bobby suggested that a sample size of four participants in a case study will be highly informative and meaningful to reach data saturation (Bobby, 2016; Kindsiko & Poltimäe, 2019). Based on Bobby's recommendations, I used four participants for this multiple case study. Researchers rehearsing the same open–ended interview questions and semistructured interview techniques to the various participants from different units is another way to ensure data saturation (Baines et al., 2018; Tran et al., 2017; Yang, 2016). I asked the same open-ended interview questions to each participant to ensure data saturation.

Researchers use data saturation to ensure the adequacy and quality of the data collected, and the researcher gathers relevant data from participants (Hennink et al., 2019; Yin, 2018). The accomplishment or description to reach data saturation is when a researcher will attain enough information or redundancy within the research data (Lochrie, 2016; Vasileiou et al., 2018). According to Bobby (2016) and Yin (2018), the recommended minimum number of participants for data saturation in a case study is three to four. For example, I interviewed four managers from different units using the same interview questions to accomplish data saturation. I used the interview protocol to manage each interview process, and if I did not meet the data saturation of the four participants, the recruitment and interview process had to continue to meet data saturation.

Qualitative researchers have several options to choose from when determining what is best to obtain and gather data (Ames et al.,2019; Benoot et al., 2016). According to Saunders et al. (2016), qualitative researchers interchangeably identify purposeful sampling and judgmental sampling, meaning the same. Qualitative researchers use purposeful sampling to recognize the individuals to select who know the phenomenon, explore the importance of being available with a desire to participate, and have the zeal to articulate and reflectively express their experiences (Saunders et al., 2016). Therefore, I used purposeful sampling when selecting each participant. The population stemmed from four different small fast-food restaurant managers who successfully addressed the lack of cross-cultural communication strategies to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. The four participants had the opportunity to respond to the interview questions for the researcher to gain knowledge relating to the phenomenon of interest. The following section is ethical research.

Ethical Research

Applying ethical standards and protecting participants in a study is a vital aspect of research. Informed consent is a process related to the information given to potential participants for a study and designed for researchers not to commit harm or maleficence (Annas, 2018). Annas suggested using an informed consent form, which supported each participant's accessibility and protection. Based on Annas's recommendations, I gave an informed consent form to clarify expectations regarding the interview process. I complied with all aspects of The Belmont Report and the informed process. According to Annas (2018), the informed consent process involves (a) providing potential participants enough knowledge, (b) providing potential participants to consider options to continue or not to continue, and (c) answer participants' questions. The concluding section of the informed consent consists of information the researchers use to provide each potential participant with an understanding of their protections and rights, obtain the potential participant's voluntary agreement, and maintain open communication (Annas, 2018). The informed consent form includes a paragraph related to participants' rights to withdraw from the research at any time by notifying me via phone or by email. I reminded each participant that they could choose to withdraw from the study without a penalty, and the participant can contact me anytime via phone, email, or say so during the interview that I want to withdraw from the study. The details within an informed consent form provide and include a participant's right to withdraw from a study without consequences (Grady et al., 2017; Petrova et al., 2016). I discontinued the interviewing process with the participant if they decided not to move forward with the interview during the interview process. Therefore, I discarded notes or information associated with the discontinued interview.

I emailed prospective participants the informed consent that describes the study's aim and protections for each participant. Researchers follow the consent process are to avoid maleficence and support beneficence (Birt et al., 2016; Mwaka et al., 2018; Neubauer et al., 2019). The overreaching purpose of using informed consent is to manage a nonverbal understanding of a study and a communication link between the researcher and each participant (Ho et al., 2018). According to Annas (2018), the researcher should ensure that informed consent is a quality product with the responsibility only allocated to the researcher.

I did not offer any incentives to study participants, but I thanked each participant for voluntarily participating in this research and investigation. First, I emailed the informed consent form when an individual manager expressed interest in participating in this study. The potential participant personally replied to the email I consent or the potential participant method of agreeing with the informed consent form. Furthermore, the proposed method ensures adequate ethical protection, such as confidentiality for participants, a researcher's fundamental responsibility (Saunders et al., 2016). Next, I emailed each potential participant an email invitation to schedule the best date and time to participate in a Zoom audio interview.

I stored all information related to this study on a 256–bit Universal Serial Bus (i.e., USB) flash drive stored in a locked drawer in a locked office only accessible by the researcher. I secured all information collected from this study for 5 years. According to Reinecke et al. (2016), The researcher must know the research topic because poor–deprived researched topics may cause unethical practices.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary instrument in a qualitative research study. Furthermore, researchers are the primary data collection instrument in a qualitative research method (Clark & Vealé, 2018; Yin, 2018). The data source is semistructured interviews asking open–ended interview questions (Yin, 2018). Based on Haupt and Pillay (2016), a qualitative case study researcher can select a suitable approach for the data collection process. Qualitative researchers employing a case study design frequently use semistructured interviews to collect data (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Consequently, I created my interview questions based on this study's conceptual framework, and each open-ended question is on cross-cultural communication strategies that some small fast-food restaurants use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity.

Qualitative researchers use interview protocol to strengthen the data collection process and the researcher's data from interviews (Yin, 2018). However, the researcher should understand that adopting a protocol is critical to avoiding personal biases and wrong assumptions (Yin, 2018). I used an interview protocol to sustain consistency during the data collection process. Furthermore, I used an interview protocol guide that entails an opening script, the study's target population, purpose, the research question, interview question, and the prompt for recording. I followed the interview protocol during each interview, and I did not deviate from the outlined protocol structure and process. Qualitative researchers who do not implement and comply with an interview protocol could reduce unnecessary errors within their research outcome or data collection process (Yin, 2018). Furthermore, qualitative researchers should understand the interview protocol's use and importance to each participant's interview process (Yin, 2018).

Member checking is a process that qualitative researchers use to increase the validity of a study's findings, and it is a process they use to determine if their interpretations are accurate (Birt et al., 2016; Neubauer et al., 2019). Furthermore, Yin (2018) suggested continuing member checking if needed after a first member checking process or meeting did not fulfill the desired outcome and correct understanding. Member checking is a process used to reach and support data saturation. Therefore, I repeated member checking with participants to clarify unclear responses that assisted with reaching and supporting data saturation.

Data Collection Technique

For this qualitative multiple case study, I collected data using semistructured interviews containing six open-ended questions, company archival documentation such as project plans, strategic project goals, software specification documents, postimplementation evaluation documents, handbook, and used methodological triangulation. Case study researchers must collect data from various resources like interviews, archival records, direct observations, documents, participant observations, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2018). I started the data collection process by exploring cross-cultural communication strategies that some small fast-food restaurant managers use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity after obtaining the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

This research study's voluntary participants had to sign an informed consent form via email after deciding to participate. The potential participant decides to participate in the research study they consented by responding by email I Agree. Moreover, I provided each participant with a non-disclosure agreement to protect confidential and proprietary information during the interview. Based on Grady et al. (2017) and Yin (2018), a qualitative researcher should initiate and arrange the qualitative interviews with the participants choosing the date and time. I communicated with participants using emails and phone calls to schedule interview dates and times. According to Slišković et al. (2017), the duration of a case study interview should only be a maximum range of 30–45 minutes. I used semistructured interviews with open–ended questions during each interview. Slišković recommended that the semistructured interview technique is appropriate for a multiple case study. Therefore, based on Slišković's recommendation, I used semistructured interviews to collect data for this research study and used an interview protocol.

A researcher uses an interview protocol to guide the interview and remind study participants of their rights (Anderson et al., 2016). Qualitative researchers should use an interview protocol to remind them of the reverence and value of scripted interview instructions and repeat the same script during interviews (Anderson et al., 2016). Based on Danby et al. (2017), the researcher uses an interview protocol to maintain the structure through all interview phases. I used the interview protocol guide to conduct each interview and the interview process to support the study's entirety.

The data collection technique has some advantages and disadvantages. According to Aguinis and Solarino (2019) and Mu and Carrington (2007), the particulars of Cohen’s advantages of oral interviews as a data collection technique are as follow: The investigator has autonomy over the line of questioning, organized and uniformed data, gaining contextual insight into the topic, and the participants have an opportunity to articulate what is essential relating to their experiences.

Cohen's disadvantages are interview bias, time–consuming, less accurate, less objective, and highly individualized (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019; Mu & Carrington, 2007). Furthermore, Mu and Carrington (2007) suggested that researchers must understand that several types of data collection techniques and selecting the best type for their study will help propel the researcher's approach to collecting data. The researcher's goal is to reach data saturation (Mu & Carrington, 2007). According to Roberta et al. (2017), the investigator must differentiate the implemented approach or data collection technique's advantages and disadvantages. Qualitative researchers use the data collection technique to achieve consistent results and future research (Roberta et al., 2017). Mu and Carrington recommended that using open–ended interviews are a form of collecting data. Based on Mu and Carrington's recommendation, I collected data using semistructured techniques style interviews with open–ended questions from four different small fast-food restaurant units or multiple data sources.

