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Leadership Strategies to Improve Faculty Engagement and Performance in Higher Education

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Lasasha N. Adams

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MBA, Capella University, 2018

MS, Central Michigan University, 2011

BA, Hampton University, 2010

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

The lack of faculty engagement in higher education institutions could result in adverse outcomes. Higher education leaders are concerned with the lack of faculty engagement as it correlates to decreased productivity, commitment, and low employee job satisfaction. Grounded in the employee engagement theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore leadership strategies some higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance. The participants included 13 higher education leaders of public universities in Kentucky, USA, who used effective leadership strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance. Data were collected using semistructured interviews, one focus group, and a review of organizational documents and publicly available records. Three themes emerged through Yin's 5-step thematic analysis: fostering open communication, faculty performance evaluations, and engaging through professional development and support. A key recommendation is for higher education leaders to effectively communicate with faculty members by offering open and honest dialogue. The implications for positive social change include the potential to reduce faculty turnover and reduce unemployment rates in local communities.

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Dedication

I would like to thank God for my doctoral journey and major accomplishment. I never knew that one day I would be Dr. Lasasha Adams but God did. Lord, thank you for giving me the grace and perseverance to achieve my goal. To my lovely and loving husband and daughter, thank you for your encouragement, understanding, love, and sacrifice. From the depths of my heart, I love you and thank you! You all went on this journey/marathon with me. I would not want to cross the finish line with anyone else in the world but you all. Words cannot describe how much I love and appreciate you all. To my parents, without you none of this would be possible. Thank you for your love and prayers.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Much research exists regarding employment engagement (Khatri & Raina, 2019). However, faculty engagement in higher education is relatively new, only studied for approximately 10 years compared to employee engagement (Daniels, 2016). Gallup (2017) revealed that Kentucky had one of the highest percentages of 36% (151,462 participants) of engaged employees in the United States. Engaged faculty may have more to offer to their university and community (Nazir & Islam, 2017). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective leadership strategies some higher education leaders used to improve faculty engagement and performance.

Background of the Problem

Engagement is a top priority for leaders and organizations (Cerf, 2017). Organizations view employees as highly engaged, moderately engaged, passively engaged, or actively disengaged (Jha & Kumar, 2016). In 2020, Gallup revealed that engaged employees only represented 37% (24,132 employees) of the U.S. workforce (as cited in Harter, 2020). In 2016, research indicated that New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts were the four states with the lowest percentage of engaged employees of 29% (151,462 employees; Gallup, 2017). Herminingsih (2017) stated that organizational leaders lack engagement strategies. Similarly, Gallup (2021) revealed that higher education faculty lack engagement. Despite previous research conducted on faculty engagement (Ahmed, 2018; Shams & Niazi, 2018), and the lack of effective results, the goal of this qualitative case study was to identify effective leadership

strategies that higher education leaders at public universities use to improve faculty engagement and performance.

Problem Statement

Leadership directly impacts faculty engagement and performance (Lalatendu et al., 2018). Osborne and Hammoud (2017) noted that engaged employees account for only 30% (195,600 participants) of the U.S. workforce. The general business problem is that a lack of effective leadership strategies in higher education at public universities results in a decline in faculty engagement and performance. The specific business problem is that some higher education leaders lack effective leadership strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the effective leadership strategies some higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance. Yin (2018) posited that a sample size of five or more participants in a case study is adequate to gain an understanding of the phenomenon. The targeted population included higher education leaders of public universities in the State of Kentucky who used effective leadership strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance. The implications for positive social change include the potential for higher education leaders to increase faculty engagement and performance, which, in turn, may reduce faculty turnover and reduce unemployment rates in communities.

Nature of the Study

Researchers may choose between conducting a quantitative, mixed-method, or qualitative study (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). In quantitative studies, researchers test hypotheses by examining the relationship or differences among variables, as well as the use of close-ended questions (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). Cooper (2016) suggested that researchers use quantitative methods to collect data and to provide statistical analyses. Mixed-method research studies include both quantitative and qualitative elements. Therefore, neither the quantitative nor mixed-method approach was suitable for this study.

Contrary to quantitative research, qualitative researchers use a qualitative method to understand human experiences (Cooper, 2016) and participants' attitudes (Barnham, 2016). In this qualitative study, the goal was to understand effective higher education leaders' strategies to improve faculty employee engagement and performance. According to Nelson (2016), researchers should use a qualitative research method to understand human experiences. As a result, this study used the qualitative method to understand higher education leaders' experiences.

Four traditional research designs include (a) case studies, (b) ethnographies, (c) phenomenology, and (d) narrative studies (Mohajan, 2018). A multiple case study was the most suitable approach for this study to identify and understand higher education leaders' experiences and perspectives at public universities in Kentucky. Ethnographic designs are generally in-depth studies where researchers focus on exploring groups' cultures (Madden, 2017). Yin (2018) described ethnographic designs as long, field-based

studies. In this study, the focus was not on the group's culture(s); the study did not qualify to be an ethnography design. Phenomenological researchers typically focus on the meanings of individuals' lived human experiences with the phenomenon (Gildersleeve, 2016). Because the purpose of the study was not to understand the meaning of participants' lived experiences, a phenomenological design did not meet the needs of this study. According to Yates and Leggett (2016), narrative research generally focuses on participants' lives through storytelling and requires a significant amount of time to complete. A narrative research design was not appropriate for this study because the purpose was not to understand participants' detailed stories.

Research Question

What effective strategies do higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance?

Interview Questions

1. What effective leadership strategies do you use to improve faculty engagement?

2. What effective leadership strategies do you use to improve faculty performance?

3. What leadership strategies proved to be the most effective for improving faculty engagement?

4. What leadership strategies proved to be the most effective for improving faculty performance?

5. How do you measure the effectiveness of your strategies for improving faculty engagement in your organization?

6. How do you measure the effectiveness of your strategies for improving faculty performance in your organization?

7. How did your faculty respond to your different engagement improvement strategies?

8. How did your faculty respond to your different performance improvement strategies?

9. What else would you like to add regarding the effectiveness of the strategies you use to improve your organization's faculty engagement and performance?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the employee engagement theory (EET; Khan, 1990). In 1990, Khan developed the EET as a concept that employees submerge themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally into their work. According to Khan, meaningfulness, safety, and availability affect employees' engagement. Similarly, Barrick et al. (2015) stated that faculty might lack engagement if they do not have sufficient physical, psychological, and emotional resources or do not feel they make a difference in the organization. Higher education leaders should ensure physical, psychological, and emotional resources exist to possibly increase faculty engagement (Shams & Niazi, 2018).

When exploring the EET, the goal was to gain an understanding of the effective faculty engagement strategies that higher education leaders use to improve faculty

engagement. The EET was appropriate for this study because it assisted with the alignment of the primary research question, data collection and analysis, and interpretation of the findings. Additionally, the EET helped gain a more in-depth understanding of the effective faculty engagement strategies that higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement.

Operational Definitions

Engagement: Engagement occurs when an employee has a positive and fulfilling attitude toward their organization that creates vigor, dedication, and absorption (Hawkes et al., 2017).

Faculty engagement: Faculty engagement occurs when faculty members exhibit a commitment to their organization and experience less turnout, less burnout, increased customer focus, and improved performance (Ahmed, 2018).

Leadership strategies: Effective leadership strategies help foster employee engagement and attain organizational objectives (Azmy, 2019).

Performance: Performance is a byproduct of engaged employees' effectively using their skills to perform their job (Singh, 2019).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are ideas, beliefs, and presumptions assumed to be true (Turner & Endres, 2017). The first assumption of the study was that higher education leaders would answer the questions based solely on their lived experiences. The second assumption was

that higher education leaders would understand the interview questions and respond in a truthful and forthcoming manner.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses of the study beyond the researcher's control (Deb et al., 2016). A limitation of this case study was that participants may not have remembered all the particulars of the strategies used to increase faculty engagement. Another limitation of the study was the small sample size of 16 participants located in Kentucky. A sample size of 10 or fewer participants in a case study is often adequate to gain an understanding of the phenomenon (Robinson, 2017). However, by having 16 participants, the findings may not be generalizable to all higher education leaders (Pritchett, 2018). To overcome this limitation, one may conduct another study with a different sample size and demographics.

Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries established by the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The first delimitation of the study was the geographical location. The study only included higher education leaders who worked in the state of Kentucky. According to Gallup (2017), Kentucky had one of the highest percentages of 36% (151,462 participants) of engaged employees in the United States. By contrast, New Jersey, Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts had the lowest percentage (29%; 151,462 employees) of engaged employees (Gallup, 2017). One hundred ninety-five thousand six hundred employees surveyed from various businesses revealed that there are 33% engaged employees, 16% actively disengaged employees, and 51% not engaged

employees in the United States (Gallup, 2017). In 2021, Gallup revealed only 34% of engaged faculty and staff exist in higher education. The selection of Kentucky as the geographical location was because the state's overall workforce has one of the highest percentages of engaged employees.

The second delimitation in the study was the target population. Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggested that a target population should consist of a selection of participants for analysis purposes. This study only included higher education leaders of public universities with a minimum of 2 years of experience in improving faculty engagement and performance. The focus of this study was to explore the effective leadership strategies that higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance during this study.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Effective educational leadership and active faculty engagement are vital to organizations' performance (Mozammel & Haan, 2016). University leaders who lack effective leadership strategies could lead to faculty disengagement and lower performance (Shams & Niazi, 2018). Thus, implementing strategies could increase faculty engagement and increase performance (Lalatendu et al., 2018). According to Jaschik and Lederman (2015), faculty with a lack of engagement tend to be physically present but emotionally absent and unhappy. Similarly, Bailey et al. (2017) revealed a correlation between employee psychological and motivational factors, employee outcomes, and organizational outcomes. The findings of this study could be significant to

the effective practice of business by offering higher education leaders' leadership strategies that may improve faculty engagement that could foster increased productivity, higher commitment, increased performance, increased job satisfaction, increased profits, reduced turnover, and decreased burnout.

Implications for Social Change

Higher education leaders could create positive social change through engaged faculty. To increase faculty engagement and performance, higher education leaders should strive to improve their faculty engagement strategies. The skills and knowledge attained by faculty could assist them in obtaining jobs for benefiting their families and lowering unemployment rates in communities. Engaged faculty connect more on an emotional level with individuals and active within their communities when they feel a sense of belonging in their organization (Singh et al., 2016). More importantly, communities tend to benefit from improved faculty performance and engagement because they aid in the improvement of the community's development and economic prosperity (Akingbola & van den Berg, 2019).

<center>**A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**</center>

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective leadership strategies used by higher education leaders at public universities to improve faculty engagement and performance. The purpose of a professional and academic literature review is to impartially report on a topic and summarize the research from published studies (Snyder, 2019). This review of the literature was the basis for exploring faculty engagement at public universities. The literature review includes peer-reviewed

articles, organized by the following themes: EET, supporting theories, and leadership and faculty engagement.

To locate peer-reviewed literature for this study, searches included the following databases, accessed through the Walden University Library: *ABI/INFORM Complete, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, Emerald Management, ProQuest Central, Sage Premier Annual Reviews*, and *Science Direct.* In addition to using these databases, additional resources included the use of Google Scholar. Key terms used in the search included *faculty engagement, employee engagement, work engagement, employee engagement theory, faculty, higher education, academic engagement, engaging faculty, leadership, leadership strategies, social exchange theory, jobs demand-resources theory, Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory,* and *Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory*. The literature review includes a total of 110 references, of which 95 (86.0%) are peer-reviewed and 93 (85.0%) published less than 5 years from the anticipated date of chief academic officer approval, which is 2022.

Employee Engagement Theory

The conceptual framework for this study was the EET developed by Khan in 1990. Both motivation and leader-member exchange theories were an option for this study; however, the EET aligned more with the topic of faculty engagement. Both EET and faculty engagement center on the idea of employees becoming physically, cognitively, and emotionally engaged in their work (Shams & Niazi, 2018). In contrast, the motivation theory justifies the actions and desires of individuals. The motivation theory is otherwise what motivates people to act (Elliot et al., 2017), and the leader-

member exchange focuses on the constant interactions between leaders and members (Eşitti & Kasap, 2020).

With the expansion of research into the concept of employee engagement, multiple employee engagement definitions emerged. The various definitions and viewpoints of employee engagement establish a lack of consistency in research, thereby creating confusion among individuals (Kwon & Park, 2019). For example, Khan (1990) defined employee engagement as a way individuals express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. Whereas Shuck et al. (2017) defined employee engagement as a combination of job engagement and organization engagement that consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. In the same way, Rastogi et al. (2018) referred to employee engagement as taking place when an employee is fully engaged on a physical, emotional, and cognitive level. Shuck et al. defined employee engagement as an employee's commitment to their organization and values. In this study, the goal was to apply Khan's viewpoint on employee engagement (see Figure 1) and explore faculty engagement.

