

2022

Work Engagement in a Changing Nonprofit Environment

Shukura Crevelle
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Public Policy Commons](#)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Shukura Crevelle

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.

Review Committee

Dr. Michael Brewer, Committee Chairperson, Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Amin Asfari, Committee Member, Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Victoria Landu-Adams, University Reviewer, Public Policy and Administration
Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost

Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2022

Abstract

Work Engagement in a Changing Nonprofit Environment

by

Shukura Crevelle

MA, University of Baltimore, 2016

BS, Bowie State University, 2014

Professional Administrative Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Public Administration

Walden University

November 2022

Abstract

Employee engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind and describes work team members who gain a sense of connection in what they do. This has an impact on the physical, mental, and emotional health of the employee and the health of the organization. There was a need to explore contributing factors to employee engagement in a changing remote organization because there was a current gap in the literature regarding employee engagement and organizational change. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore causes to low engagement among employees in a nonprofit organization located in the northeast United States that was currently undergoing organization changes. The guiding research question explored what factors impact employee engagement and contribute to low engagement levels among team members within the client organization. This study was informed by the self-determination theory, particularly its concept of general engagement and model of personal engagement. Primary data were collected utilizing a web-based questionnaire that was administered to employees of the nonprofit organization. Secondary data were collected from peer-reviewed articles and historical data from the nonprofit organization. The data were analyzed using content analysis to identify emerging themes. The findings showed six themes that were important to the employees of the nonprofit organization for their continued engagement. Leadership in the nonprofit organization should address job stress, burnout, and negative work environment. Leaders of nonprofit organizations should focus on employee engagement to promote positive social change when undergoing organizational change, especially in remote/mobile work environments.

Work Engagement in a Changing Nonprofit Environment

by

Shukura Crevelle

MA, University of Baltimore, 2016

BS, Bowie State University 2014

Professional Administrative Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Public Administration

Walden University

November 2022

Dedication

To my daughter, Bailey Buchanan. For all the nights you stayed up by my side until I finished my work so I would not be alone. For all the questions you asked me about what I was always doing on the computer. For all the times you made sure I was doing okay anytime you heard the computer keys get quiet. This is an example of what can be accomplished no matter the circumstances. I love you.

To my mother who walked step by step with me down this road. You pushed me each call you made to me to let me know about your progress in your program, your frustrations, and your undying will and determination to push through your doctoral journey no matter the challenges. You always told me there is one thing that can never be taken from you, and that is your knowledge. You led by example, and for that I will always be grateful. Love you ma.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my committee, Dr. Brewer, and Dr. Asfari. Individuals who were instrumental in providing me with their time, experience, and valuable advice on the shaping of this body of work. For their constructive criticism and extreme patience when the process stalled. All the helpful advice and encouragement along the way will forever be remembered and appreciated. I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to Yolanda Echols and Jessica Burton who collaborated with me and provided constructive criticism, lent their knowledge, and provide endless encouragement along this journey.

Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	iii
List of Figures	iv
Section 1: Introduction to the Problem.....	1
Introduction to the Problem.....	1
Problem Statement.....	2
Purpose.....	4
Nature of Administrative Study.....	5
Significance	6
Summary	7
Section 2: Conceptual Approach and Background.....	8
Introduction	8
Concept, Models, and Theories	8
9	
Relevance to Public Organizations	9
Organizational Background and Context.....	11
Role of DPA Student	14
Summary	15
Section 3: Data Collection Process and Analysis.....	17
Introduction	17
Practice-Focused Question	18
Sources of Evidence.....	19

Analysis and Synthesis	25
Summary	26
Section 4: Evaluation and Recommendations.....	27
Introduction	27
Sources of Evidence.....	28
Findings and Implications	29
Participants’ Demographics.....	29
Results of Thematic Analysis	30
Unintended Limitations.....	41
Potential Implications for Social Change.....	42
Summary	42
Recommendations.....	43
Strengths and Limitations of the Project.....	46
Section 5: Dissemination Plan	47
Summary	47
References	49
Appendix: Questionnaire	54

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographics.....	30
Table 2. Theme 2: Connectedness.....	33
Table 3. Theme 3: Incentive Motivation	35
Table 4. Theme 4: Achievement Motivation	38
Table 5. Theme 5: Reasons for Disengagement.....	40
Table 6. Engagement Archival Data.....	41