Data Organization Technique

The data organization technique in qualitative research refers to a systematic process of ordering, categorizing, and arranging raw data or information gathered (Yin, 2018). I used NVivo when tracking data, maintaining research logs, maintaining reflective journals, cataloging information, and maintaining a labeling system. Each interview participant–manager, had an assigned unique alphanumeric code to protect each participant's identity and confidentiality and support the organizational aspect of collecting data. For example, I labeled the document of participant–manager with a unique alphanumeric code like Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), Participant 3 (P3), and Participant 4 (P4). I ensured the confidentiality and personal data from each participant's information protected, and I did not disclose any participant's information. No one will or needs to view the data aside from me as the researcher. Based on Abbasi et al. (2016) and Abdelhafiz et al. (2019), researchers must protect each participant's acquired personal information. I did not use any data from participants for any such purpose other than this research. I protected the data during the collection period. For example, I stored encrypted data on secure servers, removed identifiers after the data collection process, and created misleading identifiers in the presentation. I secured all participants' information saved with a unique alphanumeric code on a Universal Serial Bus (i.e., USB) flash drive.

The researcher's transcribing processes are in–depth and repeated, listening to each participant's narratives related to each open–ended question asked by the investigator (Thome, 2016). I saved the data collected into a computer after recording the interview. Furthermore, I then started the transcribing process and used Microsoft Word files to store raw data that I later transferred into NVivo. Subsequently, I completed the continual process of member checking of each participant. Finally, I coded, transcribed, and analyzed each interviewee's raw data once I moved the raw data moved into NVivo. Yin suggested using a Qualitative Analysis Data Program (QADP) to help qualitative researchers manage the raw data and identify those themes as the software could not identify. Based on Yin's suggestion, I selected NVivo software to support data analysis to prepare for the data analysis procedure.

I stored and secured all raw data for 5 years. Moreover, I deleted data from the computer, I destroyed the USB flash drive using a commercial shredder, I destroyed the study's raw data by shredding all paper copies of the research files, and I followed all The Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Walden's University data storage policy that requires 5 years. The following is the data analysis section.

Data Analysis

The thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify, analyze, organize, describe, and report themes discovered within a data set (Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Nowell et al., 2017). I used this method to identify themes, and I used the pre-codes that guided the analysis. Two of the primary goals of comparing the literature are to explain how themes support or contrast peer–review–style literature and clarify (Melkers et al., 2017). Therefore, I analyzed the relationship to the existing literature and conceptual framework.

The logical and sequential process for data analysis is Braun and Clarke’s six thematic analysis steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step thematic analysis process helped to analyze the data rigorously. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended six steps of the thematic analysis process, and they are: (a) familiarizing yourself with your data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) producing the report.

I described and shared each step of what I did during the thematic analysis process. The description and six steps of this thematic analysis process were:

1. **Become familiar with the data.** Braun and Clarke (2006) indicated that you start to familiarize yourself with their data. Therefore, I inundated–immersed myself in reading each interviewee's transcribed data multiple times while taking notes, reading documentary evidence, and marking preliminary ideas for pre–codes that can describe my content. During this point, I familiarized myself with the data and initiated ideas before coding.
2. **Begin identifying initial codes.** Braun and Clarke (2006) indicated that the researcher must begin to assign codes to their data. I analyzed and generated themes from the assigned codes from within the data, and I used the NVivo software to organize and label data to identify and generate initial codes. Next, I expanded on those initial codes from the literature review and the conceptual framework to incorporate those common concepts, repeated statements, and keywords and phrases that I discovered throughout the data.

3. **Searching for themes.** Braun and Clarke (2006) indicated that the researcher starts to sort their codes into themes. I examined initial codes and then grouped them into themes based on similarities. Yin (2018) defined themes are patterns that capture something interesting about the data and research question. Next, I arranged themes into key themes and subthemes. Finally, I used the codes to organize into key and subthemes, communicating things about the research question at the final step.
4. **Reviewing themes.** Braun and Clarke (2006) indicated that this stage involves the refinement of the researcher's themes, and this step is a more in–depth review of identifying themes. I reviewed, modified, and initially developed themes identified from step three of this process. I ensured to link all relevant data to each theme in NVivo, and I reviewed the themes for accuracy, relevance, and supportive data.
5. **Defining and naming themes.** Braun and Clarke's (2006) indicated that this stage involves refining the themes and potential subthemes within the data. To answer the research question, I organized the main themes from the broadest to the narrowest topic. I reviewed each theme and subtheme context during this final refinement step.
6. **Producing the report.** Braun and Clarke's (2006) indicated that this stage involves the researcher transforming the analysis into interpretable writing using vivid and compelling extract examples related to the themes. I used tables, figures, and charts to present the data analysis findings. I ensured that the report relays the analysis results that convince the reader of its merit and validity. Finally, I ensured that the report goes beyond the description of themes and portrays an analysis supported by empirical evidence addressing the research question.

The four methods of triangulation researchers can choose from are (a) method triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) data source triangulation (Fusch et al., 2018; Natalia & Rodrigo, 2017). Qualitative researchers that use methodological triangulation could help the researcher to validate data through cross-verification of two or more methods and is proper for case studies (Lodhi, 2016). Moreover, methodological triangulation could support the validity of information synthesized from various sources (Fusch et al., 2018; Gibson, 2017). The methodological triangulation, known as multi-method triangulation or method triangulation, is the conventional approach when researchers explore a research problem (Tracy, 2019). I used methodological triangulation to explore the problem from multiple angles, and methodological triangulation was the most suitable data analysis process for this study.

Furthermore, I used methodological triangulation to collect data by interviewing participants, examining company websites, and reviewing recently published peer-reviewed articles on cross-cultural communication. I reviewed company documents to explore each company's cross-cultural communication strategies that engage employees and increase productivity. The use of methodological triangulation helped explore the problem from various angles, and methodological triangulation was the most suitable for this study's data analysis process.

Data analysis intends to describe the cross-cultural strategies managers of small fast-food restaurants use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. Researchers conducting data analysis within qualitative case studies should use a systematic and methodological process to guarantee the findings' dependability and credibility (Yin, 2018). I used Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory to frame my data analysis. Moreover, I examined the six dimensions or the constructs (i.e., power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, indulgence, and restraint) of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory to develop codes, themes, and mapping. The following is the reliability and validity section.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

The reliability concept is when a researcher's study is repeatable because dependability is active, not passive, relating to the finished product (Andrian et al., 2018). Dependability adds rigor to the research process by expressing the researcher and participants (Bengtsson, 2016; Conz & Magnani, 2020; Kern, 2018). According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), member checking is a technique used for exploring the credibility of results. The continuous interaction with each participant during and after the interview will guarantee dependability (Bengtsson, 2016; Conz & Magnani, 2020; Varpio & Meyer, 2017).

I adopted the member checking approach for accuracy in interpretation and increased validity. The member checking approach guaranteed that I met the highest dependability and validity level; I used an interview protocol for each participant's using the same interview questions and guidelines. Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggested that reaching data saturation ensures the findings' dependability in their experiences.

Validity

Qualitative researchers addressing validity and reliability are vital, but the researcher's goal is to meet the criterion of trustworthiness within the content of qualitative analysis (Bengtsson, 2016; Conz & Magnani, 2020). Based on Bengtsson (2016) and Leal (2019), the standard criteria of trustworthiness are (a) credibility, (b) dependability, (c) transferability, and (d) confirmability. As a qualitative researcher, I addressed validity and reliability through the lens of the criterion of trustworthiness.

Credibility

Credibility is a proposition, inference, or conclusion (Thomas, 2017). The term credibility refers to the truth and confidence when a reader reads the research findings that some credibility indicators exist (Cho & Kim, 2017; Thomas, 2017). Based on Thomas (2017), qualitative researchers understand how crucial member checking is for trustworthiness. Smith and McGannon (2018) noted that a member checking method is crucial during a qualitative research process. I continued to engage with each participant using member checking to accomplish internal validity and provide confidence. Member checking and triangulation supported the credibility of the findings. Methodological triangulation involves two or more data collection methods to obtain study data (Heesen et al., 2019). Triangulation is valuable to confirm research findings, acquire more comprehensive data, and increase the data validity and understanding of the phenomenon (Bekhet & Zausniewski, 2012; Gibson, 2017; Heesen et al., 2019). I implemented methodological triangulation to support credibility by comparing interview responses to analyze the data collected from reviewing related company documents. Cho and Kim recommended that by comparing multiple data sources with any information on the study. Based on Cho and Kim's recommendation, I compared various data sources with any information relating to the study to confirm any generated findings when analyzing the data.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the research findings' consistency and reliability and drawing upon multiple sources. For example, dependability appears when other researchers can view data and reach similar findings and interpretations—building a succinct line and trail of evidence with a constant comparison of documents, member checking, prolonged engagement, and persistent observations are how to achieve dependability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Stewart et al., 2017). In addition, the researcher’s interview is one way of reducing misunderstandings by participants and bias (Selelo et al., 2017). Therefore, I documented data collection, explained participants' selection, member checking, and following an interview protocol to achieve dependability in this research study.