Figure 1

Employee Engagement Tenets
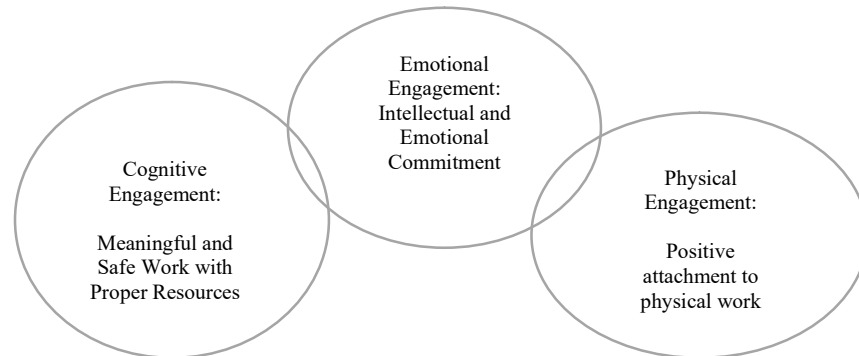
Note. From "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work," by W. Khan, 1990, *Academy of Management Journal*, *33*(4), pp. 692-724. https://doi.org/10.5465/256287

In the 1990s, Khan (1990) was the first to introduce employee engagement as a concept that employees submerge themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally into their work (as cited in Akingbola & van den Berg, 2019). Khan strategically developed this theory based on Goffman's (1961) work, which focused on employees' attachment and detachment toward their jobs. Additionally, Khan expanded on the later work of Hackman and Oldham (1976). Hackman and Oldman explained that task characteristics, such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and performance feedback, are job resources that affect job engagement. Employees with the proper job resources and leadership support may feel more engaged (Jin & McDonald, 2017). Similarly, Christensen et al. (2020) posited that higher education faculty without

the appropriate resources might not be engaged; therefore, higher education leaders should provide faculty with the appropriate resources for increased engagement. Leaders measure employee engagement through an employee's commitment to their organization (Geoffrey & January-Enkali, 2019). Akingbola and van den Berg (2019) and Shuck et al. (2017) postulated that employee engagement consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral constructs that impact an employee's performance. Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement affect an employee's engagement level and are necessary for the employee to potentially feel meaningful, safe, and available (Kwon & Park, 2019). Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral constructs impact faculty engagement in public universities, which also affects organizational growth (Shams & Niazi, 2018).

Cognitive

Cognitive engagement refers to an employee's understanding of their role in terms of goals and objectives within their organization (Ahmed, 2018). When employees understand their work role, they connect to others through their performance (Khan, 1990). Additionally, employees tend to be happier, creative, and flexible when they have available cognitive resources (Akingbola & van den Berg, 2019). When employees evaluate the work condition as optimistic, they can step into the next phase of emotional engagement (Shuck et al., 2017). The results of this study may help higher education leaders understand if they should strive to ensure faculty fully understand their role within the organization to promote cognitive engagement.

Emotional

Emotional engagement is how employees feel about their organization, leaders, and coworkers (Ahmed, 2018). Shuck et al. (2017) and Khan (1990) agreed that employees must first be physically and emotionally present in their work to be engaged. According to Shuck et al., emotionally engaged employees tend to have a positive attitude and support their organizations' values; consequently, emotionally engaged faculty could positively impact organizational engagement and performance. A connection exists between emotionally engaged employees, commitment, and loyalty to an organization (Akingbola & van den Berg, 2019). Hanaysha and Majid (2018) posited that receiving intrinsic awards typically positively affects employees by urging them to continue to engage in their work. Intrinsic awards may aid faculty engagement and help faculty develop a positive attitude toward their organization, higher education leaders, and coworkers.

Behavioral

Behavioral engagement allows employees to extend their existing resources and to display these activities publicly in the workplace (Shuck et al., 2017). Abasilim et al. (2019) asserted that leaders would experience enhanced employee performance and behavior when leaders determine the best course of action that corresponds to the employees' needs. The social impact of behaviorally engaged employees forecasts a healthy work environment representing the organization's social impact (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). However, previous research has not revealed if behaviorally engaged faculty positively impact higher education institutions at public universities in Kentucky.

Shuck et al. (2017) agreed with Khan's (1990) view on employee engagement, believing that there are cognitive, emotional, and behavioral facets of employee engagement. Moreover, Shuck et al. espoused that there is a connection between cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement and that an individual must meet one before achieving the next. For example, an employee will not achieve emotional engagement before attaining cognitive engagement, and behavioral engagement is not attainable until the attainment of emotional engagement (Shuck et al., 2017). Therefore, the findings of this study may reveal whether higher education leaders at public universities in Kentucky engage faculty cognitively, emotionally, and/or behaviorally to achieve a high engagement level.

Complementary Theories

Researchers review supporting theories to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. Social exchange theorists focus on how building relationships with employees creates positivity within an organization, whereas job demand-resources (JD-R) theorists focus on the energetic and motivational processes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The supporting theories of social exchange theory (SET) by Thibaut and Kelley (1959) and JD-R theory by Bakker and Demerouti (2017) may help to gain a better understanding of faculty engagement in this study.

JD-R Theory

In 2001, Demerouti et al. (2001) introduced the JD-R theory, focusing on the causes and effects of burnout (as cited in Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). According to Bailey et al. (2017), JD-R theory indirectly impacts engagement, performance, and job

satisfaction. In 2004, a revised JD-R theory recognized job resources as reducing burnout and job demands as increasing burnout (Du et al., 2019). Put another way, job demands increase stress while job resources decrease stress. When employees possess the job resources needed to perform their job, stress is minimal and stimulated engagement exists (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Job resources, such as training, personal development, social support, performance feedback, and autonomy, improve employee engagement (Jin & McDonald, 2017). However, if there is a lack of job resources, employees may have difficulty coping with the job demands and subsequently suffer from decreased motivation and a lack of engagement. The findings of this study may reveal if higher education leaders should strive to ensure an adequate amount of job resources to avoid burnout, stress, a lack of job satisfaction and performance, and motivation.

Public universities continue to experience change that significantly impacts academics and university workplaces (Mudrak et al., 2018). However, Mohammed et al. (2020) purported that higher education institutions' staff members are less likely to experience burnout when they are less overloaded with work and have access to more job resources. Stelmokienė et al. (2019) interviewed university teachers to unveil the risks and factors that impact their burnout. Stelmokienė et al. determined that risk factors such as job and emotional demands and safety factors such as personal and job resources impacted the teacher's burnout. According to Mudrak et al. (2018), job demands and job resources continue to be a challenge in higher education institutions. McCormack et al. (2018) believed that support and burnout are complex and fluctuate in the workplace. The results of this study may provide higher education leaders with a better understanding of

the number of job demands they should impose upon faculty and the number of job

resources they should provide to faculty.

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Early scholars, George Homans (1961), John Thibaut and Harold Kelley (1959),

and Peter Blau (1964), established the concept of SET; however, in this study, the focus

was on Thibaut and Kelley's viewpoints on SET. Thibaut and Kelley developed the SET

centered around the idea that relationships between leaders and employees are essential.

Cropanzano et al. (2017) believed that trust, loyalty, and commitment existed among

leaders and employees if they abided by specific rules of an exchange. In this study,

higher education leaders may obtain a deeper understanding of how SET impacts

engaged and not engaged faculty in their workplace.

Employees possess a sense of belonging to their organization when they feel

supported by their leadership (Jin & McDonald, 2017). In addition, by leaders fostering

healthy relationships with their employees, employees can experience higher

engagement, performance, and commitment within an organization (Nazir & Islam,

2017). The goal of this study, then, was to gain an understanding of the effective

strategies that higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and

performance and to see if these strategies increase faculty engagement and performance.

Alternative Theories

Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg et al. (1959) developed and characterized the two-factor theory as

hygiene factors and motivators. Leaders use hygiene factors as a means for employee

retention. In a dissertation by Abbas (2017), hygiene factors consisted of extrinsic factors such as (a) salary, (b) supervision, (c) organizational policy, (d) interpersonal relationships, and (e) work conditions. Additionally, Abbas described motivation factors as (a) achievement, (b) work, (c) recognition, (d) responsibility, and (e) advancement. Motivation factors tend to spike a higher level of satisfaction and commitment among faculty members in public universities, whereas hygiene factors contribute to lower satisfaction among faculty members (Abbas, 2017).

Retention is a significant challenge and concern in higher education institutions (Mittal & Singh, 2017). Without retention strategies, organizational leaders will face employee retention challenges (Iqbal et al., 2017). However, according to Kundu and Lata (2017), job satisfaction and motivation could enhance employee retention with the appropriate leadership strategies. Higher education leaders should employ both motivation and hygiene factors that improve retention. According to Herzberg et al. (1959), recognition and rewards will assist with improving retention.

The two-factory theory focused on employees' dissatisfaction, satisfaction, and motivation (Herzberg et al., 1959). Job satisfaction plays a significant role in a faculty member leaving or staying at their job. The results of this study may provide higher education leaders with a better sense of the hygiene and motivational factors that improve faculty engagement and performance in higher education institutions.

Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Theory

Vroom (1964) introduced the expectancy theory that entailed three constructs: (a) expectancy or personal objective set, (b) instrumentality or perceived rewards and/or

outcomes, and (c) valence or an individual effort. The concept of expectancy is reflective

of an employee's confidence level of themselves; the higher the level of employee

confidence, the higher the probability of motivation (Vroom, 1964). As outlined in

Vroom's expectancy theory, an employee's behavior, whether unconscious or conscious,

predicates a reward or gain. Moreover, if an employee feels as though they cannot fully

accomplish a task, they will not even try to complete the task. In the concept of

instrumentality, an employee's motivation level is typically higher when they believe

completing a task will result in a reward (Quratulain et al., 2019). Faculty engagement

and retention may increase when higher education leaders allow faculty to have a say in

their task expectations. According to Vroom, leaders should include employees in the

decision-making process to learn about employees' different needs. Valence varies

depending on the individual's perspective (Vroom, 1964). In a study with 755

participants, Harris et al. (2017) revealed a correlation between extrinsic valence and

motivation. This study may reveal motivational tools that higher education leaders could

use to improve faculty's engagement and performance.

Measuring Employee Engagement

Scholars have attempted to measure employee engagement in several ways,

including the Gallup Workplace Audit scale, the Burnout Inventory, and the Utrecht

Work Engagement Scale (UWES). During this study, UWES and Intellectual, Social,

Affective (ISA) Engagement Scale were the measurements discussed (Schaufeli et al.,

2006; Soane et al., 2012). The goal of UWES was to measure the vigor, dedication to

work, and absorption of faculty engagement, while ISA focused on measuring intellectual, affective, and social engagement.

UWES Scale

The original UWES was a 24-item survey that measured vigor, dedication to work, and absorption of employee engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Schaufeli et al. (2006) assessed this version of the scale and determined that seven items did not positively contribute to the scale, consequently, they shortened the scale to a 17-item scale by eliminating those seven items that did not add value or enhance the effectiveness of the scale. In this study, the goal was to use the UWES- 9 to measure higher education leaders' engagement levels at universities in Kentucky.

Schaufeli et al. (2006) approved a shorter nine-item version of the UWES-9. According to Kulikowski (2017), the UWES-9 scale was more robust and accurate and favored relative to the 17-item UWES scale. Furthermore, the UWES-9 scale offers a single engagement score per participant, unlike the 17-item scale. Kulikowski's findings revealed that both burnout and engagement scales were significantly and negatively related. As a result, the study incorporated the shortened nine-question version of the UWES to examine employees' vigor, dedication to work, and absorption as one unit.

Intellectual, Social, Affective Engagement Scale

The ISA Engagement Scale is another instrument used to measure employee engagement. Soane et al. (2012) created the scale to develop, define, and then measure three components of employee engagement: intellectual, affective, and social engagement. Intellectual engagement is the degree to which people invest creative and

cognitive energy to find ways to perform their jobs (Shrotryia & Dhanda, 2019).

Affective engagement is the degree to which people derive a positive effect from their

role in the job, and social engagement is workers' psychological connections to the

workplace environment and the beliefs they share with colleagues (Shrotryia & Dhanda,

2019). Soane et al. (2012) surveyed over 950 employees, and the findings revealed a

correlation between engagement and task performance, organizational citizenship

behavior (OCB), and turnover retention. Further, Soane et al. discovered that the ISA is a

valid scale to measure employee engagement. The ISA scale can be beneficial when

blending and balancing employee engagement models. In this study, the goal is to

examine the vigor, dedication, and absorption of employee engagement to determine the

effective strategies higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and

performance; therefore, the UWES-9 scale was more appropriate for use in this current

study.