List of Figures

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.....	9
-------------------------------------	---

Section 1: Introduction to the Problem

Introduction to the Problem

The purpose of the human service field is to protect vulnerable populations while also assisting them in self advocating, thriving, and being contributing members of society (Homer, 2017). Many nonprofit organizations within the human service field have missions that carry out this purpose. Actively engaged employees lead to desired productivity and successfully carrying out the mission of nonprofit organizations in the human service industry (Aboramadan & Dahleez, 2020). The study site client organization currently has a problem with actively disengaged employees. According to their website, in 2015, the client organization became a fully mobile workforce, closing all brick-and-mortar offices across the state of Maryland for employees to work in the community where they serve the individuals they support. In 2020, the organization, like many others across the United States, became a completely remote providing all services virtually to individuals being supported. In this basic qualitative study, I explored the causes and impact of employee disengagement within the mobile/remote human service client organization to make recommendations on how to address it. The potential positive social change implications of this study include decreasing high turnover rates within human service agencies, prioritizing employees' mental health, and creating a support system for addressing employees' work-life balance (see Aboramadan & Dahleez, 2020) within a primarily mobile/remote work environment.

Problem Statement

The client organization has a problem with disengagement among team members, and I was asked to examine the disengagement and provide recommendations. The problem has negatively impacted team members at the client organization knowing what is expected of them at work and having the ability to learn and grow within the last year, as gathered from an internal organizational document on engagement. The client organization has undergone several changes in the past 2 years, including launching recent programs, expanding capacity through departments across the agency, and creating new policies and procedures as a response to current social climate. It was unknown what was causing team members within the organization to identify as being not engaged.

Employment engagement, or work engagement as it is also referred to, is “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Kuijpers et al., 2020 pg. 3). Engaged employees are work team members that enjoy what they do and gain a sense of connection with the work being done. In recent years, the concept of work engagement has picked up traction in organizations, both for-profits and nonprofits, as an area of focus (Knight et al., 2017). The engagement level of team members within the client organization is a metric within the balanced scorecard and an outcome within their strategic plan for 2020–2025. The organization measures this metric quarterly by tracking professional engagement opportunities created and trainings taken by team members. Annually, the organization works with an outside agency to conduct an engagement survey that is used to create annual engagement outcomes specific to each catchment area in the client organization.

In this study, I analyzed engagement through one-on-one interviews with team members, questionnaires, and observations of team members in various settings (i.e., leadership meetings, supervisions, committee meetings, and mobile workdays) and developed recommendations from the results of my analysis.

Studies on the potential causes and consequences of employee engagement are plentiful (Knight et. al., 2017); however, there is a lack of literature specifically focused on employee engagement during organizational change. In this study, I viewed employee engagement as previous research has and added the parameter of organizational change. This parameter was operationalized using existing engagement models applied to the client organization, The growth of the client organization in recent years has increased the number of leaders, as stated by the chief executive officer of the client organization, that manage within a mobile work environment and team members that navigate their work task completely in a mobile setting. This growth and work style all contribute to the work engagement of team members.

Work engagement impacts team members physically, emotionally, and mentally in the work environment, connecting employees' health directly with their engagement to their job and the organization (Knight et al., 2017; Osbourne, 2017). When an organization experiences several changes within a short span of time, team members mental health, motivation, and job performance are all threatened (Kaltainen et al., 2019). Current literature has explored contributing factors and the consequences of work engagement but has not explored the effectiveness of interventions to address employee engagement (Knight et al., 2017). Existing literature also has a gap in exploring work

engagement and organizational change (Kaltainen et al., 2019). In examining engagement within the client organization undergoing organizational change in this study, I explored the potential contributing factors.

Low engagement is becoming an increasingly significant issue at the client organization because the overall engagement scores decreased from 2018 to 2021 in their employee engagement survey. The employee engagement survey and internal quality assurance reports from 2018–2019 demonstrated that team members' engagement has become a more significant issue in recent years, but the issue is still unresolved. Within the last 6 years, the client organization has transitioned into a complete mobile work environment for all team members across the agency. Expansions across all departments within the organization has also occurred within the past 2 years and the agency is currently navigating through the COVID-19 pandemic and a social revolution according to the chief executive officer. I conducted this study using primary data sources to identify any potential antecedents, triggers, and trends contributing to the low engagement of team members within the client organization.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore what is causing lower engagement among team members within the client organization. I investigated what the organization sets as target engagement levels, the connection between team members and the mission of the organization, opportunities designated for engagement, and how often team members engage in these opportunities to identify potential causes for the low engagement. Work engagement is a global experience that is defined as “a positive,

fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Kuijpers et al., 2020 pg. 3).