Transferability

Transferability entails that the researcher provides readers with evidence that a study's findings apply to related organizations or allow other researchers to form conclusions if the research findings apply to a different field (Adams et al., 2019; Cope, 2014; Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019; Yin, 2018). The researcher's responsibility for transferability is to provide a profound description by explaining an abundance of details about the context of the explored phenomenon, data collection techniques, and data analysis methods (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Yin, 2018). I thoroughly documented each step throughout the entire research and data collection process. Achieving transferability transparency is integral (Evans et al., 2018). Qualitative researchers should use the detailed descriptions of study participants and accountability, framework, and location to enhance transferability (Evans et al., 2018). I made sure to comply with the data collection and thematic analysis techniques outlined in the interview protocol, member checking, triangulation, and data saturation. The research study should move beyond compliance and a requirement–driven approach to consider trust and relevance (Evans et al., 2018). I provided detailed information about the researcher, participants, research method and design, ethical practices, data collection instruments and techniques, and data organization. This study's transferability can benefit future researchers as evidence of semistructured work used for future research to improve cross-culture communication strategies to improve employee engagement and increase productivity used by small fast-food restaurant managers.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research involves a correct and accurate interpretation of each participant's data through member checking and data triangulation (Connell, 2016). I confirmed that the study results reflect the participant perspectives presented through an objective research process, and I used NVivo software for auditing the steps I took during the data collection process. Moreover, I confirmed that each participant's response was accurate and correctly interpreted. A representation of the researcher's data collection does not reflect the investigator's biases or viewpoints (Connell, 2016; Cope, 2014; Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). Connell suggested a qualitative approach using multiple sources of data to reach data triangulation. Based on Connell’s recommendations, I used multiple data sources to reach triangulation and support confirmability.

Data saturation is a critical aspect of qualitative research, and data saturation enhances the study (Tran et al., 2017; Xenofontos, 2018). According to Kahlke (2017) and Tran et al. (2017), researchers determining data saturation are involved and dictated by the research. Qualitative researchers recognize data saturation when they reach a point where the information is redundant or has no added information (Tran et al., 2017). Schroeder and Smaldone (2017) and Xenofontos (2018) stated that data saturation is when the investigator can no longer find any new information after member checking. Researchers inspecting each theme helps minimize individual responses and improve confidence, and data saturation is when the findings are redundant, the themes surpass the data, and future coding is no longer possible (Grommon, 2018; Schroeder & Smaldone, 2017).

One way researchers guarantee data saturation is by researchers using their interview protocol during each interview (Cope, 2014; Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). The result of researchers using their interview protocol is collecting quality data from interviewees (Heydon & Powell, 2018). Based on Hancock et al. (2016) and Saunders et al. (2018), data saturation is the benchmark for validity. Achieving data saturation is a vital milestone in an excellent qualitative study, and data saturation is crucial to confirm the dependability of a study (Constantinou et al., 2017). I collected, analyzed, and coded data from each interview until I reached data saturation. According to Kahlke (2017), collecting data until there are no new themes assures data saturation within a study. I collected data until there were no new themes generated based on Kahlke's recommendations of collecting data until there were no new themes. For example, data saturation was helpful to assure the findings' dependability participants experienced cross-cultural communication strategies that engage employees and increase productivity.

Transition and Summary

This qualitative multiple case study explored cross-cultural communication strategies that some small fast-food restaurant managers used to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. In section 2, I reiterated the purpose statement. I detailed the headings for the researcher's role, participants, research method, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, data analysis, and reliability and validity. Section 2 concludes the prepared research proposal. Section 3, The Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change section, comprises an overview of the study and each central–major theme exposed from the data analysis phase. I presented the study's results, professional practice and social change recommendations, and future research recommendations. Section 3 concluded with the reflections and conditions section.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the cross-cultural communication strategies that some managers of small fast-food restaurants use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. Data were collected from four semistructured interviews with managers of small fast-food restaurants who have successfully implemented cross-cultural communication strategies. Additionally, data were acquired from documents found on the small fast-food restaurant website and related media platforms. I reviewed employee handbooks, employee benefits, culture and mission, brand, social media, and advertisements.

I identified four major themes from the thematic analysis (a) develop relationships, (b) empathy, (c) mindfulness and respect for others, and (e) training and communicating. I also identified one subtheme: Re-evaluations and measuring goals, and each theme and subtheme ties to the study findings, literature review, theory, or conclusion. These four themes and one subtheme could help managers of small fast-food restaurants improve employee engagement and increase productivity. In Section 3, I include professional practice applications and recommendations for future research, reflections, and the conclusion.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study was: What cross-cultural communication strategies do some managers of small fast-food restaurants use to engage employees and increase productivity? I collected data through semistructured interviews with participants. My objective was to answer the research question and understand the strategies that some managers of small fast-food restaurants use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. I used company documents, interviews, and methodological triangulation to validate the research findings. I maintained the participants' confidentiality by using pseudonyms: P1, P2, P3, and P4.

Using Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory as the foundational theory or conceptual framework was vital to discover the findings of this research study. I explored the cross-cultural communication strategies managers use in the United States' southern region to improve employee engagement and increased productivity for small fast-food restaurants through the lens of Hofstede's theory. After analysis of the data collected, four themes emerged–(a) develop relationships, (b) empathy, (c) mindfulness and respect for others, and (d) training and communicating–and one subtheme: Revaluations and measuring goals.

Theme 1: Developing Relationships

The first theme that emerged from the thematic analysis was developing relationships. The findings suggest that managers should develop relationships to engage employees and increase productivity for their restaurant. Restaurant managers employ and create a culture for developing relationships as a priority, resulting in positive employee engagement and productivity outcomes. Restaurant managers' mindsets and beliefs are constant interactions or characteristics of developing relationships that enhance cross□cultural communication strategies. For example, P2 described the manager's interactions and actions to developing relationships:

> Developing the relationships was not difficult. Just saying 'good morning' each day opened the relationship exchange. So, when it was time to have a difficult conversation,

the relationship had already been established to help the conflict have a favorable and positive outcome.

P4 stated, "We as managers had to understand our culture behaviors, feelings, interactions, and actions to understand other cultures." Participants explained how to develop relationships and why it is not difficult to interact and establish cross‑cultural communication strategies within the work environment. For example, managers understood they had to learn to be diverse and educate themselves on cultures. Business researchers have explained that developing relationships or the process of engaging employees is a psychological state driven by passion and directed by behavioral energy (He et al., 2019). Participants were passionate about developing relationships to create fair and favorable outcomes that engage employees and increase productivity. For example, P2 said, "I think the first approach I used is asking questions; I think my whole goal is being able to relate to my followers."

Developing Relationships and the Construct of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory.

The question asked in the conceptual framework that correlates with the constructs from Hofstede's theory of individualism versus collectivism was analyzed and aligned with developing relationships. The individualism versus collectivism construct of Hofstede's theory and the theme of developing relationships aligned with the impacts of individualism-collectivism had on improving cross-cultural communication and increasing productivity. This study's findings suggest that developing relationships provided participants with a strategy for developing relationships and keeping managers informed of actions to appreciate other cultures and their cross-cultural communicational behaviors and beliefs. The findings indicate that employing strategies for developing relationships helped inspire different methods available for developing relationships. Chakraborty (2017) and Hsieh (2015) reported that developing relationships is identified as a collectivist culture that recognizes values and exemplifies authentic harmonies of family relationships. Hofstede et al. (2010) asserted that organizations dependent on within-groups could affect the proper outcome of developing relationships. Two of the four participants talked about learning from others and developing relationships. P1 stated, “Managers must sacrifice their comfort zone or give up something to learn about others and their culture to develop relationships.” The crucial aspect of developing relationships and those contributing to creating the learning of cultures represents what it takes for organizations to reach the anticipated outcome of developing relationships. P1 further stated, “Once those employees understand what managers are attempting to achieve, they should reverberate those values that lead to developed relationships.” Furthermore, participants indicated that developing relationships was necessary for their restaurant business.

P2 stated, “Organizations with developed relationships find it easier for managers to have fair and positive exchanges, but managers tend to anticipate conflict–style exchanges.” Furthermore, developing relationships could help managers create a win–win work culture with specific individuals and local communities where the small fast-food restaurants are located. P1 and P2 talked about having programs that help maintain relationships within a work culture and the communities. For example, P2 stated, “[Managers] have teams and programs to maintain a relationship environment.” Vidales (2017) revealed that listening and speaking communication is a model for a manager to comply when developing relationships. Developing relationships is about a manager’s conscientious efforts to understanding work culture and the cultural behavior of the diverse cultures within their operation.

The findings of this study suggest that the theme of developing relationships aligns with the construct of collectivism versus individualism from Hofstede's theory. Hofstede's (1983) theory promoted the construct and dimension of collectivism versus individualism as managers who identify conditions linked to collectivism and act relationally or express well–being to a group. Borisova et al. (2017) and Farivar et al. (2016), Solmazer et al. (2016) argued that qualities of a collectivist–style culture could reflect the sorting and arrangement of groups within the same group. Managers create a collectivist–style culture when individuals share their organizations' behaviors and values around collectivism (Borisova et al., 2017). A collectivist culture recognizes values, training programs, excellent skills and exemplifying authentic harmonies of family–style relationships (Borisova et al., 2017). Therefore, creating a collectivist–style culture is critical to small fast-food restaurants when developing relationships.