Factors Affecting Engagement in Higher Education

Engaged employees make up only 37% (24,132 employees) of the U.S. workforce

(Harter, 2020); 24% of the workforce are highly engaged employees (Moletsane et al.,

2019), and only 13% of employees worldwide feel engaged in the workplace. Moreover,

Mann and Harter (2016) stated that the lack of engaged employees costs $11 billion

annually in the United States. Conversely, engaged employees may increase an

organization's profitability by 21% (Mann & Harter, 2016). Kang and Sung (2017)

documented correlations between employee engagement, performance, and productivity.

This study may reveal to higher education leaders that a correlation between faculty engagement, performance and productivity exists.

Shams and Niazi (2018) investigated factors contributing to faculty engagement in public universities in developing countries. Further, Shams and Niazi proposed a conceptual model for public university leaders to retain and engage faculty. In the study, Shams and Niazi discovered that productivity and motivation increased when employees received benefits and resources. Shams and Niazi concluded that higher education leaders should strive to increase employee motivation levels by remaining cognizant of factors such as performance, job satisfaction, commitment, and productivity, which affect engagement in higher education. Similarly, Azmy (2019) conducted a study of 100 employees in a higher education institution and determined that productivity, commitment, performance, and job satisfaction have a direct effect on employee engagement. Moreover, Azmy revealed that engaged employees could lead to improved organizational performance, productivity, and academic excellence in higher education institutions.

Productivity

One advantage of faculty engagement is increased productivity (Mackay et al., 2017). Hanaysha and Majid (2018) and Mackay et al. (2017) concluded that effective engagement strategies within an organization may lead to increased productivity. Gupta and Singh (2020) asserted that engaged employees contribute to an organization's productivity through leadership. Gupta and Singh posited that leaders are successful at motivating employees and acting on employees' ideas, which enhance productivity. In

higher education, Hanaysha and Majid observed that employee motivation significantly impacted employee productivity when leaders included faculty in discussions and decisions. Researchers have yet to determine whether productivity increases or decreases in a public university in Kentucky when higher education leaders include faculty in discussions and decisions; this gap in the literature established the need for further study.

A lack of employee engagement negatively affects productivity in organizations. For example, U.S. organizations lost $300 billion because of a lack of engagement among employees (McAuliffe et al., 2019). Leaders should encourage engagement and productivity among their staff (Moletsane et al., 2019) and maintain an awareness of engagement factors that increase productivity (McAuliffe et al., 2019). Once increased productivity is evident within an organization, leaders should continue to efficiently manage the profits to avoid future adverse impacts on productivity (Moletsane et al., 2019). Previous research does not address or reveal if higher education leaders in a public university in Kentucky should strive to improve engagement among faculty members to increase productivity; however, by conducting this study, that question could be addressed and possibly answered.

Commitment

Another advantage of engagement is an increase in employees' commitment (Schwepker, 2019). Employees may exhibit affective, continuance, or normative commitment, and these factors directly correlate to an organization's results (Shuck et al., 2017). For example, Shuck et al. (2017) stated that affective, continuance, and normative commitment are negatively associated with withdrawal cognition and turnover. Affective

commitment is associated with attendance, performance, organizational citizenship behavior, stress, and work-family conflict outcomes.

Increased employee commitment yields a positive effect on an organization (Schwepker, 2019), resulting, for instance, in increased productivity (Judge et al., 2017). Other scholars recognized the correlation between employee engagement and organizational commitment (Shuck et al., 2017), suggesting that higher education leaders can increase organizational commitment when they promote engagement. Yurtkoru et al. (2018) suggested that increased employee commitment can also reduce employee turnover and increase trust between employees and leaders. The intent of this study was to inform higher education leaders if increased employee commitment reduces employee turnover and increase trust between faculty and higher education leaders.

Higher education leaders should be aware of factors that negatively impact organizational commitment and faculty performance. Aboramadan et al. (2020) suggested that engagement and commitment are the two most important factors in higher education institutions. Pansari and Kumar (2017) suggested that leaders should implement initiatives to help their employees become emotionally engaged and develop a sense of commitment. Pansari and Kumar further stated that faculty who were not emotionally engaged might not be fully involved, and this disengagement might affect organizational performance. Similarly, Nazir and Islam (2017) collected data from 410 higher education employees who provided higher education leaders with strategies to build a skilled and dedicated workforce. The results of this study may provide higher

education leaders a better understanding of the factors that contribute to organizational commitment and thereby improve faculty performance.

Performance

To document the correlation between engagement and performance, Al-dalahmeh et al. (2018) outlined how one affected the other. Cheche et al. (2017), in accord with Osborne and Hammoud (2017), further explained the relationship between employee engagement and performance. Employees generally express and reveal their engagement level during their work performance (Nazir & Islam, 2017). Kartal (2018) explored various aspects of employee engagement and concluded that engagement is an amalgamation of commitment, involvement, attachment, discretionary effort, energy, positive attitude, and psychological presence that positively impacts performance. These findings implied that organizations should strive for increased employee engagement and performance (Kartal, 2018). Nazir and Islam (2017) acknowledged that improving organizational performance is more feasible if leaders can increase their employees' engagement. The results of this study may reveal that improving organizational performance is more likely with engaged faculty members.

Engaged employees tend to perform at higher levels than disengaged workers (Qadeer et al., 2016). Gutermann et al. (2017) and Qadeer et al. (2016) identified a correlation between employee engagement and job performance. Qadeer et al. surveyed over 200 participants and concluded that employees' passion for their jobs reflected positively in task and non-task related performance. Gutermann et al. examined the importance of high-quality leader-member exchange relationships in resourceful work

environments and concluded that positive relationships facilitate high levels of work engagement and job performance. Additionally, Gutermann et al. asserted that providing development and training to employees increases employee engagement. Following from previous findings, the goal of this study is to learn if development and training positively or negatively impacted faculty engagement in higher education institutions.

To increase employee engagement, leaders should provide training and resources to their employees. Employees tend to be more engaged when they receive adequate training and resources to perform their jobs (Ahmed, 2018). Naim and Lenka (2018) asserted that adequate development could increase retention, and Ong and Yaqiong (2018) surveyed 116 participants to understand better how university middle-level managers' behaviors influenced faculty work engagement. Findings indicated that university leaders should receive training and develop training plans for middle-level managers to lead effectively. Azmy (2019) concluded that training and development improve employee engagement. The findings from this study might inform higher education leaders that making training readily available for themselves, and faculty members could lead to more effective leadership and improved performance.

Job Satisfaction

Increased job satisfaction is another advantage of increased engagement (Schwepker, 2019). Locke and Latham (2019) defined job satisfaction because of positive or negative job experiences. In contrast to Locke and Latham's definition, Garg et al. (2018) noted that job satisfaction is a positive emotional state related to an employee's state of mind and commitment level and derived from their job experience.

This study may provide higher education leaders with an understanding of what precipitates job satisfaction in faculty members.

Previous findings indicated a correlation between employee engagement and job satisfaction (Akingbola & van den Berg, 2019; Gamage & Jayatilake, 2019). More specifically, scholars postulated that employee engagement is a result of job satisfaction. Engagement begins psychologically (Khan, 1990), and employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to be more committed to the organization (Dhamija et al., 2019). The findings from this study may reveal a correlation between faculty engagement and job satisfaction at public universities in Kentucky.

Job satisfaction is fundamental to improving employee engagement (Akingbola & van den Berg, 2019) and can positively or negatively affect an organization (Garg et al., 2018; Tepayakul & Rinthaisong, 2018). Ali and Farooqi's (2014) study in a public university revealed a positive relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction. When faculty members are engaged and satisfied with their job, they may be more productive. Further, Kong et al. (2018) found that when employees feel a sense of belonging to an organization, they report increased satisfaction. When an increased level of dissatisfaction exists, faculty members' work products reflect dissatisfaction, and they may eventually leave their jobs (Schwepker, 2019). The findings from this study might provide higher education leaders with leadership strategies that increase faculty satisfaction and subsequently enhance faculty engagement.

Factors Affecting the Lack of Engagement in Higher Education

A lack of engagement typically occurs when faculty members do not feel as an integral part of the organization. Such a lack of engagement poses leadership concerns. Jaschik and Lederman (2015) surveyed 21,399 faculty members, and results indicated that faculty were 34% engaged, 52% not engaged, and 14% actively disengaged. To avert the lack of faculty engagement, higher education leaders must make faculty feel like a part of the organization. Additionally, Maslach and Leiter (2017) noted that disengaged individuals might avoid tasks, and the quality of their work product may decline. Individuals who lack engagement may take frequent breaks and socialize with their colleagues (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Higher education leaders may use the findings from this study to develop strategies to combat turnover, stress, and burnout.

When employees lack engagement, they typically withdraw and exhibit physical, cognitive, and emotional barriers (Khan, 1990). Jindal et al. (2017) explained that disengaged employees do not seek additional duties or tasks outside their specific roles. Moreover, employees who lack engagement tend to demotivate other employees (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Leaders must be aware of employees who demotivate other employees and implement measures that foster engaged employees (Friedman & Gerstein, 2017). The goal of this study was to reveal the appropriate measures to foster faculty engagement within public universities in Kentucky. By understanding the appropriate measures, higher education leaders may decrease the number of demotivated faculty members caused by disengaged faculty members.

Turnover

Another disadvantage of a lack of engagement is turnover. In 2018, employee turnover was at an all-time high and only 34% of employees identified as engaged (Jaschik & Lederman, 2015). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018), the average employee stays with their employer for 4.2 years. Nazir and Islam (2017) noted that faculty turnover is high and continues to increase. Leaders in higher education may reduce turnover among faculty by implementing effective engagement strategies.

Lower levels of faculty turnover exist when managers in higher education institutions have flexibility, promote open communication, and work to make faculty feel valued (Towns, 2019). In a research study of 249 faculty members, Ababneh (2020) revealed that universities achieve higher levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and trust, and report lower turnover intentions, when managers meet faculty expectations. Turnover can prove to be very costly for organizations. Higher education leaders should prioritize and identify issues that affect faculty turnover (Nazir & Islam, 2017). Based on this knowledge, the goal of this study is to reveal effective engagement strategies that higher education leaders at public universities in Kentucky may implement to mitigate high turnover.

Burnout

Sabagh et al. (2018) characterized burnout as the result of increased anxiety and tension from stress. Individuals who lack engagement exhibit signs of burnout, such as decreased performance and absenteeism (Yildirim & Sait Dinc, 2019) when they feel a task is illegitimate (Stoyanova & Iliev, 2017). Taris et al. (2017) and Salmela-Aro and

Upadyaya (2018) agreed that a connection exists between burnout and engagement; however, the concepts remain vastly different.

According to Kim and Park (2017), if an individual perceives a task to be illegitimate, requiring that individual to complete the task could affect their emotional wellbeing and ultimately contribute to burnout. Burdened individuals may also experience burnout (Akingbola & van den Berg, 2019); therefore, it is essential to conduct this study to learn if public universities in Kentucky burdened faculty that ultimately experienced burnout. More importantly, this study could help higher education leaders learn strategies to incorporate that mitigate burnout.

Scholars believe employee engagement (comprised of *energy, involvement,* and *efficacy*) is the positive antithesis of burnout (*exhaustion, cynicism,* and *professional inefficacy*; Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Moreover, excessive workload and control by others, combined with a lack of rewards and recognition, community and social support, perceived fairness, and values, may lead to burnout or employee disengagement. Wigert and Agrawal (2018) claimed that leaders should focus on eliminating unfair treatment, unmanageable workloads, lack of role clarity, lack of communication and support, and unreasonable time pressures. Consequently, the goal of this study is to uncover effective leadership strategies that can improve faculty engagement to minimize burnout of faculty.

Shanafelt and Noseworthy (2017) reported that employee engagement is the antithesis of burnout, and factors such as manageable workload, efficiency, autonomy, and work-life balance support engagement and prevent burnout. Bauwens et al. (2019) collected data from 532 academic employees and evaluated how the fairness of

management's perceptions of performance affected burnout among the employees. The study revealed that academic employees experienced less burnout when management exhibited a high level of fairness. Additionally, age and gender influenced burnout among staff. Bauwens et al.'s (2019) findings implied that when leaders do not have an accurate understanding of employees' level of burnout, a threat could exist to their employees' engagement level. The results of this study may reveal the threats to faculty engagement to higher education leaders.

Stress

Another disadvantage of the lack of engagement is stress. Stress results when employees endure increased pressure or tension, likely manifested from ineffective leadership and recognition. Many employees exhibit stress through poor attitudes and absenteeism. According to Mudrak et al. (2018), rising stress levels precipitated from work demands, and work-family conflicts plague academic workplaces. Karatepe et al. (2018) identified factors that mitigate stress, such as effective leadership, proper mentoring, employee empowerment, recognition, and effective communication. The results of this study may inform higher education leaders of stress factors that impact faculty and hopefully lead to improvements in faculty engagement and performance.