The guiding question for this study was: What factors are impacting employee engagement and contributing to low engagement levels among team members within the client organization? To assist the organization in addressing this question, I employed a basic qualitative design to explore employees’ low work engagement and its causes within the study site organization. Using one-on-one interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and an in-depth interview approach, I collected data to analyze and provide feedback and recommendations to the client organization. Qualitative designs are often used in social and health sciences research and can be best used to learn about and improve on an agency’s practices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A basic qualitative design is used when seeking to understand how individuals interpret their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The basic qualitative design was appropriate for this study because this design has the potential to contribute to better understanding of potential causes to the client organization’s lower engagement among team members.

Nature of Administrative Study

In this study, I used a basic qualitative design to explore the causes and impact of employee disengagement within the client organization through the experiences of the team members. Being able to receive feedback from employees regarding their experiences within their work environment contributes to the strengths of a qualitative approach. Exploring the problem by capturing the participants’ points of view of how they engage in the organization, what drives them to do the work, and how this

contributed to the organizations productivity, culture, and team member satisfaction was the goal of using this approach. I used an in-depth, semi structured interview approach to gather qualitative data in the form of participants' responses regarding the potential causes of low engagement. I also used open-ended questionnaires and artifact analysis to collect data for analysis. The questionnaires were developed and administered electronically, and the interviews were conducted virtually or in person if possible. I chose to employ the qualitative method in this study to utilize the strength of conducting interviews with individuals in their natural environment within the organization to best understand the problem within the client agency to provide my analysis and recommendations. Limitations of using a qualitative approach include not being able to recreate situations or events that occur naturally when gathering data, creating challenges in repeating or reproducing data as well as individuals' responses and behavior being reactive to knowing they are being observed (Anderson, 2010).

Significance

There is existing research on aspects of employee engagement within the workplace; however, research on employee engagement in mobile/virtual, nonprofit workplaces is still emerging. This study is significant because I further explored employee engagement and the contributing factors inside the client organization while they experience organizational change. I conducted this study to develop recommendations for the client organization and its work environment of low engagement among team members based on scholarly research as it explores the client

organization. The study focused on employee work engagement and changes internal to the organization.

Summary

Actively engaged employees in nonprofit organizations aid in increased productivity when carrying out the organization's mission (Aboramadan & Dahleez, 2020). The current problem with the client organization was they have actively disengaged employees, which is negatively impacting the organization according to internal engagement reports. The client organization has undergone several changes in the past few years, including expanding the workforce and restructuring the organization, as mentioned on the organizations webpage,; however, the causes of the actively disengaged employees were not known. Work engagement has been an area of focus for both for-profit and nonprofit organizations in recent years (Knight et al. 2017) and is a measured area within the client organization. In this basic qualitative study, I explored what was causing low engagement among employees at the client organization and the impact of the low engagement. Questionnaires and interviews were used to gather data from participants. The study is significant because research pertaining to employee work engagement within a virtual/mobile environment is still emerging and research about engagement in organizations that are rapidly changing still has areas to be expanded on. I used various models of engagement as the framework for this study.