Developing Relationships and Business Practice

Hurn and Tormalin (2013) and Nguyen-Phuong-Mai (2020) argued that a manager's primary goal is to develop the relationship between culture and communication. Hurn and Tormalin (2013) argued that cross-cultural communication intertwines with concepts, ideas, theories, and scholarship topics like cultural studies and cultural diversities. For example, P4 stated,

> If structured correctly, there can be a win–win in a synergetic situation, so how we deal with it when we try to set up this win–win, we must try to appreciate all the perspectives, meaning my perspective or everybody's perspective.

Vidales (2017) noted that communicating both verbally and nonverbal is a method of cross-culture communication and developing relationships.

Richter et al. (2016) explained that formal or less formal concepts support organizations in managing policies and best practices relating to how managers address cultural values and develop relationships. Understanding various cultures and communication helps managers grasp clear cross-cultural communication strategies (Vidales, 2017). Cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural communication strategies require managers to communicate to diverse employees with distinctive styles and individuals within the business culture for developing relationships (Lifintsev & Wellbrock, 2019; Vidales, 2017).

Summary of Developing Relationships

Some participants agreed that developing relationships and being confident that cross-cultural communication happens within the organization is essential—; a manager who empowers and implements a culture that develops relationships positively impacts the restaurant's success. Furthermore, the construct of Hofstede's theory of individualism versus collectivism is essential to developing relationships within organizations (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013; Nguyen-Phuong-Mai, 2020).

Beugelsdijk et al. (2017) and Hofstede et al. (2010) stated that Hofstede defines culture as a collective programming of minds to differentiate one group from another. Hofstede's theory supports and understands diverse cultures and how the theory coexists with culture and workplace culture relationships. Beugelsdijk et al. (2017) found that values affect employees' and managers' philosophical views of success and accomplishment, work performance, leadership, and diverse social relationships, relevant to Hofstede's theory. The findings of this study are consistent with supporting a manager's approach of developing relationships, which links to the purpose statement as a strategy that managers use to explore cross-cultural communication strategies that some managers of small fast-food restaurants use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. In addition, the findings of this study are consistent with the related and contrasting theory of transformational leadership theory.

Transformational leadership is a theory that focuses on transforming others by developing relationships. Managers must first develop relationships to be transformational managers (Esmi et al., 2017; Jackson, 2017; Kwan, 2020). For example, managers should understand that developing relationships helps to transform people or employees. Therefore, managers who use transformational leadership develop relationships with individuals and employees as a critical strategy.

Theme 2: Empathy

The second theme that emerged from the thematic analysis was empathy. The findings suggest that managers practice empathy to engage employees and increase productivity for their restaurant. The participants' responses suggest that developing a work culture of empathy between managers and employees could lead to employees' optimistic outcomes and increase productivity. Managers believe that understanding what other people think and how they feel in given situations enhances cross□cultural communication. For example, P3 described manager interactions and actions. "Putting myself always in the other person's shoes while humoring them is my way of interactions to empathy." P4 defined the term and how managers should understand the theme of empathy.

> When I [the manager] say empathy, you can have someone's perspective, but my favorite feeling is appreciated for employees, and that means not only know what that perspective is but be able to feel the importance of it.

P4 also gave an actual example of a manager's position of empathy.

> I put myself in their position–then address what I would be thinking about at this time because I am human, just like my employees. [However,] for them to first accomplish that self-awareness is excellent because some of us try, but we are not even congruent with ourselves (P4).

Thus, P4 explained how managers view empathy and how it first starts with the self or self-awareness. Furthermore, P4 suggested that empathy is a crucial element of cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural communication strategies.

The business relevance of empathy between managers and employees is an integral part of the cross-culture communication strategy and the pursuit of cultural goals. Van den Heuvel et al. (2016) explained that cross-culture communication and communication create attributes like short and long–term goals, camaraderie, and measuring critical success when developing and managing cross-culture communication strategies. Participants were passionate about displaying empathy, humility, and understanding the need for engaged employees and increased productivity.

Empathy and the Construct of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

The question asked in the conceptual framework that correlates with the constructs from Hofstede's theory of masculinity versus femininity was analyzed and aligned with empathy. The conceptual framework question was: How has masculinity–femininity affected the emotional and social roles of improving cross-cultural communication and increasing productivity? Most participants expressed the need for managers to project empathy and focus on the care and concern of people (e.g., employees) and their feelings within the organization. Hofstede et al.'s

(2010) Hofstede's theory construct focuses on femininity but not on collectivist values, which helps someone in need from a diverse ethnic group, illustrates a cultural feminist, not the values of a collectivist. Solmazer et al. (2016) argued that Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory focused on masculinity–femininity, and society–cultures respond to characteristics like empathy, caring, relationships in their environment, and the quality of life.

P4 articulated and expounded on how managers' subconscious and conscious characteristics should be honest and natural. "Being honest with yourself and having a good understanding of who you are, what you are honest about, or natural is key to empathy." Furthermore, having a good understanding of the self assists with putting oneself in someone else's experience relating to life.

Hofstede et al. (2010) discovered that managers' empathy and femininity share the same mindset for caring and placing others as caring human beings and the organization's long-term well–being. For example, P3 said, "When individuals know that you care and you are honest, they are more prone to listen and do what is needed and done." All participants alluded that empathy should develop organically and progressively, with minimum to high levels of training. The participant explained how managers organically and personally are conscious of expressing empathy. For example, P4 stated, "I try to be humble and not domineering but answer as many perspectives and many different answers, and I so trying to be open to everybody's perspective." The construct of femininity or caring and placing others as caring human beings correlates with empathy and how managers express empathy with their employees. The following section is an analysis of and the link between the theme of empathy and communication.

Empathy and Business Practice

Abayadeera et al. (2018) argued that managers should intensely involve themselves in the intercultural and cross-cultural communication processes with employees to overcome the challenges of low levels of empathy by emphasizing managers to be more empathetic. Zhu and Fu (2019) contended that cross-cultural communication has always been a critical strategy a manager use when implementing successful communication strategies that consist of empathy. Alcaide-Muñoz et al. (2018) stated that organizational culture experiences a lack of productivity, the suffering of quality, and resentment and empathy. One participant explained some critical elements of the resentment from the lack of empathy and if managers ignore and exhibit inadequate non-verbal and verbal communication. For example, P4 stated,

> When I [the manager] say empathy, you can have someone's perspective, but my favorite feeling is appreciated *for employees* [emphasis added], and that means not only know what that perspective is but be able to feel the importance; of it.

One participant explained the result of communication empathy and how employees feel emotionally with empathetic managers. The participant proved that an appropriate communication strategy is critical for managers to exhibit to preserve a culture of empathy. For example, P4 stated, "When individuals [employees] know that you care and are honest, they are more prone to listen and do what is needed. They want to know that you care and that they are essential and appreciated."

Ai et al. (2018) suggested that managers meet communication challenges from future employees' perspectives and a global mindset of being culturally comfortable within a cross-cultural communication business environment. Furthermore, Vidales (2017) defined the communication model as an equation with two active components: Listening equals speaking. Bhayani (2017) and Bormane and Šķiltere (2018), and Marlow et al. (2017) stated that a communication exchange happens between two or more individuals, leading to a vibrant organizational culture of empathy. Chater and Courtenay (2019) suggested that communication is skill managers need for positive outcomes and training to enhance confidence, and the skill and confidence of communication is the driving force of an organization. Furthermore, Botez (2018) explained that change has not happened if managers do not communicate or efficiently exchange messaging, the highest priority for employees. The empathy of managers could lead to a healthier communication process with employees and enhance confidence based on the findings. Pilditch et al. (2020) argued that empathy or individuals develop the capacity to communicate with a high priority for people could create an environment of camaraderie and measuring critical success. The following section summarizes the theme of empathy.

Summary of Empathy

Each preceding section from the theme empathy consisted of analysis and the findings of this study. First, I analyzed the results of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory construct of masculinity versus femininity over empathy. In this study, I found that empathy is crucial to masculinity versus femininity—the empathy or caring for people within an organization by communication and appreciation of their stakeholders. Managers are empowered to maintain consciousness to identify the needs and challenges within an organization to change outcomes.

The demanding expectation placed on managers is maintaining a learning mindset that provides the foundation of organizational culture. Chater and Courtenay (2019) stated that maintaining managers in various communication approaches is a skill needed to enhance confidence, and communication skills are at the forefront and foundation of organizations. The findings suggested that managers teach employees the organization's culture and focus on ideals and values. Furthermore, when culture change happens within an organization, managers should participate in the training process and help promote an environment of caring, communicating, and listening.

The theme of empathy aligns with Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory construct of masculinity versus femininity. Furthermore, feminine society–culture responds to characteristics like caring, relationships in their environment, and the quality of life (Hofstede et al., 2010). Managers accept the responsibility of how work culture chooses to emphasize achievements and the nurturing of employees. The managerial structure of restaurants responds to the ever–changing cultures within the work culture, and managers introduce training plans of empathy–an organization's values linking to engaging employees and increasing productivity (Hofstede et al., 2010). Vidales (2017) stated that two different communication components impact employee engagement and increase productivity, and the two components are listening and speaking.