Faculty Engagement and Leadership

Faculty engagement and leadership has a direct connection within an organization (Ahmed, 2018). According to Khatri and Raina (2019), faculty engagement occurs when the faculty find enjoyment and meaning in their work and sense alignment between their tasks and their personal values and abilities. The importance of employee engagement

sparked an increased interest in employee engagement among leaders and scholars

(Caniëls et al., 2018). Simply put, leadership fosters engagement, which makes the

achievement of organizational goals more likely (Akingbola & van den Berg, 2019;

Stoyanova & Iliev, 2017). Interviewing higher education leaders at public universities in

Kentucky will inform other higher education leaders of effective strategies that

encouraged engagement and ultimately helped attain organizational goals such as

improved faculty engagement and performance.

Effective strategies by higher education leaders could improve faculty

engagement. Leadership is essential to engaging employees (Garg et al., 2018).

Leadership is one of the most critical influences on employee engagement (Abasilim et

al., 2019). By providing adequate resources and offering support, empowerment, and

encouragement, leaders can improve employee engagement within the workplace

(Ahmed, 2018). The findings from this study may inform higher education leaders at

public universities of leadership strategies that contribute to an increase in faculty

engagement.

Open communication between leaders and employees improves employee

engagement. Positive leadership styles typically model open communication between

leaders and employees (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). As a result, employees feel valued

when they can freely voice their opinion and provide feedback to their leaders. In

addition, Ahmed (2018) asserted that leaders should assign meaningful and motivating

work, support their employees, provide resources, and reward their employees to improve

employee engagement. The results of this study may provide higher education leaders

ideas on how to attain open communication with faculty and ultimately improve faculty engagement.

Leadership styles play an essential role in commitment, performance, satisfaction, and employee engagement (Abasilim et al., 2019). Conversely, a leadership style can adversely affect an organization and its employees' performances (Bambale et al., 2017). Increased engagement and commitment levels exist when leaders employ a leadership style that fits the situation and employees' support (Abasilim et al., 2019). Ethical leadership and visionary leadership styles may positively affect employee engagement (Wu, 2017); however, the following discussion will focus on transformational, servant, and authentic leadership styles in this study. This study addresses the effective leadership strategies some higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance.

Transformational Leadership Style

Burns (1978) was the first scholar to define transformational leadership. Leadership styles are critical in attempts to increase employee engagement. Researchers studied the correlation between employee engagement and transformational leadership; however, the literature on the topic is limited (Singh, 2019). Transformational leadership positively impacts employee engagement (Amor et al., 2020) and could be the most important type of leadership (Sahu et al., 2018). Singh (2019) concluded that to improve employee engagement and increase productivity, transformational leadership is essential. Al-Malki and Juan (2018) used transformational leadership to engage employees and increase productivity. The intent of this study is to offer higher education leaders' ideas

of how a transformational leadership style could increase productivity, profitability, and engagement.

Transformational leaders are essential in organizations because they sacrifice personal interests. Additionally, transformational leaders give employees a sense of value and ownership (Burns, 1978). When employees feel valued and have a sense of ownership, an opportunity for trust between both parties is the result. Accordingly, transformational leaders could see an increase in an employee's engagement level. The findings from this study may reveal if faculty members at the select public university in Kentucky feel valued. Higher education leaders could also use the results to make adjustments that would ultimately increase engagement and performance.

A transformational leadership style involves establishing a relationship of trust between leaders and employees (Jena et al., 2018). When employees trust their leaders, employees tend to be more engaged in their organization. Hence, organizations led by transformational leaders may experience more innovation (Zheng et al., 2017). Furthermore, Bakker and Albrecht (2018) concluded that transformational leaders are more effective leaders than transactional leaders. Transformational leaders' support, recognition, and influence play a significant role in an employee's engagement level (Amor et al., 2020). Employees who feel valued typically report that they have supervisor support (Ahmed, 2018), whereas receiving recognition from a supervisor makes employees feel appreciated and respected (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018).

Transactional Leadership Style

Burns (1978) considered transactional leadership and transformational leadership to be opposites. In contrast, Bass (1985) believed that transformational and transactional leadership styles complemented one another. Transactional leaders inspire their workers to excel individually rather than to help the organization (Saravo et al., 2017). Similarly, Bass explained that transactional leaders strive for priorities and objectives that fulfill personal and professional expectations, putting pressure and demands on others to overcome difficulties and barriers that may hinder progress. Once employees achieve the goals to which they committed, transactional leaders compensate them as previously agreed, by means such as cash or advancement. Such awards may motivate followers in their ongoing efforts, thus in some way promoting increased engagement. The results of this study may inform higher education leaders if awards promote increased faculty engagement.

Servant Leadership Style

The servant leadership style originated from Greenleaf (1977), who explained that a servant leader embodies building trust, respecting, empowering, and inspiring their employees (Aboramadan et al., 2020). The focus of servant leaders is on increasing engagement within their organization (Begzabeh & Nedaei, 2017). Servant leaders strive to make sure their employees know their value within the organization (Aboramadan et al., 2020). Increased employee engagement and a more sustainable organization occur when employees feel valued. Therefore, higher education leaders should always ensure

faculty feel valued to ensure a higher level of engagement and maintain a sustainable organization.

Servant leadership affects employee engagement (Priyono et al., 2019). According to Kaur (2018), commitment and job satisfaction are relevant to improving employee engagement in organizations. Organizations can foster trust by demonstrating commitment and fairness and adhering to rules and regulations (Su et al., 2020). Furthermore, Smith et al. (2017) added that once a level of trust among leaders and employees exists, employees develop an increased commitment to the organization. The findings of this study may reveal if higher education leaders at public universities should exhibit commitment and fairness to increase faculty engagement.

Authentic Leadership Style

The authentic leadership style positively affects employee engagement and encourages employees to be engaged (Oh et al., 2018). McAuliffe et al. (2019) asserted that employees report an increased engagement level when they felt their leaders were authentic. When leaders are authentic, employees also have an increased commitment level (McAuliffe et al., 2019). However, a lack of trust can have a negative effect on employee engagement and organizational effectiveness (Ouma, 2017). Therefore, higher education leaders should strive for authenticity to inspire increased commitment, trust, and faculty engagement. Trust emerges in the correlation between authentic leaders' and employees' dedication (Ramalu & Janadari, 2020). Kyei-Poku and Ying (2020) insisted that authentic leadership promotes equity in the workplace, and equity is essential to support positive organizational results. Public universities may achieve organizational

goals when trust exists among faculty and higher education leaders with an authentic leadership style.

Transition

Section 1 contained the background and general and specific problems of the study. Section 1 included the purpose of the study, the nature of the study, and the conceptual framework, the definition of key terms, the potential contributions of the study to business practice and positive social change, and the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. The remainder of the section included the synthesis of the literature review.

Section 2 contains the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, the steps for selecting the participants, the methodology and design appropriate for the study, population and sampling, ethical research, the data collection techniques, data organization techniques, and data analysis. In Section 3, the goal is to present the findings from the study, the application to professional practice, the implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for future research, and reflections.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 includes a discussion of a qualitative multiple case study design to explore the leadership strategies some higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance. In this study, the intent was to interview higher education leaders and review company documents to identify effective leadership strategies used to improve faculty engagement and performance. Section 2 consists of the following information: (a) the purpose of the study, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) the steps for selecting participants, (d) the methodology and design appropriate for the study, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) the data collection techniques, (h) data organization techniques, and (i) data analysis.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the effective leadership strategies some higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance. Yin (2018) posited that a sample size of five or more participants in a case study is adequate to gain an understanding of the phenomenon. The targeted population included higher education leaders of public universities in the State of Kentucky who used effective leadership strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance. The implications for positive social change included the potential for higher education leaders to increase faculty engagement and performance, which, in turn, may reduce faculty turnover and reduce unemployment rates in communities.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative case studies, a researcher's role is to conduct the study, collect the data, and address the concept from a personal lens (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2016). To prevent a biased view of events, researchers should take steps to ensure thoroughness in their study (Hamdani et al., 2014). As the researcher in this study, my role consisted of the following: (a) collecting literature on employee engagement, performance, and higher education leaders; (b) formulating interview questions about the study's topic; (c) conducting interviews; (d) transcribing, coding, and analyzing data; (e) establishing emerging themes; and (f) providing suggestions for further research. Halcomb (2016) posited that individuals who collect data should immerse themselves in the process. Therefore, I, as the researcher, was the primary data collection instrument to understand the leadership strategies higher education leaders use to improve employee engagement and performance.

Qualitative researchers minimize bias by first identifying bias. Throughout this study, the goal was to maintain a heightened awareness of potential bias (see Kouchaki & Gino, 2015; Yin, 2016). Elo et al. (2014) stated that a researcher's past experiences could create bias. Johnston et al. (2017) explained that by eliminating personal prejudices and information gained academically, a researcher could mitigate bias. I precluded the impact of professional bias by not being a faculty member or a higher education leader affiliated with the universities associated with this study.

The study followed *The Belmont Report*'s (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979) three

ethical principles (beneficence, justice, and respect), which provide guidance regarding using human subjects (see Metcalf, 2016). Researchers can demonstrate these three principles by (a) providing informed consent forms to all participants and ensuring each contributor operates with autonomy, (b) maximizing benefits and minimizing harm to participants (Metcalf, 2016), and (c) providing fair and equal treatment to all participants (Miracle, 2016). The research did not include incentives to participants in this study. Providing incentives could have a negative impact on the participants' judgment (Zutlevics, 2016).

Researchers use interview protocols to limit bias (Jamshed, 2014). Additionally, researchers administer the same interview protocol for each participant as a mental framework and to create reliability and validity (Silverman, 2016; Yin, 2016). Interview protocols can help researchers establish a rapport with the participants, obtain consent, and ensure rich data collection (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Finally, to mitigate bias, researchers use semistructured, open-ended questions and multiple data sources (Baillie, 2015). The intent of this study was to use interview protocols (see Appendix A), semistructured, open-ended questions (see Appendix B), and multiple data sources such as organizational documents and publicly available or internal archival records to mitigate bias.

Participants

In this research study, the goal was to explore the research question: What effective strategies do higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance? Interview participants should have first-hand knowledge of effective

strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance (Baillie, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Thus, the selection of participants included those who (a) were full-time higher education leaders of a public university, (b) had hiring and supervisory experience, and (c) had a minimum of 2 years of experience in improving faculty engagement and performance.

Researchers should strive to keep all the participants' personally identifiable information confidential (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Before conducting research, one must obtain a letter of approval from Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct interviews. After receiving the letter of consent, the next step was to obtain a list of higher education leaders' names and email addresses from the universities' public website to contact for a potential interview. Next, potential participants received an email (see Appendix C), with an informed consent form and letter of consent attached, inviting them to participate in the study. After receiving an email response from participants and scheduling interviews, the first step was to introduce myself and give a background of the study.

Developing and reminding participants of data collection is crucial to the success of any research study (Yin, 2018). To establish rapport, interviewers should establish a working relationship with the interviewee (Yin, 2017). Taylor and Thomas-Gregory, (2015) posited that researchers should act professionally, not be judgmental, and have patience. In this study, the goal was to withhold judgment while maintaining professionalism and patience.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

From this qualitative research study, higher education leaders may gain an understanding of effective strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance. A qualitative method intends to provide an in-depth description and understanding of a phenomenon (Bradshaw et al., 2017). Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore the effective leadership strategies some higher education leaders used to improve faculty engagement and performance. The intent of this study was to use a qualitative research method that could yield an understanding of higher education leaders' effective strategies to improve faculty employee engagement and performance.

A quantitative research method was another possibility for this study. In quantitative studies, researchers test hypotheses by examining the relationships or differences among variables using close-ended questions (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018) and document conclusions using numerical data (Healey, 2016). Cooper (2016) stated that researchers use quantitative methods to collect data and to provide statistical analyses. Quantitative researchers emphasize closed-ended and deductive analysis, rather than inductive analysis, the method qualitative researchers use to interpret data and document results (Yilmaz, 2013). A quantitative research method was not appropriate for this study because the study did not require numerical data to check the conclusions of the relationship or differences among variables. The goal of this qualitative research study was to gain an understanding of higher education leaders' effective strategies to improve faculty employee engagement and performance.

A mixed-method study is another research method that involves both quantitative and qualitative elements and is typical for novel research (Khidir et al., 2016). Neither the quantitative nor mixed-method approach was suitable for this study. Contrary to quantitative research, qualitative researchers use a qualitative method to gather an understanding of the human experiences (Cooper, 2016), as well as attitudes of participants (Barnham, 2016).