Section 2: Conceptual Approach and Background

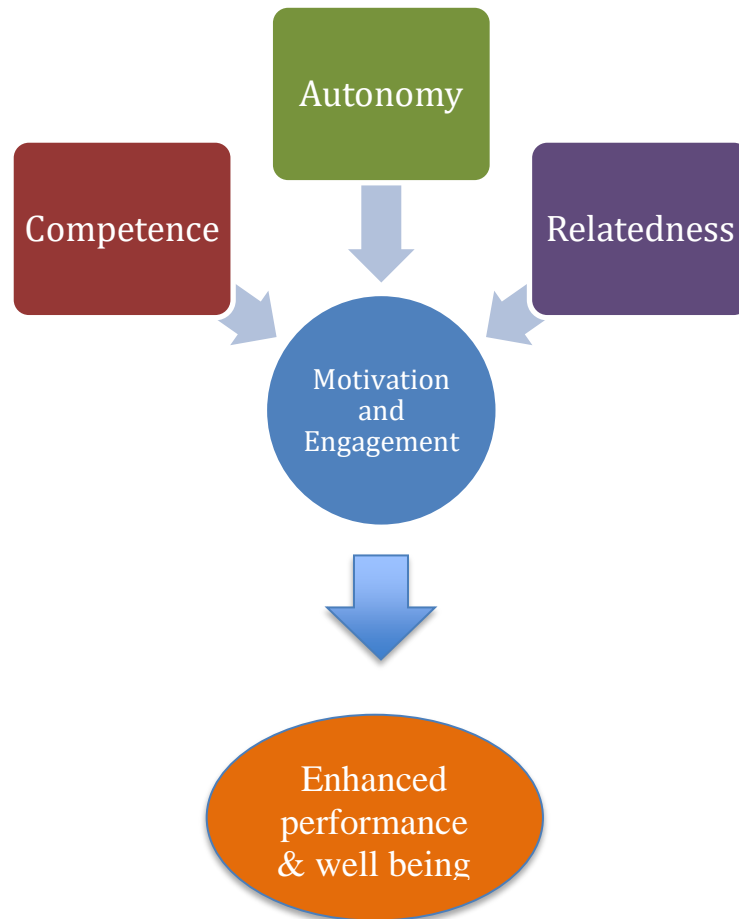
Introduction

The client organization had an issue with actively disengaged employees. In this study, I sought to determine what factors were impacting employee engagement and contributing to low engagement levels among team members within the client organization. The purpose was to explore the causes of low engagement and the impact the low engagement has on the mission and productivity of the client organization. In this section, I discuss the concepts and models that were used in the study, the relevance of the issue to public organizations, and the role of the researcher. I also provide more background information on the client organization in this section.

Concept, Models, and Theories

The framework for this study was shaped by other studies that explored employee engagement. Employee engagement was defined early on as the way organizational members express themselves cognitively, emotionally, and mentally in their work role (Rafiq et al., 2019). Schaufeli (2017) introduced the concept of general engagement and cited a model of engagement in the workplace by William Khan known as personal engagement. These models of engagement are characteristics of self-determination theory. I used self-determination theory as the conceptual framework to explore the employee engagement within the client organization. In this framework, engagement is viewed as individual employees' experiences, autonomy, and psychological safety (Schaufeli, 2017). Figure 1 outlines the conceptual framework.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework**Relevance to Public Organizations**

William Khan coined the term engagement in the early 1990s to describe a mental state where a person performing a work task is involved in the task with full enthusiasm and has a connection with the work and organization (Bakker & Leiter, 2017). Employee engagement has been studied in multiple industries in the past and is attributed to

productivity, performance, and the satisfaction of employees (Sahni, 2021). For employees to be considered fully engaged, they must exhibit motivation by being cognitively, physically, and emotionally engaged in the work and having a meaningful connection to the organization (Joplin et al., 2021). Engagement is an indicating factor in organizational health and continues to be an area of research interest to better understand what motivates the workforce. Keller (2011, as cited in Sahni, 2021) revealed that that roughly half the workforce in the United States identified as disengaged. Almost a decade later, Hester and Martins (2020) showed that 24% of the global workforce identify as being disengaged, with only 33% of the U.S. workforce identifying as being engaged. Disengaged workers are costly to the organization as well as the economy; therefore, paying attention to employee engagement is essential to the successful growth of both (Sahni, 2021).

The current state of employee engagement has decreased to below 50% due to a variety of factors, including mandatory remote work for many due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Laxmiprada & Lalatendu, 2020). Remote workers have identified as being less engaged due to not being in an office with other team members (Laxmiprada & Lalatendu, 2020), which impacts an organization's culture and profitability. Employee engagement has been challenging to maintain for employees in remote positions due to the act of balancing work, home, and mental health (Albro & McElfresh, 2021). Organizations are currently trying to ensure employees have the technological resources, training, and support to thrive in the virtual work environment (Albro & McElfresh, 2021). Changes in what used to be traditional work environments to remote work

environments has been the most significant cause of the current state of employee engagement. Current approaches to address employee engagement include organizations restructuring to accommodate true work-life balance through flexibility, the introduction of mindfulness in the workplace, and revamped employee assistance programs (Laxmiprada & Lalatendu, 2020; Sarmah & Chaudhuri, 2021).