The findings of this research study align with the literature based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory construct of masculinity versus femininity (Hofstede, 1980). Based on the findings, managers focus on engaging employees, increasing productivity, and maintaining femininity over masculinity. Furthermore, within this study, managers developed a strategic verbal and nonverbal modal through training managers and employees, created an implementation strategy, and a performance model with the assistance of employees. The findings consist of managers' empathy awareness as a strategy to create and implement this culture into their business. This research study's findings are linked to the purpose statement that managers use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. In addition, the findings of this study are consistent with the related and contrasting theory of anxiety/uncertainty management theory; in the following paragraph, I linked the theory and theme of empathy.

AUM theory is that managers must understand what other people think and how that feel or empathy. Gudykunst (1990) proposed that managers should study how to communicate between people from different cultures and individuals of the same cultures to understand how to express empathy. For example, managers should intermingle with different cultures to share their experiences to convey empathy. However, managers who interact with intercultural people and groups tend to care for people or empathize. The following section is an analysis of the theme of mindfulness and respect for others.

Theme 3: Mindfulness and Respect for Others

The third theme that emerged from the thematic analysis was mindfulness and respect for others. The findings suggested that managers should practice mindfulness and respect for others to engage employees and increase productivity for their restaurant. Being mindful of the cultural differences of employees and people is essential, and having respect for people's differences. Two out of four participants agreed that using mindfulness and respect for others is necessary to engage employees and increase productivity. For example, P1 stated, “To overcome barriers when practicing cross-cultural communication within the organization and the different environment of each employee or where they stemmed [originated] from *their cultural background* [emphasis added].” Participants made it clear through their responses to ensure that mindfulness and learning critical gestures are synonymous. P1 stated, “Another area *to ensure mindfulness* [emphasis added] was learning critical gestures while communicating. For example, learning different ways to say hello, welcome, how are you, please, thank you, good luck, goodbye, and many other vital gestures." One of the four participants explained that when respecting others, one could expect that same respect. P4 stated,

> To respect each employee's difference, and most employees will reciprocate that same respect or give the same type of respect back, and I want to make sure people understand that mindfulness and that is a level of respect to others.

The participants explained how managers view mindfulness and respect for others and how it is vital to the organizational culture—mindfulness and respect for others are crucial elements of cross□cultural communication and cross□cultural communication strategies. Mega (2017) urged that managers' effectiveness of mindfulness and respect consisted of cultural sensitivity, having no cultural biases, and having culturally responsive skills. Furthermore, the participants were passionate about mindfulness and respect for others that engaged employees and increased productivity.

Mindfulness and Respect for Others and Construct of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

The question asked in the conceptual framework that correlates with Hofstede's theory constructs was indulgence versus restraint analyzed and aligned with mindfulness and respect for others. The conceptual framework question was: How has an indulgence or restraint culture affected the improvement of cross-cultural communication and increased productivity? Most of the participants conversed those managers need to exercise mindfulness and respect for others and have managers pay closer attention and connect more with employees.

As proposed by Hofstede et al. (2010), Hofstede's theory focuses on the indulgence versus restraint construct that links expression and passion, in which indulgence is about free gratification. Hofstede et al. (2010) and Hurn and Tormalin (2013) explained that a high indulgence rate freely fulfills managers' essential needs and aspirations to improve and affect the cross-cultural communication work philosophy. Borisova et al. (2017) and Gibson and Sullivan (2018), and Hurn and Tormalin (2013) argued that Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory that managers should maintain a focus indulgence over restraint because of its impact on culture and how it shapes human activities within a workplace. For example, one participant provided an instance of the construct of indulgence and how it looks and feels between employees and employers. P3 stated,

> The problem is people feeling ignored, and dissatisfied emotions set in because employees can tell if someone is trying to work with them and be part of society. Employees are not feeling *or do not want to feel* [emphasis added] like somebody just trying to dictate them to help the manager succeed.

Also, P3 gave a similar response to how managers should think within an indulgence culture, and the participant stated, "I try to be very aware of myself not to have blind spots, prejudice, and biases." Finally, Minkov (2018) argued that an indulgence culture or a cultural with freedom of speech outlines the general situation of mindfulness and respect for others to maintain cultural reactions and behaviors.

Mindfulness and Respect for Others and Business Practice

Mega (2017) discovered that managers should focus on being mindful and respectful because these behaviors create the effectiveness of cultural sensitivity, like no cultural biases and experiencing culturally responsive skills. Furthermore, Mega (2017) found that behaviors are different in diverse work cultures, and the conciseness of communication exchanges among the various languages are known as activities related to race, religion, and educational levels. Managers should understand their influences on cross-cultural communication relationships and effectiveness within the work community that present new communication challenges. For example, P1 stated,

> We had to find new ways to communicate and understand the different cultures. We realize that there are several facets of cultures within each employee's culture. When communicating, do not have perceptions of the employee's cultural differences.

Hurn and Tormalin (2013) found that cross-cultural communication strategy and effectiveness stems from an individual personality, national characteristics, an employee's work culture, and professional development, and each relates to the different personalities. P4 stated, "We as managers had to understand our own culture behaviors, feelings, interactions, and actions to understand other cultures." Furthermore, Breevaart and de Vries (2017) discovered that one could observe the lack of cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural communication strategies in the form of an abusive manager who exercises nonphysical, verbal, or non-verbal aggression to employees. For example, one of the four participants expressed an example of proper cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural communication strategies. P4 provided an example, and the participant stated, "When a manager needs to retrain an employee on any matter, the employee respects and appreciates how the manager uses a teaching approach or that [similar] approach." Cambridge and Hawkes (2017) and Hendri (2019) and Purwadi et al. (2020), and Sabuhari et al. (2020) concluded that managers with responsibilities given to achieve the organization's desired cultural vision like cross-cultural communication strategy would be a help to reach their objective.

Summary of Mindfulness and Respect for Others

Each preceding previous section from the theme mindfulness and respect for others consisted of analysis and the findings of this study. An analysis of the findings as it related to Hofstede's (1983) cultural dimensions theory construct of indulgence versus restraint and examined the findings as it relates to the business practice of cross-cultural communication strategies (Borisova et al., 2017; Gibson & Sullivan, 2018; and Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Two out of four participants shared that their manager's focus on maintaining a free-minded work culture or a culture of indulgence over restraint improved cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural communication strategies between managers and employees. P2 stated, “No matter who the staff members were or whether they are frontline to a manager, they all mattered because they are essential to the health of the company unit.” Furthermore, based on the findings of this research study, small fast-food restaurants and managers impact society through job growth and improve local agencies like police and fire departments. These improvements take on many different forms, including job fairs, tax dollars allocated in the local community, public workshops to address societal issues, and creating forms for the people to speak and managers to listen. From these findings, managers who practice mindfulness and respect for others align with managers who make available managers pay keen attention and connect with employees.

The construct of Hofstede's (1983) theory of indulgence versus restraint links to the theme of mindfulness and respect for others as the manager’s focus is on building a work environment that appreciates the necessity for cross-cultural communication for all employees. Josan et al. (2019) argued that an optimal communication process is ideal when managers listen and are respectful during a communication exchange (e.g., listening than speaking). Abayadeera et al. (2018) stated that managers should intensely involve themselves in cross-cultural communication with employees to overcome the challenges. Furthermore, the complexity of the structure of a manager managing a fast-food restaurant creates difficulty measuring mindfulness and respect for others within the organization (Xiao et al., 2018).

In business practice, managers should understand their influences on cross-cultural communication relationships and effectiveness within the work community that present new communication challenges (Mega, 2017). The managers' responsibility for high indulgence is the essential need and aspiration to improve and affect the cross-cultural communication philosophy and strategy (Hofstede et al., 2010; Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Managers who exercise effective cross-cultural communication strategies identify opportunities for using programs to improve their communities (Chen & Weng, 2017).

The findings of this study align with the literature based on the conceptual framework that correlates with the constructs from Hofstede's theory of indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede et al., 2010). Furthermore, Gibson and Sullivan (2018) suggested that small fast-food restaurants impact society through job growth and improve local agencies. Furthermore, the discovery of these findings implied that managers should focus on cross-cultural communication strategies, like maintaining a free–minded work culture with mindfulness and respect for others. The final finding from this generated theme was how managers should listen and be respectful with each employee (e.g., others) during an exchange. Furthermore, this links to the purpose statement or the strategy some small fast-food restaurant managers use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. In addition, the findings of this study are consistent with the related and contrasting theory of attribution theory; and the following paragraph links the theory and theme of mindfulness and respect for others.

Attribution theory is a theory that managers use to understand how to analyze and respond to individuals or expressing mindfulness and respect for others. Lowery and Burrow (2019) and Méndez López (2020), and Ruybal and Siegel (2019) asserted that attribution theory desires to help managers understand how to analyze and respond to others' behaviors or to personify the mindfulness and respect for others. Therefore, managers who personify that wiliness concerning themselves with understanding the different cultures, emotions, and stereotypes within the work culture express mindfulness and respect for others.