Research Design

Four traditional qualitative research designs include (a) case studies, (b) ethnographies, (c) phenomenology, and (d) narrative studies (Mohajan, 2018). In general, qualitative researchers investigate phenomena using open-ended questions (Aladdin, 2017; Lee & Krauss, 2015), and qualitative case study supports the exploration of a particular and dynamic phenomenon within its real-world context (Yin, 2018). The objective of this study was to identify and understand higher education leaders' experiences and perspectives at public universities in Kentucky; therefore, a multiple case study was the most suitable approach for this study (see Yin, 2018). Consideration included other qualitative research methods, including ethnography, narrative study, and phenomenology, but none of these proved the best fit for the research topic.

Ethnographic designs are generally in-depth studies wherein researchers focus on exploring groups' cultures (Madden, 2017). Similarly, Wall (2015) stated that researchers use self-observation to investigate and draw conclusions about the cultural phenomenon of interest in ethnographic studies. Yin (2018) described ethnographic designs as long-lasting, field-based studies. Because this study did not focus on a group's culture, the

study did not align with an ethnographic design. An ethnographic study was not appropriate for this study because the study did not focus on the activities of people, organizations, associations, and societies.

Phenomenological researchers typically focus on the meanings of individuals' lived human experiences of a phenomenon (Gildersleeve, 2016). Researchers use the phenomenological research design to allow participants to give their views on experiences they have experienced. Committed participants share their real experiences and react closely to a particular study (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Because the purpose of this study was not to understand the meaning of participants' lived experiences, a phenomenological design did not meet the needs of this study. According to Yates and Leggett (2016), narrative research requires a significant amount of time to complete. A narrative research design was similarly not appropriate for this study because the purpose was not to understand participants' detailed stories.

Because of its capacity to support the examination of higher education leaders' experiences and perspectives, a multiple case study helped address the research question and fulfill the purpose of this research study. The selection of participants included Kentucky as the site for this study because workers in Kentucky have reported one of the highest levels of engagement in the United States (Gallup, 2017). Researchers must ensure the collection of high-quality data that best supports analysis (Vohra, 2014). Therefore, a multiple case study of higher education leaders at universities in Kentucky ensured the collection of quality data from participants who experienced the phenomenon of interest.

In a qualitative study, researchers must consider the scope of the analysis and the breadth of knowledge needed from each participant (Yin, 2017). Yin (2018) posited that a sample size of five or more participants in a case study is adequate to gain an understanding of the phenomenon. Gaasedelen (2016) stated that small sample sizes yield pertinent data and encourage further reading in the topic under study. In this study, the intent was to interview five to 10 higher educational leaders from public universities in the state of Kentucky who used effective leadership strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance. Inclusion criteria required selection of higher education leaders who (a) were full-time higher education leaders of a public university, (b) had hiring and supervisory experience, and (c) had a minimum of 2 years of experience in improving faculty engagement and performance.

Qualitative researchers must also address the question of how to determine when to stop collecting data; researchers should continue interviews until they reach data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The ability to achieve data saturation varies in different studies and with different participants and may prove to be difficult (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The goal of this study was to interview five to 10 higher education leaders until no new themes emerge from the data because of data saturation (see Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In this study, the intent was to achieve data saturation through semistructured interviews and reviewing organizational documents and publicly available or internal archival records provided by higher education leaders that helped explain faculty engagement and performance at the higher education institution. Data saturation occurred after conducting 13 interviews and a focus group that consisted of three participants.

Population and Sampling

The population of this qualitative multiple case study consisted of higher education leaders from public universities in Kentucky who used effective leadership strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance. After obtaining participant contact information from the university's public website, emailing potential participants, and confirming study participants, interviews occurred in a mutually agreed-upon neutral setting. The use of purposive sampling techniques helps ensure researchers obtain the most relevant data from the study participants (Stein et al., 2016; Yin, 2016).

According to Duan et al. (2015), purposive sampling is the preferred method for qualitative research. Researchers use purposive sampling to choose knowledgeable participants who can contribute to the research problem and the theoretical role and context (Mason, 2017). Purposive sampling allows for the precise selection of participants in a small population with the expertise to address the research question. Researchers choose participants based on their ability to provide rich data relevant to the phenomenon under study (Harrison et al., 2017; Yin, 2016). In this study, selection included higher education leaders as knowledgeable participants who could contribute to the research problem.

Researchers must achieve data saturation in qualitative research by ensuring no new themes or data emerge (Yin, 2018). In this study, the intent was to achieve data saturation by collecting data through interviews of five to 10 higher education leaders, organizational documents such as reports and charts provided by higher education leaders, and publicly available or internal archival records provided by higher education

leaders that help explain faculty engagement and performance in the higher education institutions. Data saturation is achieved during the interviews when no new themes emerge. After conducting participant interviews, the next step was to transcribe and analyze the participants' responses to determine the potential need for additional interviews.

Ethical Research

The informed consent process provides an element of integrity, removes prejudice, safeguards participant protection from unethical acts, provides participants of their rights, and is required in ethical research (Aguila et al., 2016; Greenwood, 2016; Hammersley, 2015; Mann et al., 2016; Yin, 2017). The informed consent form provided participants with the background of this case study, my contact information, and contact information for the Walden University IRB office. The intent of this study was to use the informed consent form to assist with maintaining integrity and safeguarding and protecting the participants' rights.

As discussed in *The Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979), participants had an opportunity to withdraw from the research study at any time by informing the researcher via email, phone, or in-person. If a participant withdrew from this research study, I destroyed all electronic or paper data associated with that person.

Offering incentives such as gift cards to participants is common in qualitative research (Sullivan et al., 2016). Moreover, incentives can help recruit participants in a doctoral study (Rodgers et al., 2016). However, Zutlevics (2016) and the National

Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral

Research (1979) stated that providing incentives to participants could potentially have an

impact on their responses. This qualitative case study did not include incentives.

In qualitative case studies, ensuring ethical protection and integrity with

participants is central (Allen, 2015). At Walden University, researchers must obtain

approval from the IRB and the organization before beginning to recruit research

participants (Brown, 2013; Maskara, 2014; Shaw, 2012). Prior to seeking IRB approval

#06-11-21-0786433, the researcher completed and provided Walden University's IRB

office with the CITI Human Subjects Protection online training for participant protection

and ethical research compliance certification.

After receiving approval, the next step was to obtain a list of higher education

leaders' names and email addresses from the universities' public website to contact for a

potential interview. Next, the intention was to contact the potential participants and make

sure that they met the inclusion criteria. For the participants who met the criteria, the next

step was to schedule an interview, provide them with a consent form to sign, and then

conduct the interview.

Confidentiality is a top ethical consideration in any research with human subjects

(Miracle, 2016). Researchers use pseudonym codes to protect the identity and

confidentiality of participants (Yin, 2017). To secure participants' identity, interview

participants had alphanumeric codes P1 through P13 and focus group participants had

alphanumeric codes FG1 through FG3 assigned that will remain on the researcher's

personal password-protected computer for 5 years. The codes limit the use of names

while still tracking and recording the data (Morse & Coulehan, 2015). Researchers should

dispose of all gathered data after 5 years (Morse & Coulehan, 2015); accordingly, I will

dispose of all gathered electronic and paper data from the participants after 5 years.

Data Collection Instruments

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify effective leadership

strategies that higher education leaders at public universities use to improve faculty

engagement and performance. I was the primary data collection instrument in this

qualitative multiple case study. Researchers use semistructured, open-ended questions to

understand better the research questions (Sarma, 2015; Yin, 2017). This study included

in-depth semistructured interviews that consisted of nine open-ended questions.

During this study, a request was made for organizational documents such as

reports, charts, metrics, policy and procedure documents, meeting agendas and minutes

used to implement faculty engagement strategies, and any other organizational

documents that support effective strategies used to improve faculty engagement and

performance. A review of organizational documents and publicly available documents

was to support understanding the effective strategies higher education leaders used to

improve faculty engagement and performance. As a result of fewer than expected

documents provided by participants during the interview process, a focus group was used

as well.

Researchers should recognize the data collection instruments' adequacy to ensure

that the analysis is valid and reliable (Noble & Smith, 2015). In qualitative research, the

best practice is to collect data from multiple sources (Yin, 2017). Yin (2017) opposed

collecting data from one source in a case study because that limited set of data does not strengthen case studies' validity or reliability. After the interviews, the next step was to generate a transcription of the audio recordings, and participants received the researcher's paraphrased version of the interview for member checking. Member checking gave participants a chance to correct or add any comments via email. The use of audio recordings, member checking, interviews, organizational documents, and publicly available records helped to identify effective leadership strategies that higher education leaders at public universities use to improve faculty engagement and performance.

Data Collection Technique

Abdalla et al. (2018) explained that choosing an appropriate data collection technique is necessary to gather the most appropriate data. Qualitative researchers can use interviews, observations, focus groups, or document analysis to collect data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2018). The interview is the most common qualitative data collection technique used by researchers to produce rich and detailed information. During this study, I used open-ended semistructured interviews to collect data from participants (see Appendix B).

Researchers can conduct interviews face-to-face or via focus groups, telephone, or electronic mail (Cleary et al., 2014). Conducting face-to-face interviews allows researchers to ask additional probing questions, manage the information revealed by participants, and make observations of participants' facial expressions and body language (Nandi & Platt, 2017; Ziebland & Hunt, 2014). When collecting data in interviews, qualitative researchers encounter advantages and disadvantages of the method. Krall et al.

(2014) explained that researchers benefit from participants' immediate responses, increased ability to collect verbal and nonverbal data, and enhanced interview management when collecting qualitative data via interviews. Disadvantages such as time consumption, limitations on sample size, and lack of availability of relevant documents may impact the research (Krall et al., 2014; Yin, 2018). The goal was to use open-ended semistructured interviews to collect data from participants.

Prior to conducting interviews, the next step was to obtain IRB approval from Walden University. After receiving IRB approval # 06-11-21-0786433, the intent was to obtain a list of higher education leaders' names and email addresses from the universities' public website to contact for a potential interview. The next step was to contact the potential participants to verify if they met the study's criteria. For the individuals who met the criteria, the next step was to schedule an interview, provide them with a consent form, and then conduct an interview. Because of COVID-19, the interviews occurred via telephone.

Additionally, the intent was to audio record the interviews using a digital recorder and then transcribe the interviews into Microsoft Word. After the transcription of the interviews, the study participants member checked the data. Thomas (2012) and White et al. (2012) indicated that researchers use member checking to enhance the integrity and trustworthiness of qualitative findings. Moreover, researchers use member checking to probe for additional information from the participants and verify or correct any information provided by the interviewees as well as interpretation by the researcher (Caretta, 2016; Connelly & Peltzer, 2016; Kornbluh, 2015; Morse, 2015b). The objective

was to use member checking to increase the validity of the study and ensure the recording and interpretation of the data are accurate.

Researchers should collect data from multiple sources to understand a phenomenon better. Yin (2018) suggested using multiple sources, such as interviews, participant observation, direct observation, archived records, and documents to establish triangulation, achieve data saturation, and verify knowledge to address the key research question. In this study, the intent was to collect data through interviews, organizational documents such as reports and charts, and publicly available or internal archival records provided by higher education leaders that help explain faculty engagement and performance at the higher education institution. The lack of sufficient documents provided by participants resulted in a focus group being conducted in addition to the interviews.

Data Organization Technique

Organizing research data helps researchers interpret the data and enhances the research process (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Yin (2018) stressed the importance of effectively organizing data to increase the reliability of the study. The development of a data organization plan is a fundamental approach to increase the quality of information from interviews, field reports, organizational documentation such as reports and charts, and archival records (Merriam, 2014). When organizing and managing data, the intention was to (a) use a digital audio recorder to transfer the data to my password-protected computer, (b) transcribe the interview data into Microsoft Word, (c) import the transcribed interview data into NVivo 12 and (d) export the data into an Excel

spreadsheet. An Excel spreadsheet is an excellent tool for organizing data (Felice & Janesick, 2015), to capture the participants' names, the date and time of the interview, receipt of the consent form, and the alphanumeric code. Researchers use qualitative research software to organize, store, and analyze data; this study utilized NVivo 12 software (Morgan et al., 2016; Woods et al., 2016). As required by Walden University policy, I will retain all electronic data on a password-protected personal computer and paper data in a locked box for 5 years.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, the data analysis process is vital to ensuring the researcher accurately analyzes and reports the research findings effectively (Yin, 2017). Researchers use a case study to generate theoretical ideas to direct data collection and analysis by including multiple sources of information in triangulation (Abdalla et al., 2018; Archibald, 2016; Baillie, 2015; Green et al., 2015). The four types of triangulation are (a) the investigator, (b) data, (c) methodological, and (d) theoretical (Yin, 2017). Qualitative researchers use multiple source data collection and methodological triangulation to analyze data, improve validity, and define themes (Amankwaa, 2016; Carter et al., 2014; Johnson, 2015; Kern, 2016; Modell, 2015). Researchers achieve methodological triangulation by collecting data from multiple data sources, such as interviews, documents, archival records, and participant and direct observations (Fusch et al., 2018). During this study, the intention was to collect data from interviews, organizational documents, and publicly available or internal archival records provided by higher education leaders.

As outlined by Yin (2018), the data analysis process consists of five steps: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. In this study, the goal is to complete the five steps outlined by Yin. The first stage consisted of compiling the interview, focus group and field notes, organizational and publicly available documents. The second stage involved disassembling the research data, which consisted of organizing the data into smaller fragments and then coding the data (Yin, 2016). According to Saldana (2021), coding is the responsibility of the researcher not qualitative research software. Qualitative researchers use coding to identify themes, categories, and patterns (Dunn et al., 2017; Jakes, 2018).

The third stage involved reassembling data while looking for patterns and themes (Yin, 2016). In this study, a thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo 12 to organize, transcribe, store, and manage patterns and themes. Yin (2016) indicated that NVivo is data analysis software commonly used by qualitative researchers. Transcribed interview data was exported from NVivo 12 into an Excel spreadsheet to organize the themes. Wang et al. (2018) believed thematic analysis to be an iterative process that consists of the following steps: (a) reading the data, (b) coding the data, (c) searching, reviewing and analyzing themes, and (d) providing a summation of the findings. Conducting a thematic analysis will help gain an understanding of the effective strategies used to improve faculty engagement and performance. According to Teruel et al. (2016), researchers should correlate key themes to the conceptual framework. During this study, the intent was to use the themes that emerged during data analysis to focus on the key themes and correlate the key themes with the literature review and conceptual framework.

Researchers strive to interpret data while maintaining a mindset of fairness and accuracy (Yin, 2016). The goal was to remain mindful of being fair and accurate during the fourth stage when reviewing the research data interpretation. Last, researchers generally draw conclusions during the fifth stage (Groenland, 2016; Yin, 2016). During the fifth stage, the intent was to draw conclusions based on the collected data. An assumption is that new studies with related themes on effective leadership strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance in higher education will be published as time passes and included if appropriate.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Qualitative researchers should ensure the reliability, validity, objectivity, and generalizability of their study to establish trustworthiness (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Qualitative researchers should establish a means to test the trustworthiness and validity of their studies. To do so, researchers should consider the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in their study (Brown et al., 2017; Karimi et al., 2017). Qualitative researchers use the term dependability to establish reliability (Silverman, 2016). A researcher can establish dependability by having multiple individuals code and interpret the data and then note the data that both coders agreed upon (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Qualitative studies' effectiveness depends on how well the researcher collects and track the data. Researchers should implement a consistent process that they will follow throughout the data collection and data analysis (Trochim et al., 2016). During qualitative

interview-based research, a researcher can use a protocol to record observational data. An interview protocol will assist with establishing dependability (Yin, 2018). To establish dependability, the intent was to (a) use a protocol to record observational data, (b) double-check the transcriptions for errors through member checking, and (c) apply data triangulation. Researchers use data triangulation to collect data from multiple sources to improve the precision and legitimacy of their findings (Jentoft & Olsen, 2017; Yin, 2018).

Validity

Credibility

Qualitative researchers use credibility, transferability, and confirmability to establish validity (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Qualitative interview-based researchers seek to establish credibility by ensuring internal validity. Qualitative researchers may establish credibility by employing data triangulation, member checking, long-term and repeated observations at the research, peer examination, participatory modes of research, and clarification of researcher bias. During this study, the intent was to establish credibility through member checking and triangulation. Member checking allows participants to address the researcher's interpretations and add or delete erroneously interpreted data (Abdalla et al., 2018; Birt et al., 2016). Researchers establish confidence when establishing credibility within an interview-based research study.

Transferability

Researchers achieve transferability once the contexts of behaviors and experiences become meaningful to the receiver (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In other words, to establish transferability, the researcher should provide clear and concise descriptions. Similarly, researchers should establish transferability by conducting cross-case comparisons, member checks, and expanding the sample size. I ensured transferability by using member checks.

Confirmability

When establishing confirmability, researchers should acknowledge personal assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes and establish an audit trail to enable other scholars to track that process (Abdalla et al., 2018). Acknowledging assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes can enable researchers to minimize bias within a study. Bracketing mitigates the researcher's everyday assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes (Sorsa et al., 2015). Researchers can also use bracketing to minimize bias within interview-based qualitative research. Bracketing not only minimizes bias but also protects researchers against potentially emotionally challenging material (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Both the researcher and participant should participate in bracketing by following the interview protocol for consistency. During this study, included were the use of bracketing to ensure confirmability.

In addition, the goal of this study was to interview 5-10 higher education leaders until no new themes emerge from the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Ensuring data saturation is vital when conducting a qualitative case study. Researchers should continue

interviews until reaching data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The goal of this study was to achieve data saturation by collecting data through interviews, organizational documents such as reports and charts, and publicly available or internal archival records provided by higher education leaders that help explain faculty engagement and performance in the higher education institutions. After conducting participant interviews, the next step was to transcribe and analyze the participants' responses to determine the potential need for additional interviews.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the effective leadership strategies some higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance. Section 1 included the purpose of the study, the nature of the study, and the conceptual framework, the definition of key terms, the potential contributions of the study to business practice and positive social change, and the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study.

Section 2 explained the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, the steps for selecting the participants, the methodology and design appropriate for the study, population and sampling, ethical research, the data collection techniques, data organization techniques, and data analysis. In Section 3, the goal was to present the findings of this study, which included an analysis of the participants' responses, documents reviewed, emerged themes, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further research, personal reflections, and a conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the effective leadership strategies some higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance. The data in this study derived from 13 semistructured interviews and a focus group that consisted of three higher education leaders from public universities in Kentucky. These educators used effective leadership strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance. The findings indicated that higher education leaders use open communication, faculty performance evaluations, and professional development and support to improve faculty engagement and performance. Section 3 consists of an introduction, presentation of the findings, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for further research, reflections, and a conclusion.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study was as follows: What effective strategies do higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance? In-depth semistructured interviews and a focus group assisted with answering the primary research question. The original intent of the study was to only conduct semistructured interviews and couple the interview data with organizational and publicly available documents to achieve triangulation and data saturation. However, the lack of participants providing organizational documents created a need to conduct a focus group to achieve triangulation and data saturation.

Interview Findings

The interviews consisted of 13 educational leaders who used effective leadership strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance at public universities in Kentucky. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, the interviews occurred via telephone rather than in person and lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes each. Each participant responded to nine open-ended interview questions. The use of an interview protocol helped ensure consistency during the interview sessions. In addition, assigning pseudonyms (Participant 1 [P1] through Participant 13 [P13]) helped ensure participant confidentiality.

Secondary sources such as organizational and publicly available documents offered additional knowledge (Whitmore et al., 2018). The sources included policies, organizational charts, evaluation forms, mission and vision statements, and faculty handbooks. Interviews, organizational documents, and publicly available documents assisted with achieving data triangulation. University A and University B's websites revealed the importance of producing engaged faculty, students, and staff.

After the interviews, NVivo 12 provided transcription of the audio files. NVivo 12 assisted with exporting the transcribed audio files into a Word document. Each participant received an electronic copy of the interpretations of their transcripts via email for member checking. After member checking, NVivo 12 aided in coding the finalized interview transcripts to identify emerging themes. Next, manual coding took place following Yin's (2018) 5-step process to confirm the accuracy of the codes and emerging themes. The first step consisted of compiling and rereading the transcribed interviews,

focus group, and field notes as well as organizational and publicly available documents. The second step involved disassembling the research data into smaller sections to allow for coding. The third step involved reassembling data and coding line-by-line participant responses to identify patterns and themes, as suggested by Yin. During interpretation, a fair and accurate review of the data occurred, as recommended by Yin. The final and fifth step consisted of drawing conclusions of the data.

After thematic analysis and the use of imported analyzed data, NVivo 12 and EET by Khan (1990) revealed three core themes: (a) fostering open communication, (b) faculty performance evaluations, and (c) engaging through professional development and support. The identified themes address leadership strategies some higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance. The participant's interview and focus group responses support the study's conceptual framework, EET by Kahn (1990). See Table 1 for the themes and frequencies that emerged from the data collection.

Table 1

Emergent Themes and Frequencies

Themes	Number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
Fostering open communication	11	85%
Faculty performance evaluations	12	92%
Engaging through professional development and support	8	62%

Theme 1: Fostering Open Communication

The first theme that emerged was fostering open communication. Siddiqui and Sahar (2019) and Saad et al. (2018) posited that a positive relationship exists between

communication and employee engagement. Similarly, several interview participants in the study expressed the importance of open communication with faculty, which, in turn, enhances engagement. The participants indicated that they foster open communication by having an open-door policy and conducting regular meetings. P2 and P5 revealed that they conducted regularly scheduled meetings with faculty as a forum to encourage open communication. P8 discovered that faculty mostly learns from each other when they are brought together to talk. P6 strategically organized junior faculty to meet regularly to discuss items that they would like accomplished. In addition, P6 expressed the importance of listening to the faculty's concerns, needs, and wants.

P11 expressed, "Faculty need to know what's expected of them, communicate with them one-on-one on how their progress is going, and if there's anything that I can do to help that." The participants' responses solidified previous findings that higher education leaders should communicate with faculty and explain how their role fits into the organization's mission (see Siddiqui & Sahar, 2019). Higher education leaders may experience more engaged faculty after explaining how their role fits into their higher education institution. In addition, engaged faculty could assist with achieving that higher education institutions goals (Menon & Priyadarshini, 2018).

Faculty should feel valued and possess a sense of belonging at their higher education institution. P1 shared that administrators, professional staff, and faculty are all a part of the organizational conversations regarding the measurement of retention. P2 mentioned the importance of making sure each faculty member knows that they are being heard. P10 went on to say that faculty must be involved, or they do not want to hear from

others such as higher education leaders. P3 asserted, "I listen to the faculty and act upon many of the things that I hear. When faculty feel that you hear them, they tend to be very responsive...they tend to engage more and perform better." According to Mazzei et al. (2019), open communication plays a pivotal role in promoting and improving employee engagement because it gives employees a sense of belonging to their organization. P13 indicated the importance of building consensus and getting to know the faculty members and what they value. More importantly, P13 contended that higher education leaders should foster open communication, build good relationships, and not just talk to faculty when you want something.

Pongton and Suntrayuth (2019) asserted that leaders must foster open communication and a commitment to dialogue to be effective in management. To establish communication and dialogue, P11 talked one-on-one with faculty in their offices to tell them what was going on with the department, the college, and the university. P2 asserted the importance of making sure faculty know that they are being heard and involved. P6 maintained that leadership strategies such as open feedback and honest dialogue improves faculty engagement and performance.

The findings indicated that higher education leaders understand the importance of communicating with their faculty to promote engagement and performance. In alignment with the study's findings, Page and Schoder (2019) stated that when leaders communicate with their employees, the employees may feel empowered to complete and take ownership of their tasks and assignments. Khan (1990) described a similar dynamic that employees experience meaningfulness when felt valued or useful. When open and honest

communication exists, leaders can promote organizational commitment and improve employee engagement (Walden et al., 2017). When higher education leaders demonstrate open and honest communication, faculty may also experience improved commitment and meaningfulness to their organization.

Feedback

According to Cenkci and Otken (2019), employee feedback could assist in developing strategies for improvement. More specifically, employee feedback could assist higher education leaders to improve performance (Kwon & Farndale, 2020). P2 mentioned the significance of getting feedback from the faculty and hearing the different perspectives from all the other faculty who teach on that subject. P3 indicated, "Having a leadership team of associate deans, chairs of departments and certain directors, staff, and faculty directors provides a tremendous amount of feedback on what's working and what's not working." Finally, P13 stressed, "When you give feedback, you need to also build them up as well. It's having mutual respect and not come in like I'm your boss. You have to come in as colleagues." P5 and P6 provided an instructional observation feedback form used to evaluate faculty performance. Therefore, higher education leaders should provide verbal or written feedback to foster improved faculty engagement and performance.

Correlation to the Literature and Conceptual Framework

Communication is different at higher education institutions than other organizations (Pongton & Suntrayuth, 2019); however, communication remains vital at higher institutions as well other organizations. At many organizations, ensuring the flow

of communication from upper- to lower-level employees plays a significant role in optimizing performance (Sanders et al., 2020). Siddiqui and Sahar (2019) contended that consistent and honest communication is an important management tool to enhance employee engagement. Similarly, Jiang and Luo (2018) concluded that effective and open communication from leaders improves employee engagement. Tucker (2017) believed that employees engaged more when they understood their role. Thus, higher education leaders should have a continual flow of communication to faculty to aid improved engagement and performance.

Khan's (1990) EET was appropriate to frame an understanding of the strategies higher education leaders used to improve faculty engagement and performance. According to Teruel et al. (2016), researchers should correlate key themes to the conceptual framework. Khan's theory centers on the idea that employees become physically, cognitively, and emotionally engaged in their work. Moreover, Khan alluded that meaningfulness, safety, and availability affect employees' engagement. The theme, fostering open communication, is aligned with Kahn's psychological condition safety. Psychological safety exists when employees are able to freely communicate, feel supported, feel trusted, and do not fear their leader.