Theme 4: Training and Communicating

The fourth and final central theme that emerged from the thematic analysis was training and communicating. The key suggested findings were that managers should implement training and communication for employee engagement and increase productivity for their restaurant. In addition, managers employing training and communicating with their employees are ways for tailoring individual employees' specific needs.

The participant's responses suggested that developing a work environment and culture of training and communicating between managers and employees could lead to positive employee engagement and increased productivity. Managers believe that supporting employees with specific training and understand communication strategies could enhance cross-cultural communication. For example, the participant's responses described the manager's strategy and how communicating the supporting training levels impacts training and communication within the organization. P2 stated, “In terms of communication, the staff is divided into three levels of support." The same participant described the tier levels and how managers used them to support employees properly with training. P2 stated, "Based on the identified tier, the staff member receives that level of support, and the communication is honest and tailored to the level of need."

Furthermore, the participant reiterated the tiers, levels, and elements of the system. For example, P2 stated, "The three–level tier system is Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3." The manager explained that the three-tier system supports employees with training and interventions. The participant then explained the three–level tier support. For example, P2 stated, "Our company has three-level tier support that we use to provide support to employees who need training and interventions."

For example, P4 stated, "We created a program that gave employees immediate feedback relating to promotions and raises or pay increase-money [emphasis added]." Two participants expressed a similar training program that provided instant feedback, and the program help to changed employees' pay scale. Finally, P3 responded to how training and communicating aligns. For example, P3 stated, "We have an open line of communication for our employees by providing a helpline that allows employees to add suggestions, and if used, then we give them an incentive."

Three of the four participants asserted how managers view training and communicating and how it starts with managers. For example, most participants suggested that training and communication are vital in cross-cultural communication and strategies. The business relevance of training and communicating between managers and employees is a fundamental aspect of cross-cultural communication strategy and the pursuit of cross-cultural goals. Hurn and Tormalin (2013) and Nguyen-Phuong-Mai (2020) argued that cross-cultural communication intertwines with concepts and ideas, but the manager's fundamental goal is to help welcome the relationship between culture and communication within an organization. Furthermore, the participants demonstrated through their responses that they were passionate about employing training and communicating with their employees and the need for employee engagement and increasing productivity.

Training and communicating and Construct of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

The question asked in the conceptual framework that correlates with Hofstede's theory constructs was: What effect has short–term and long–term orientation focused on improving cross-cultural communication and increasing productivity? Most participants agreed that managers need to employ training and communication, and managers maintain a connection with employees. The findings of this study suggested that the theme of training and communicating aligns with Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory construct long–term versus short–term orientation. Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory construct is related to long-term versus short-term orientation. Beugelsdijk et al. (2017) stated that cultural and cross-cultural researchers use Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory to understand diverse cultures. Beugelsdijk et al. (2017) argued that managers are responsible for the way values affect employees' and success and accomplishment, work performance, leadership, and diverse social relationships. Hofstede et al. (2010) and Hurn and Tormalin (2013), and Mohammed and Tejay (2017) found that short-term versus long-term orientation provides oneness and value for each other and being training partners and making sure employees receive their expected and desired rapid feedback from decision-making areas like quick profits, job evaluations, and employee promotions. A participant explained how working together and creating training partners could create a work culture of oneness and experience cultures. For example, P4 stated,

> We created teams to work together and training partners. The objective was to create oneness or learn to value each other. Now, this did not eliminate the ego of some employees, but it did allow them to experience other ways to view people of different cultures.

Managers with a mindset of focusing on Hofstede's theory and taking short-term and long-term orientation focus on persistence, perseverance, or emphasizing the present than the future (Hurn and Tormalin, 2013). Managers impact employees when they train efficiently and provide good communication (Hofstede et al., 2010). Furthermore, the lack of employees-people making predictions of life's philosophies, strong creeds, and educational achievement could negatively affect the support from employees (Hofstede et al., 2010; Hofstede, 2011). Participant 3 stated, "We *managers always* [emphasis added] have an open line of communication for our employees by providing a helpline *for long–term goals* [emphasis added] that allows employees to add suggestions, and if used, and we give them an incentive."

Chakraborty (2017) and Hsieh (2015), and Hurn and Tormalin (2013) argued that training and communicating motivate short–term versus long–term orientation culturally because of Confucian Dynamism, which is the origin of this dimensional construct. For example, the construct explains employees' cultural mindsets and thinking like Eastern and Western worlds (Chakraborty, 2017; Hsieh, 2015; Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). One participant spoke of how upper-management plays an intricate part in training and communicating through on–site visits. For example, P3 stated, "We followed up with upper managers on–site visits and training, and the context of the visits was to help train managers to train employees and work together with employees." Lee et al. (2017) concurred that a high–performing organizational culture encourages employee involvement. For example, employees and employees are supportive of each other, and employees exemplify interdependency amongst themselves.

SubTheme: Re-evaluations and Measuring Goals

The subtheme that emerged from the thematic analysis was re-evaluations and measuring goals. The findings suggested that managers implementing re-evaluations and measuring goals should enhance employee engagement and increase productivity within a restaurant work culture. Managers employing re-evaluations and measuring goals are vital to a restaurant organization because they could affect cross-cultural communication strategies that enhance employee engagement and increase productivity. For example, managers implementing open-door communication with employees using this subtheme and technique may sometimes become awkward but could enhance employee engagement and increase productivity. One participant agreed that using a re-evaluation mindset during an open–door exchange helped the manager stay focused and not entertain disputes and quarrels. P3 stated,

> During an open-door exchange, if something disrupted does happen, that gives them *employees* [emphasis added] an opportunity to escalate the problem; [however,] I, *the manager* [emphasis added], must re-evaluate the situation during any boiling point conversation to refocus it. If I did not re-evaluate to refocus during this open communication exchange, nothing would get resolved or communicated.

Managers measuring goals are essential to engage employees and increase productivity. For example, managers use different tools to understand what works or does not work within the organization. One of the participants explained how to measure goals. P4 stated, “It was necessary for us as managers to look at trends and patterns and see what worked and did not work. This way, new strategies could be explored and implemented.” Lee et al. (2017) and Ma and Ye (2019), and Simpao (2018) argued that the concept of productivity or employee productivity is better known as workforce productivity but broadly defined as a worker's efficiency or a performance gauge that measures an employee's efficiency and effectiveness. The participants' responses expressed and revealed that re-evaluations and measuring goals are essential to cross-cultural communication strategies.

Re-evaluations and Measuring Goals and Construct of Hofstede’s Theory

The findings of this study show that the theme re-evaluations and measuring goals mission-focused align with the long–term versus short–term orientation dimensions and construct. The re-evaluations and measuring goals theme links to Hofstede’s (1980) cultural dimensions theory construct of long–term versus short–term orientation dimensions. Responses from P1, P2, P3, and P4 revealed they employed re-evaluations and measuring goals and with each participant recognizing that the actions or this theme were part of their continuous improvement. For example, P1 stated,

> I [Manager] do not think we factored these two mindsets when implementing cross-cultural communication strategies well enough, but it was part of the continuous improvement aspect of the implementation. We later noticed that some employees were egotistical or selfish, so to speak, while others cared for others. To solve this problem, we created teams to work together.

Kim and Jang (2019) and Lee et al. (2017) argued that productivity or employee productivity in today's global marketplace, like the service industry, enhances their efficiency and productivity levels to increase their bottom–line. One participant re-evaluated and measured goals by monitoring trends and patterns. P2 stated, “It was necessary to look at trends and patterns and see what worked and what did not work. This way, new strategies could be explored and implemented.” Kim and Jang (2019) and Lee et al. (2017), and Simpao (2018) argued that the challenge is achieving productivity gains by creating engaging employees. P1 positioned that “we [managers] are having to transition the face–to–face training to establishing an online training soon.” Furthermore, A participant explained that the inclusion program could enhance employee engagement by implementing programs based on assessments. P1 stated,

> The inclusion program helped win those low acceptance to get on board with the new implementations one day. P1 stated that “When having company meetings, making sure we take time at the end to answer any questions and provide an explanation to specific things that was not understood.”

Fast-food restaurant managers should use cross-cultural communication strategies to engage employees and increase productivity goals. Improving employee productivity improves a company's bottom line (Kim & Jang, 2019). The findings on re-evaluated and measured goals correlate with the conceptual framework in that cross-cultural communication strategies engage employees, increase productivity, and effectively perform, observe, or model their manager.

Training and Communicating and Business Practice

Cesário and Chambel (2019) and Yaakobi and Weisberg (2018) stated that promoting productivity or employee productivity within businesses that invest in human resources training strategies enhances communication. Ritsri and Meeprom (2020) posited that service organizations improving their employee productivity levels added knowledge management training programs with communication skills. A participant–manager described a communicating strategy and the approach they used when communicating with their employees. For example, P1 stated, “Our strategy was to be neutral and maintain a neutral approach when we are communicating strategies.” Kim and Jang (2019) indicated that an increase in training and communication within a cross-culture work environment that implements cross-culture communication strategies improves employee engagement and increases productivity.