Theme 2: Faculty Performance Evaluations

In this study, 12 of 13 (92%) interview participants used evaluations to also improve engagement and performance. Higher education leaders use evaluations to measure faculty members performance. A faculty handbook revealed that faculty members are evaluated on (a) effectiveness; (b) relationship with students and with

colleagues; (c) participation in departmental, college and university activities; (d) research/creative activities; (e) university and public service; and (f) continuing professional development provided by P6 and P12. P2 indicated that all the faculty are evaluated on a regular basis. P2 further stated that the courses span a semester, and after each exam, the course is evaluated as well as each individual faculty member. Most importantly, if a faculty member falls on the low spectrum of the evaluations, P2 develops strategies to improve the faculty members performance.

P3 encourages peer-to-peer evaluations. Similarly, P5 conduct faculty evaluations. P6 mentioned, "Sometimes it's seeing a change of student evaluations improving, and faculty observations, or just kind of a self-reported thing from the faculty." P8 indicated, "Teaching evaluations would be measured essentially by the quality of evaluation that moves forward in the merit and promotion process, and what we look for is a more substantive evaluation of teaching." P10 stated,

> Some units use peer-to-peer evaluation, but sometimes they're limited to tenure and promotion processes. So, it might be that when a faculty member is going up for tenure they will have peer evaluations of their teaching. 360 evaluations are used but primarily for those in leadership than faculty. The 360 review is a peer review process of those who report to us and those that are above us and equivalent to us. So, we do those 360 evaluations periodically.

P1 explained that faculty should not be surprised of what is in their evaluation. P1 said that everything that they read in their evaluation, they should have already heard the information from their leaders at some point during the year. Finally, P13 stated,

For faculty performance, the focus is on having buy in to evaluate somebody. We
have annual reviews every year for junior faculty where we look at their student
evaluations, we do faculty peer evaluations, and rotate faculty at least 3 times a
year. We give the junior faculty members feedback every year. For the junior
faculty, that's something that I'm kind of in charge of now, is helping get them
through the promotion and tenure process. So again, I'm focused on what they
want, and I have conversations with them. I ask them what do you want to do with
your career, and what things do you want to focus on?

Correlation to the Literature and Conceptual Framework

According to Sokhanvar et al. (2021), higher education is experiencing
considerable changes with assessments. Higher education institutions incorporate
assessments when teaching as a method to evaluate students' progress (Sokhanvar et al.,
2021). Higher education leaders use evaluations to improve faculty engagement and
performance aligned with Kahn's (1990) psychological condition, availability.
Psychological availability occurs when higher education leaders have the physical,
emotional, or psychological resources to personally engage (Kahn, 1990). Similar to
psychological availability, evaluations measure how ready people are to engage.

Theme 3: Engaging Through Professional Development and Support

P10 provided a link that highlighted that University B's website "recognizes that
the ongoing professional development of faculty is critical to the mission of the
institution and to the personal enhancement of an individual." According to Harden et al.
(2018), professional development helps foster improved performance and organizational

commitment as well as a decrease in employee turnover rates. P1 and P2 alluded that development is key to engaging faculty. To improve faculty engagement, P1 further implied that faculty are required to attend all of the administrative workshops, administrative, and professional development. A couple times a week, P1 sends out an article from the Inside Higher Education or the Chronicle of Higher Education or a leadership document. P1 shared that all faculty, the professional team, and administrators receive the leadership documents to better understand what is happening at the university. P1 asserted, "I have found that that has really increased their engagement because they better understand sort of the rules of the game of higher education."

As suggested by Lu et al. (2016), leaders should promote professional development to improve employee engagement. P8 provided a link to University B's faculty affairs webpage that offers professional development and mentoring opportunities. The universities websites showed that they placed a substantial importance on faculty development. Similar to Lu et al., Milhem et al. (2019) believed that a correlation exists between employee engagement and development. Higher education leaders should prioritize faculty development to improve engagement.

Maximo et al. (2019) argued that when employees feel supported, they experience increased engagement. P5 supports faculty with their professional development and just want faculty to know that they are supported. According to P1, "There is no profession that has a better opportunity to change someone's life than higher education. If you cannot be excited about coming in and changing the life of someone every single day, you really need to find another career." Ladyshewsky and Taplin (2018) stressed that

leaders should provide support to their employees to avert employee disengagement. P4 makes a conscious effort to serve faculty in a supportive role. More importantly, P4 helps faculty get connected to people who may be in their field and who may have expertise to share with them. For example, if there's community engage research, P4 tries to get faculty connected to local organizations that may have experience, expertise, and resources beneficial to the faculty. To improved faculty performance, P6 reinforces the idea of servant leadership. Additionally, P6 said, "Let me partner with you. Let me come alongside you. Let me support you. Let me help you think through these things as opposed to being very punitive or very confrontational." Demonstrating support to faculty lets them know that they're not alone in making changes and improving their performance, contended P6.

Subtheme 1: Training

Training is another leadership strategy to improve faculty engagement and performance. Participants stated the importance of offering training to faculty to improve engagement and performance. More specifically, P3 encourages faculty to be more engaged in teaching by sending them for additional training. In addition, P3 stated,

> One of the things that we do that again, they're going to be engaged in our performance, so for our younger faculty who are eligible for NSF career awards, we provide training. We provide workshops that sometimes consist of panels of past career award winners so that the current faculty can learn from their experience. We also have a group subscription to Academic Impression's which allows faculty and staff to go for training under this group's subscription, and the

training is mostly virtual, some is face to face, but most of it is virtual. Quite a

few of them take the opportunity to go through the training so that increases

performance as well.

P10 explained,

We have had *experts* to provide HR or Title 9 training, and oftentimes our faculty

just roll their eyes. So, what I started trying to do was always have faculty sitting

at the table when we were developing training. We absolutely need the experts,

but the expert must work with other faculty to figure out how we can make it

meaningful for faculty. Faculty must be involved or they don't want to hear from

others.

Subtheme 2: Job Resources

Job resources, such as training, personal development, social support,

performance feedback, and autonomy, improve employee engagement (Jin & McDonald,

2017). Balwant et al. (2019) stated that job resources are one of the strongest predictors

of employee engagement. In agreement, P1 explained the importance of being transparent

in terms of expectations of mentoring and providing resources. P4 stated,

Some of us are just connected to the people with the resources in terms of

mentorship, in terms of other folks who can help them move their agenda's

forward and other people, for whatever reason, from a social capital standpoint

are not always as well connected. So, I try to help people get connected with

disposable resources whatever they need in order to be successful.

P11 indicated,

> If they are teaching faculty, I try to give them the resources necessary for them to
> be able to be effective in their jobs. The expectations we have for those two
> different faculty groups are very different. For the tenured and tenure track
> faculty, the research is for some of them that's their primary job focus with the
> teaching being a supporting activity. For the clinical faculty, teaching is the
> majority of their time. In some instances that is helping them to find funds, to go
> to meetings where they can network, to go to meetings where they can actually
> network with reviewers and with editors.

Correlation to the Literature and Conceptual Framework

The findings noted in Theme 3, consisting of engaging through professional development and support, align with the findings of Albrecht et al. (2021) and Nikolova et al. (2019) in that leader's that provide resources are more than likely to have engaged employees. Conversely, higher education faculty without the appropriate resources might not be engaged (Christensen et al., 2020).

Geibel and Otto (2022) believed that job resources help predict an individual's engagement level and that job resources are an important part of effective leadership. Lesener et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of job resources such as interpersonal relationships, the exchange of information, social support, and feedback to encourage engagement and performance. According to Khan (1990), engaged employees typically possess a psychological availability when they have physical, emotional, or psychological resources. The availability of development opportunities and support significantly

impacts a faculty members engagement and disengagement level (Kahn, 1990). See

Table 2 for the themes that emerged from the data collection.

Focus Group Findings

Table 2

Focus Group Ranking of Themes

Themes	Ranking
Faculty performance evaluations	1
Communication	2
Professional development and support	3

Note. Ranking in order of priority.

The focus group consisted of three educational leaders who used effective

leadership strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance at public

universities in Kentucky. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, the focus group occurred

via the Zoom video conferencing platform, rather than in person, and lasted

approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes. Each participant responded to nine open-ended

interview questions as offered to the individual interview participants P1-P13. In

addition, assigning pseudonyms (Focus Group Participant 1 [FG1] through Focus Group

Participant 3 [FG3]) helped ensure participant confidentiality.

After the focus group, NVivo 12 provided transcription of the audio files. NVivo

12 assisted with exporting transcripts into a Word document and then each of the three

participants received their transcripts via email for member checking. In addition, NVivo

12 aided in coding the finalized interview transcripts to identify emerging themes. Next,

manual coding took place to confirm the accuracy of the codes and emerging themes. In

addition, Yin's (2018) 5-step process of (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c)

reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding aided with analyzing data by providing

a clear blueprint. After thematic analysis, the results suggested that faculty performance

evaluations, effective communication, and professional development and support are

leadership strategies that some higher education leaders used to improve faculty

engagement and performance.

Theme 1: Faculty Performance Evaluations

Higher educational leaders use faculty performance evaluations such as annual

evaluations, peer evaluations, student evaluations, and self-evaluations to improve faculty

engagement and performance. All participants' faculty have performance evaluations on

an annual basis. FG3 stressed the importance of giving honest evaluations as well as

positive and negative feedback. During one-on-one evaluation sessions, FG1 asks faculty

the following questions, (a) how do you think you did? (b) Are you satisfied with your

performance this year? (c) If you were the person evaluating yourself, what kind of

feedback would you give yourself? (d) What score would you have given yourself on this

annual evaluation? A study by Guo et al. (2019) revealed that university teachers with

positive self-evaluations had a higher level of performance and engagement in research.

FG3 gives faculty the space for self-evaluation during the beginning of the semester and

makes sure to close the loop with the faculty member.

Peer evaluations identify the strengths and weaknesses of faculty which, in turn,

could assist with improving faculty engagement and performance. FG2 and FG3 used

peer evaluations to aid in the improvement of faculty engagement and performance. FG2

indicated that each faculty member has at least two other faculty to do a peer evaluation of teaching. FG3 posited that new faculty have a mentor and faculty coordinator that conducts a peer evaluation of the new faculty's teaching. Similar to Yin (2018), the findings suggest that higher education leaders could use evaluations as a mechanism to improve faculty engagement and performance. Both interview and focus group participants concluded that communication and job resources are key leadership strategies that improve faculty engagement and performance.

Correlation to the Literature and Conceptual Framework

Basit (2020) revealed that self-evaluations can be understood as personal resources. Kahn (1990) believed that an elevated level of engagement existed when an employee had the physical, emotional, or psychological resources. In addition, Kahn categorized this condition as psychological availability. Individual insecurity is a distraction that influences psychological availability. Employees experience insecurities when they focus on how others perceive or judge them, which, in turn, affects their engagement level. Annual performance evaluations, peer evaluations, student evaluations, and self-evaluations could be individual insecurity distractions, psychological availability.

Theme 2: Communication

The first theme that emerged in the focus group was communication. Effective communication is a vital leadership trait (Putra & Cho, 2019). FG1 stated, "Communication is critical, it is really the conduit to progress." All three of the participants encourage communication through their regularly scheduled meetings. The

meetings are scheduled to build rapport with faculty, and to give faculty the opportunity to offer recommendations and suggestions to improve their department and programs. It is important that faculty feels open and free to speak during the meetings, stated FG3.

FG2 took it a step further and conducts informal Wednesday meetings during the lunch hour. Faculty are not required to attend these meetings. Yi (2019) expressed the need for leaders to foster open communication, free dialog, and knowledge sharing through informal channels such as informal meetings and chats. The informal meetings have afforded FG2 an opportunity to learn of issues that would not have necessarily been brought up in a formal meeting. In addition, FG2 indicated, "Having an informal communication opportunity, it is more free flow, there's not an agenda, and it can be sometimes not even about work. It's just about us as people and that's important as well." The focus group data suggests that higher education leaders could benefit from conducting informal meetings just as much as conducting formal meetings.

All focus group participants purposefully have an open-door policy. FG1found an open-door policy to be very helpful and believes this policy helped to maintain a rapport with faculty. FG2 has an open-door policy, but also offers faculty and students an opportunity to schedule an appointment. By contrast, FG3 has an open-door policy but does not have a system in place to offer faculty and students an opportunity to schedule an appointment. Wigert and Agrawal (2018) suggested that leaders should eliminate anything that causes or perceives the lack of communication or support. More importantly, having a system in place for open communication between leaders and faculty could minimize faculty turnover (Towns, 2019).

Rabiul et al. (2021) stressed that two-communication between leaders and subordinates impact an organizations performance and engagement. Two-way communication occurs when an equal amount of information flows between a higher education leader and faculty member (Rabiul et al. (2021). Two of the three participants indicated the importance of transparency through communication has aided in improving faculty engagement and performance. Specifically, FG1 contended,

> I think transparency is important for my team. I also understand that what works for me may not work for everybody on my team, so I have to kind of customize that approach for different team members. Obviously, you can't tell you your team everything because that's not healthy as a leader either. One of the things I'm also transparent with them about that I think helps them feel like I'm more approachable is that I'm going to mess up sometimes. I probably have at some points, but they're going to be things you don't agree with that I have to make decisions about. Know that I will always consult you on the things that I can, and all those decisions will always be in the best interests of this department and the students and community we serve.

Stoyanova and Iliev (2017) explained the possibility of increased levels of communication leading to transparency. The participants' response of transparency and communication to improve engagement is in line with Trueman et al. (2022) who emphasized transparency coupled with communication will result in meaningful engagement. FG3 noted that by being transparent helped faculty to deal with change better. The data showed that when higher education leaders (a) conduct formal and

informal meetings, (b) have an open-door policy, and (c) are transparent, these strategies can improve faculty engagement and performance. Stoyanova and Iliev (2017) also believed that transparency between leaders and employees increase engagement.

Feedback

Kim et al. (2021) expressed that employees' working under supportive leadership have higher levels of satisfaction, motivation, and performance. All focus group participants are supportive leaders that use feedback and evaluations to improve faculty engagement and performance in the department. Feedback gives the higher educational leader and faculty member a gauge of how things are going. According to FG1, soliciting feedback could be a challenge at times. FG2 solicits feedback from faculty on a semester basis to see how they progress along with their professional goals and if any support is needed. FG1 and FG2 offers faculty with the option to provide feedback in a group or individual setting. Lee et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of leaders providing feedback and how feedback improves engagement and impacts organizational success.

Correlation to the Literature and Conceptual Framework

Sharma (2021) posited that organizations should promote open communication as well as informal feedback among leaders and employees. Theme 2, communication, supported the conceptual framework of this study, which was Kahn's EET. All participants strongly believed in open communication between leaders and faculty as well as faculty feeling supported. The higher education leaders' thoughts and practices align with Kahn's (1990) psychological condition *safety*. Psychological safety only exists when faculty feel that they can freely communicate with their higher education leaders.

Theme 3: Professional Development and Support

Chaudhary (2019) opined that employee's experience increased engagement when supported by their leaders. The global pandemic forced universities to alter their normal ways in which they offer professional development opportunities. All focus group participants indicated that their 2020 professional development opportunities were offered virtually. FG1 suggested that the virtual option to attend professional development opportunities was not so bad. The virtual option gave faculty and students the opportunity to stay safe and attend the professional development workshops, conventions, etc. during a pandemic. FG1 further added, "It really has kind of extended the boundaries of what we can do with continuing education. It also has created opportunities for our students to engage in ways that they were not before."
To promote professional development, FG2 asserted,

> I try to see if there are any development opportunities within establishing or even further refining their teaching strategies within the university. Our profession is fortunate that they offer once a year a new faculty workshop that is a five-day workshop. We offer that to all new faculty, but if this is a case in which the teaching effectiveness needs to be improved, I would see if they have not gone to that and if they like to attend. All of our faculty complete what's called a faculty development plan annually, and that identifies their goals within the areas of teaching service, scholarship and what progress they've made on their previous goals. It is short- and long-term goals as well.

There are different ways that higher education leaders can infuse professional development into the department. FG3 is actively creating a mentoring document that outlines the expectations for mentoring at different levels. Additionally, FG3 is developing a faculty award so that every year a faculty member would receive a $1000 incentive award to be used for professional development travel or whatever they want. The findings suggest that higher education leaders should offer some type of professional development whether in-person or virtual.

Correlation to the Literature and Conceptual Framework

According to Alvi et al. (2020), a supportive environment and effective communication will enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the team. The study results by Ahmed (2018) revealed that university administrators should develop policies and strategies that support engagement among faculty members to maximize their engagement. All three focus group participants encouraged professional development and is supportive to their faculty. Higher education leaders should ensure faculty have physical, emotional, and psychological resources as identified by Kahn (1990) as psychological availability.

Applications to Professional Practice

The intent of this study was to examine leadership strategies higher education leaders use to improve employee engagement and performance. The findings of this study include specific leadership strategies that higher education leaders can explore to improve employee engagement and performance. Faculty engagement is imperative for higher education leaders to attain their organizational goals. The results of the study

implied that to improve employee engagement and performance, higher education leaders should foster effective communication, encourage faculty performance evaluations, and engage through professional development and support.

Although each individual higher education institution has its specific challenges (McNaughtan et al., 2019), all higher education institutions can gain an understanding of effective strategies and experiences to improve faculty engagement and performance. Some leaders could adopt and create an organizational plan based on other leaders' successful leadership strategies (Nguyen & Phan, 2020). The results of this study could aid higher education leaders in improving faculty engagement and performance. Higher education leaders may use the findings to (a) identify existing barriers that could hinder faculty engagement and performance, (b) develop leadership strategies that foster effective communication, faculty performance evaluations, and engage through professional development and support, and (c) understand their role in improving faculty engagement and performance among their employees.

Implications for Social Change

The purpose of this multiple case study was to identify leadership strategies higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance. To increase faculty engagement and performance, higher education leaders should focus and customize their faculty engagement strategies. The implications of the findings for social change in general are to enhance faculty engagement and performance in higher education by utilizing leadership strategies.

Higher education leaders may create positive social change by developing engaged faculty. By implementing effective leadership strategies, higher education leaders can assist with lowering faculty disengagement. Employee disengagement has a negative effect on organizations (Shams & Niazi, 2018). When implementing effective leadership strategies such as effective communication, training, professional development, support, feedback, and evaluations, higher education institutions may increase faculty engagement and performance. According to Moss et al. (2017), increased employee engagement has a positive effect on an employees' performance and community. The implications for positive social change include the potential to reduce faculty turnover and reduce unemployment rates in communities.

Recommendations for Action

Several recommended actions for higher education leaders derived from the study's findings. This study findings may assist higher education leaders in using strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance. Nine of the study's participants noted that open communication is a key leadership strategy to improving faculty engagement and performance. Towns (2019) also indicated the importance of open communication at higher education institutions. The first recommendation is for higher education leaders to foster effective communication by implementing open and honest dialogue with faculty members. P13 shared that higher education leaders should build relationships with faculty. More specifically, faculty need to feel valued, and it can be accomplished through effective communication. Therefore, conclusions can be drawn

that when faculty can share their ideas with higher education leaders, they feel more valued and experience a sense of belonging to the organization.

The second recommendation is for higher education leaders to ensure faculty members have access to adequate resources. Fourteen of the study's total 16 interviews and focus group participants believed resources have a significant impact on faculty's engagement and performance. When faculty have the proper resources, such as training, professional development, open feedback, and faculty performance evaluations, they achieve a higher level of engagement and performance.

The findings from this study will be disseminated and accessible to researchers and students through the ProQuest/UMI dissertation database. In addition, a one-page summary will be provided to all participants via email for reference. The intent is to distribute the study's findings through several academic journals and seminars to provide higher education leaders an understanding of the leadership strategies needed to improve faculty engagement and performance.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the leadership strategies some higher education leaders used to improve faculty engagement and performance. In this study, limitations were (a) participants may not remember all the particulars of their strategies used to increase faculty engagement, and (b) using a small sample size of 16 participants located in the state of Kentucky.

One recommendation for future research is to increase the target population size, select a different geographical location with participants from different departments, and

from only one university. The participants in this study lived in Kentucky and were leaders from two different universities. A future researcher may choose to conduct a similar study from a single university and focus on higher education leaders in specific departments. This study included leaders from several different departments.

Another recommendation would be to require the higher education leaders to have more than a minimum of 2 years of experience in improving faculty engagement and performance. A future researcher could also research the leadership styles that improve faculty engagement and performance.

Finally, COVID-19 created another limitation for this study. Due to COVID-19, the access to the public universities was not readily available. As such, all interviews occurred via telephone. The barrier of not conducting face-to-face interviews did not afford an opportunity to witness participants body language and demeanor. Nambiar and Benny (2021) indicated that conducting telephonic interviews during COVID-19 felt impersonal and precluded the use of visuals and other cues; however, they would likely conduct telephonic interviews again in the future.

Reflections

My doctoral journey revealed and confirmed the inner strength that God instilled me. I knew the journey would not be easy, however, I did not know that it would be as challenging and take as long to complete. On numerous occasions I asked myself if I should continue, but then God reminded me that I can do all things through him.

In January 2018, I started this journey to obtain a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree. Within the first 8 months in the program, I went to

Residency 1 and Residency 2. Attending both Residencies at the outset of the program was enlightening. In my opinion, the residencies were game-changing due to the amount of knowledge received and lifelong friendships established. While attending Residency, several professors indicated that doctoral students could complete their DBA program within five terms. As a result, my goal instantly became to complete my program within the five terms. Unfortunately, I did not reach that goal within the five terms.

The intent of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the effective leadership strategies that some higher education leaders used to improve faculty engagement and performance. The participants for this study included 16 higher education leaders who successfully improved faculty engagement and performance. To recruit participants, I emailed approximately 200 individuals but only ended with 16 participants over a span of 8 months. The global pandemic made the data recruitment process extremely challenging. With all of the obstacles and sacrifices, I remain grateful and blessed for the journey. My goal was to become Dr. Adams and to add to the body of knowledge, and I accomplished my goal.

Conclusion

This qualitative multiple case study included an exploration of effective leadership strategies higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance. The participants consisted of 13 interview and three focus group higher education leaders in Kentucky who used effective leadership strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance. Data were collected using telephonic semistructured interviews and a focus group via Zoom. Yin's (2018) 5-step analysis process guided data

analysis of participants' interview responses, organizational documents (organizational chart, evaluation forms, faculty handbooks), and publicly available documents (policies and mission and vision statements).

The three emergent themes included fostering effective communication, faculty performance evaluations, and engaging through professional development and support. Key recommendations are (a) for higher education leaders to practice effective communication by implementing open and honest dialogue with faculty members, and (b) for higher education leaders to ensure faculty members have adequate resources and support to meet their professional goals and objectives. The implications for positive social change include the potential to reduce faculty turnover and reduce unemployment rates in communities.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview: Leadership strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance in higher education

The purpose of this study is to explore the effective leadership strategies some higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance. This study will include 5 to 10 higher education leaders at public universities in the State of Kentucky who used effective leadership strategies to improve faculty engagement and performance. Each higher education leader will be asked the same questions as per the protocol below:

1. I will introduce myself to the higher education leader as a doctoral student at Walden University in the Doctor of Business Administration program and the purpose of the study.

2. Prior to the interview, a consent form will be provided to the higher education leader via email. Once the consent form is reviewed, and a response is received via email with the words, "I consent" by the higher education leader, the interview will commence.

3. The higher education leader will be reminded that the interview will be recorded using a digital recorder and that the interview should last approximately 30-40 minutes.

4. The interview will start with asking background information such as (a) title and position, (b) years of experience in the same title/position, (c) education, and (d) age; then followed by the research questions.

5. When the interview is complete, the higher education leaders will be informed that I will email the transcript to them for member checking.

6. At the end of the interview, I will thank the higher education leader for participating in my study and then stop the digital.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What effective leadership strategies do you use to improve faculty engagement?

2. What effective leadership strategies do you use to improve faculty performance?

3. What leadership strategies proved to be the most effective for improving faculty engagement?

4. What leadership strategies proved to be the most effective for improving faculty performance?

5. How do you measure the effectiveness of your strategies for improving faculty engagement in your organization?

6. How do you measure the effectiveness of your strategies for improving faculty performance in your organization?

7. How did your faculty respond to your different engagement improvement strategies?

8. How did your faculty respond to your different performance improvement strategies?

9. What else would you like to add regarding the effectiveness of the strategies you use to improve your organization's faculty engagement and performance?

Appendix C: Letter of Invitation

Dear [Participant],

I am a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) student at Walden University. My doctoral study titled *Leadership Strategies to Improve Faculty Engagement and Performance in Higher Education* explores effective leadership strategies higher education leaders use to improve faculty engagement and performance.

I kindly request your permission to conduct interviews via videoconferencing, in-person, email, or telephone of higher education leaders to help me understand the effective leadership strategies used to improve faculty engagement and performance. The inclusion criteria of the higher education leaders consist of (a) are full-time higher education leaders at a public university, (b) have hiring, and supervisory experience, and (c) has a minimum of 2 years of experience in improving faculty engagement and performance. I anticipate the interviews taking place within the next 60 days. Any personal information provided will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at lasasha.adams@waldenu.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Lasasha Adams