Lee et al. (2017) explained that managers' challenge of productivity and growth supports how managers address training and communication methods. Managers' understanding of productivity or employee productivity with cultures helps to understand cross-cultural communication strategies (Ma & Ye, 2019). Cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural communication strategies impact managers' communication and training employees appropriately (Vidales, 2017). A manager–participant explained how they applied their understanding of training and communication but maintained productivity or employee productivity. P1 stated,

> Our company had us *managers* [emphasis added] to read specific books to learn about different cultures. We had to learn how to be tolerant with different groups or the most dominant group, and we accomplished that by developing simple communication when training employees on the new strategies.

Richter et al. (2016) contended that managers should acquire the aptitude and skills to implement and employ training and communication techniques to create cross-cultural communication strategies. P4 stated,

> We have an indirect communication approach we use when correcting employees. For example, we will address something positive, then end addressing the opportunity problem, and we always listen and keep an open mind.

Subtheme Re-evaluations and Measuring Goals and Business Practice

The subtheme that emerged from the thematic analysis was re-evaluations and measuring goals. Lee et al. (2017) argued that a manager's primary goal is re-evaluations and measuring goals. Furthermore, productivity within the services industry, such as restaurants, is operationalized to measure values, cultures, and communication strategies reflected as a different strategy (Lee et al., 2017). One of the four participants expressed and explained an example of re-evaluations and measuring goals within an organization. P1 stated, "It was necessary to do individual assessments and get to know your observations for all staff. Once their characteristics were identified and analyzed, developing a relationship with the staff member was necessary." Eldor (2017) argued that businesses' and managers' roles and responsibilities are harder to distinguish because of a fast–changing business environment, and re-evaluations and measuring goals are essential.

Cesário and Chambel (2017) and Yaakobi and Weisberg (2018) expounded those managers applying general performance and measurable productivity predictors are one of the noted ways to evaluate their employee's effectiveness, and those predictors are (a) quality, (b) innovation, and (c) efficiency. P2 said that,

> Ongoing support was in the continuation of the relationship. The managers checked in biweekly or monthly to see how the individuals were progressing. If the adjustment was needed, then that conversation took place. If additional support was needed, then a plan was put in place to increase support.

The participant explains an example of an organization that employs the subtheme of re-evaluations and measuring goals. Furthermore, businesses view employee engagement as being actively involved with their work and highly intrinsic physically, cognitively, and emotionally involved with their job duties (Knight et al., 2017).

Summary of Training and Communicating

The previous sections provided an analysis of the theme of training and communicating and the findings from this study. In addition, an analysis of the findings from this study relates to Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory construct of short–term and long–term orientation and an analysis of the findings from this study as it relates to the business practice of productivity or employee productivity (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017; Chakraborty, 2017; Farivar et al., 2016; Hofstede, 1980; Hsieh, 2015; Hurn & Tormalin, 2013; and Solmazer et al., 2016). Participants shared their collaborative approach to cross-cultural communication strategies with employees, fostering training and communicating in cross-cultural communication strategies and showing employees' value within their organization. This study demonstrates that small fast-food restaurant managers accepted by their employees offer needed communication training. Furthermore, the managers that employed proper communication saw productivity and created a cross-cultural communication work culture.

The findings of this study align with the literature based on the construct short-term and long-term orientation of Hofstede's theory, which links to cross-cultural communication strategies through productivity or employee productivity (Chakraborty, 2017). First, fast-food restaurant managers found that short–term versus long–term orientation provides oneness and value for each other and training partners (Hofstede et al., 2010). Second, it was evident from the findings that employees and employees should support each other to fulfill the training and communication approach. Third, managers applied cross-cultural communication, and cross-cultural communication strategies effectively impact managers' communication and training (Vidales, 2017). Fourth, it was evident from the findings that managers should acquire the aptitude and skills to implement and employ training and communication techniques to create cross-cultural communication strategies. The fourth theme links to the purpose statement that some small fast-food restaurant managers use cross-cultural communication strategies to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. In addition, the findings of this study are consistent with the related and contrasting theory of transformational leadership theory; and the following paragraph links the theory and theme of training and communicating.

Transformational leadership theory is a theory that focuses on fostering people with training and communicating. For example, Kwan (2020) argued that four components of communicating with employees nurture people with training and communicating processes, and they are (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. Therefore, managers who implement and communicate those four components communicated to foster people while training them to understand the importance of training and communicating to help transform people and employees. Therefore, a manager must use transformation leadership theory to help focus the training on a communicating aspect of developing people.

Subtheme Summary of Re-evaluations and Measuring Goals

Each preceding section from the theme re-evaluations and measuring goals consisted of analysis and the findings of this study. Most participants agreed that managers should implement re-evaluations and measuring goals to enhance cross-cultural communication strategies within an organization. Furthermore, the construct of Hofstede’s theory of short–term and long–term orientation is essential to re-evaluations and measuring goals within an organization (Hurn & Tormalin, 2013). Managers who empower and implement a work culture re-evaluate and measure goals will influence employees' success and impact the organization.

Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory supports understanding re-evaluations and measuring goals and how Hofstede’s theory coexists within the workplace and outside the work culture. For example, Lee et al. (2017) and Ma and Ye (2019), and Simpao (2018) found that the concept of productivity or employee productivity is better known as workforce productivity but broadly defined as a worker's efficiency or a performance gauge that measures an employee's efficiency and effectiveness. The findings of this study support the manager’s approach of re-evaluations and measuring goals which link to the purpose statement that managers use to explore cross-cultural communication strategies that some small fast-food restaurant managers use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. In addition, the findings of this study are consistent with the related and contrasting theory of attribution theory; and the following paragraph links the theory and theme of re-evaluations and measuring goals.

Attribution theory is a theory that managers use to understand people or employees' how and why or re-evaluates and measure goals. For example, Martinko (2018) and Méndez López (2020) stated that a manager's goal is to make sense of the empirical assessments of someone's actions, behaviors, and decisions or the process of re-evaluating and measuring employee goals. Therefore, managers should continuously re-evaluate and measure goals to make sense of people's actions for the evaluation. In addition, managers re-evaluate and measure goals to understand the employee's specific needs and direction for training purposes.

Applications to Professional Practice

This section is about the analysis of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory and the findings of this study. This subsection aimed to analyze why and how the findings are relevant to successfully implementing cross-cultural communication strategies. The specific business problem is that some small fast-food restaurant managers lack cross-cultural communication strategies to engage employees and increase productivity. Furthermore, this research study may benefit other small and large restaurants and managers within the foodservice sector seeking to develop strategies to engage employees and increase productivity. Therefore, I used Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory to guide the research analysis.

The results presented from this research study are practical strategies to help small fast-food restaurant managers successfully implement cross-cultural communication strategies. Furthermore, the themes and subtheme developed and generated from this research study stemmed from semistructured interviews of four participants and a review and triangulation of the documents from the different participating companies. The insights from the research study could be helpful in other sectors of the U.S. economy and where small fast-food restaurant managers yearning to explore those cross-cultural communication strategies that some small fast-food restaurant managers use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. The following section is about the implications for social change.

Implications for Social Change

Managers must understand cross-cultural communication strategies that successful small fast-food restaurant managers utilize to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. According to Jha and Kumar (2016), a highly productive workforce increases profitability by 40% and productivity by 78%. The data gathered in this study could help impact social change by improving employee proficiency and efficiency. Furthermore, improving employee proficiency and efficiency will affect fast-food businesses and communities where those restaurants reside through increased revenue and employment. Job growth could increase local spending and tax dollars that improve local agencies.

Individual restaurant managers engage in cross-cultural communication strategies to enhance employee engagement and increase productivity to create a more dynamic work culture. Managers implement successful cross-cultural communication strategies, and managers of small fast-food restaurants could potentially improve employee engagement and increased productivity. Some managers that remain receptive to cross-cultural communication strategies could improve employment and within communities. Moreover, small fast-food restaurant managers could contribute more to communities and increase community involvement by implementing cross-cultural communication strategies. An essential responsibility for restaurant managers that adopt cross-cultural communication strategies should empower the concept to pay taxes and maintain the ability to embrace corporate social responsibilities.

Recommendations for Action

Based on the study findings, using cross-cultural communication strategies to improve employee engagement and increase productivity may provide small fast-food restaurants with a scheme for improving employee engagement and increasing productivity. After analyzing participant responses and company documents, the recommendation is that small fast-food restaurant managers use (a) develop relationships, (b) empathy, (c) mindfulness and respect for others, and (e) training and communicating and subtheme re-evaluations and measuring goals. These strategies could improve employee engagement and increase productivity within small fast-food restaurants. Based on the study findings or the results of this study, small fast-food restaurant managers who exhibit and employ cross-cultural communication strategies could improve employee engagement and increase productivity. Therefore, stemmed from the data collection and thematic analyses process, there were three recommendations to ensure the productive use of cross-cultural communication strategies posed within this research study. I recommend the following three strategies based on the results of this research study to help small fast-food restaurant managers seeking to improve employee engagement and increase productivity.

Recommendation 1: Mindsets When Developing and Inspiring Diverse Relationships

I solely focused on cross-cultural communication, lack of employee engagement, and productivity issues that have not yielded numerous managers' desired results. However, managers' mindsets and beliefs continuously interact or are characteristics of developing and inspiring diverse relationships. Managers should maintain a specific mindset recognizing that cross-cultural communication strategies could develop and inspire diverse organizational relationships. Therefore, reframing or blaming the issue of employee engagement and universal importance could successfully inspire diverse relationships. Managers should solicit information and informative training for employees about the barriers that hinder developing and inspiring diverse relationships, improving employee engagement, and increasing productivity.

Recommendation 2: The Responsible for Teaching Employees the Organization's Culture

Managers could strive to incorporate the need and responsibility for teaching the organizational culture. However, managers' should be responsible for teaching employees the organization's culture while focusing on ideals and values. Managers consider maintaining a responsibility for teaching employees that recognizes that employing cross-cultural communication strategies could help employees and managers develop a better organization's culture while focusing on ideals and values. Therefore, reframing from burdening the employees and employers on those teaching responsibilities could successfully inspire an engaged and productive work culture. Managers should solicit information and informative training for employees about the barriers that hinder an ethical and desired organizational culture, improve employee engagement, and increase productivity.

Recommendation 3: To Allow Open–Door Communication with Employees

Restaurants could develop policies that allow open-door communication with employees. However, managers allowing open–door communication between employers and employees while implementing specified training tailored to employees' exact needs. Managers should allow and maintain open–door communication with employees. Therefore, reframing or blaming the issue on employees, making an open-door communication policy, and implementing specified training tailored to employees' exact needs. To improve employee engagement and increase productivity, managers should solicit information and informative training about the barriers that hinder tailored training and open–door communication.

Managers could use those recommendations to improve employee engagement and increase productivity when employing cross-cultural communication strategies. Therefore, I intend to publish the findings from this research study in academic business journals, scholarly literature, and ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis Database. Furthermore, I intend to provide each of the four participants from this research case study a courtesy copy of the findings. Finally, I will present this study's findings in higher education institutions, conferences, and workshops relating to managers that desire to improve employee engagement and increase productivity within their organization.

Recommendations for Further Research

As I reviewed the literature, I identified cross-cultural communication strategies and angles for small fast-food restaurants to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. The purpose of this study was to explore the cross-cultural communication strategies that some small fast-food restaurants use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. Unfortunately, small fast-food restaurants often lack cross-cultural communication strategies to engage employees and increase productivity. This multiple case study sample included four managers from four small fast-food restaurants within the United States southern region with successful strategies that engage employees and increase productivity. The study had three limitations; the first was that participants could withdraw from the interview process at any time. The second limitation was that participants might not represent the actual population or geographic limitations. The third limitation was the participants trying to satisfy the interviewee.

Future research recommendations may include other industry managers and leaders to explore the communication, training, coaching, mentoring, and cross-cultural communication strategies that led to successful employee engagement and productivity. Furthermore, qualitative researchers could not stop participants from withdrawing from a study, but they could nourish better relationships to lessen the pain of participants' withdrawing from the research study. A bond or relationship with each participant may create more confidence and a stronger relationship between the researcher and participants for data collection.

The second future research recommendation was to consider studying other locations or geographical locations and focus on fast-food restaurants with post–COVID policy changes. The population for this study included four small fast-food restaurants within the United States' southern region. The limited geographical location of the U.S. southern region potentially restricted the transferability of results to other geographic areas.

The third and last recommendation was that participants satisfied the interviewee proved to be not applicable, and all participants were informative about the research topic of interest. Furthermore, an additional concern for future research could be to include an additional interview question. Future research recommendations may include adding additional post-COVID type questions. For example, how fast-food managers used cross-cultural communication strategies to maintain employee engagement? The primary purpose of asking this question is to understand employee engagement and increase productivity post–COVID age.

Furthermore, other researchers could adopt a different study approach or a mixed–method to gain input from small fast-food and large fast-food restaurant managers.

Reflections

The decision to research strategies that engage employees and increase productivity using cross-cultural communication strategies stemmed from my professional experience managing various industries like retail, food, and financial services for over 20 years before transferring into the educational field. My experiences of observing cross-culture communication between managers and employees inspired me to conduct this study to learn how it could improve employee engagement and increase productivity. The researcher's role required me to mitigate the bias associated with the data collection and data analysis, avoiding viewing data from a personal perspective because of my prior experience of managing within the restaurant sector. My obligation as the researcher was vital to increase the research's reliability and ethical standards of findings. The doctoral journey was an astringent and laborious process of collecting and reviewing the existing literature, designing and following an interview protocol with selected participants, gathering, analyzing, and summarizing information. Each section of this research study required a different written mindset, which caused me to stretch my cognitive skill for learning and present the specific sections and chapters. Section 2 and Section 3 of the research study were challenging and not as easy as DBA graduates claiming the simplicity of writing Section 3. I did not find their assessment accurate to my experience, but it was a learning experience that will never escape and evade my mind or allow me to forget.

Furthermore, I researched my data collection for themes and writing and presented the analysis in Section 3. I thought that Section 3 writing seems to be more analytical in thinking and writing and highly focused on making sure the reader understands the interpretation of the findings. My goal was never to leave it to the reader to figure out anything written in this research study.

This journey helped me expand my understanding of the need to implement cross-cultural communication strategies in small fast-food restaurants, improve employee engagement, and increase productivity. Furthermore, this study's findings were during a global pandemic stemming from the Coronavirus or the COVID–19 virus. The COVID–19 global pandemic caused impromptu changes to people, lifestyles, business best practices, philosophies, communication, and strategies. Managers reading the findings of this study during this age or post–global pandemic may have an opportunity to discover the necessary information and examples of strategies for improving employee engagement and increasing productivity during the post–COVID–19 pandemic. The COVID–19 virus and pandemic helped bring awareness to cross-cultural communication and the need for cross-cultural communication strategies within small fast-food restaurants and other organizations.

As a learner in The DBA program and my exposure to an academic world and language, I unlocked my ontological, epistemological, and methodological understanding to better answer the reoccurring question of life or the phenomenon of life. In addition, I discovered the subconscious characteristics that I never knew, but this program helped correct and enhanced a better self. For example, the program enhanced my zeal, grit, and desire to never give up on anything I desire in life.

One of the most intriguing aspects of researching this topic from a qualitative perspective within this DBA program is how I became a scholar–practitioner. I desire to seek truths of the different organizational problems and phenomenon is within the universe, and the topic of cross-culture communication allows me this opportunity. Moreover, cross-culture communication is a multiple–disciplinary topic. For example, neuroscience is one of the many disciplines relating to cross-culture communication, and I am proud to have had the chance to research this topic and expand my desire to examine a more profound knowledge of neuroscience. I desire and plan to create an organizational model that ties my cross-culture communication findings with a neuroscience approach to organizational culture. Furthermore, the relationship between neuroscience and cross-culture communication is already intertwined but combining an intellectual property that could replace the physical economics of work culture relevant to the future of organizational culture.

Conclusion

Managers of small fast-food restaurants need to develop effective cross-cultural communication strategies to improve employee engagement and increase productivity. They better understand successful small fast-food restaurants managers use to improve employee engagement and increase productivity within the United States southern region. Managers should create job opportunities for local people to enhance their cross-cultural communication skills for better community and camaraderie. This action permits small fast-food restaurants within the United States southern region to enhance economic growth and enhance the cross-cultural relationships between the company and community residents and economic growth. Wanga et al. (2018) suggested that economic growth motivates all groups’ income levels to enhance high income equality. The 1980 publication of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory was my conceptual framework that provided the basis and guidelines for understanding diverse cultures and how Hofstede's theory coexists within the workplace and outside the work culture. The target population consisted of four small fast-food restaurants within the United States southern region with successful strategies to engage employees and increase productivity.

I conducted semistructured interviews, followed an interview protocol for each interviewee, transcribed interviews, and used mythological triangulation to compare information gathered with data from company documents to improve findings' validity and reliability. In addition, I used member checking to validate the participant' responses, expanding on their answers by asking the interviews to clarify the meaning of their answers to reach data saturation. Data analysis and an inductive analytical approach discovered four primary themes and subtheme generated from the TA. The four primary themes and subtheme discovered and generated were (a) develop relationships, (b) empathy, (c) mindfulness and respect for others, and (e) training and communicating; the subtheme was re-evaluations and measuring goals. Therefore, these themes and subtheme could help organizational managers and managers understand and develop strategies for fast-food restaurant managers to improve employee engagement and increase productivity.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Interview Questions:

1. What cross-cultural communication strategies did you use within your uncertainty avoidance culture or employee culture that either accepted or avoided change that engaged employees and increased productivity?
2. How did you overcome any power distance barriers or differences when practicing cross□cultural communication strategies that engaged employees and increased productivity or a culture that consists of a hierarchical and democratic society?
3. How did you incorporate or factor individualism or collectivism mindsets into your implemented cross-cultural communication strategy that engaged employees and increased productivity?
4. How did you provide ongoing support after implementing cross□cultural communication strategies to engage employees, increase productivity, and explain if employee expressions were indulgent or restrained?
5. How did you anticipate and prepare for the outcomes of cross□cultural communication strategies in the context of short–term or long–term orientation?
6. What additional information would you like to share or add relating to developing and practicing cross□cultural communication strategies to improve employee engagement to increase productivity?