The client organization has attempted to address engagement within the organization previously. Annual engagement surveys are conducted in the spring with the intention for each team to create goals in the fall to work towards. There is also an engagement committee that works on various initiatives and a wellness committee that conducts regular activities for all employees to participate in on a voluntary basis. Most recently, the organization implemented stay interviews to collect data on what factors keep team members with the agency.

Organizational Background and Context

The client organization is a nonprofit organization that provides case management services to a variety of individuals through three programs according to their website. The client organization began as part of a larger organization in 1982 which comprised of only seven service coordinators, providing resource coordination to individuals with disabilities. In 2005, the client organization branched off into its own nonprofit agency due to the growth and need of case management services for individuals with disabilities within the state according to the history found on their website. The skilled leadership, core beliefs, and relationship with the governing state agency were maintained as the organization branched off. Over the years, the demand for case management services for

individuals with disabilities in the state continued to grow, impacting the need for the client organization to grow and expand its services. In 2015, leadership at the client agency decided to transition the organization from traditional office structure to a mobile work environment with two hubs. The organization has also grown during this time from one program to three programs and more than 500 employees according to the chief executive officer. During fiscal year 2022, the client organization is expected to employ more than 650 team members across the organization, which has prompted a significant restructuring of the company per the chief executive officer.

The institutional context related to the problem is as follows. The client organization is a nonprofit agency that provides case management services to various demographics and operates in a completely mobile/remote setting. It is the largest case management agency in the state based on information located on their webpage. The agency has three main programs that now operate across three states: The Coordination of Community Services (CCS), the largest program in the agency; the Supports Planning Services (SPS); and the pay for service home health program. The CCS program provides case management services to individuals with intellectual and or developmental disabilities ranging from adolescents to adulthood based on information found on their webpage. The SPS program assists individuals of all ages in accessing home and/or community-based services for which they are eligible. The home health program, which is the newest program under the client organization, provides assistive care management for aging adults as defined on their independent webpage.

The organization utilizes all paid employees and no volunteers across any of the programs to serve more than 12,000 individuals. The employees, who are the focus of this research study, work remotely in the communities where they support individuals. More than 300 team members make up the CCS program, more than 100 make up the SPS program, and less than 20 make up the home health program based on numbers from internal documentation. The communities served include all counties in much of the state as well as northern Virginia and Washington D.C.

Governance of the organization is made up of a nine-member board followed by a CEO, chief operating director, chief program director, chief financial director, and a chief of staff. The mission of the organization is to provide quality case management and other related services by assisting individuals in knowing their choices and connecting them to resources in the communities which they live as obtained from the client organizations strategic plan. The client organization's core values include putting people first, driving solutions, building connections, and educating. The strategic vision for the organization through fiscal year 2025 is to continue providing quality case management and other related services while strengthening the agency's role as a leader in the field through strengthening relationships with all individuals served as well as expanding the organizational capacity to support individuals across multiple states while diversifying resources, all information found via the strategic plan located on the client organizations webpage.

Definitions of organizationally used terms are as follows.

Case management: Services that help individuals identify their strengths and needs to connect them with community services and resources.

CCS: A case manager who assists individuals in making connections to community services and resources.

Developmental Disability Administration: An agency that provides services and funding to eligible participants.

Non Developmental Disability Administration service: Services not funded by the Developmental Disability Administration.

Quality assurance: A method of looking at the quality of services funded by the Developmental Disability Administration.

With the organization providing services across Maryland, Washington D.C., and Virginia, it is subject to the employment laws and regulations of the respective locations where the employees provide services. There are currently no state regulations or legislation in any of the states which this organization operates in pertaining to engagement in a mobile work environment.

Role of DPA Student

I was responsible for collaborating with the client organization to explore the issue of disengaged employees, conduct research, and provide recommendations to the organization for addressing the issue. I was familiar with the client organization and was an employee within the organization at the time of the study. My role as the DPA student researcher was to analyze current documents the client organization had on its processes and practices for employee engagement then gather data through one-on-one interviews

with employees and questionnaires. I was familiar with the topic of employee engagement through previous academic work as well as employee engagement being an area of focus within the strategic plan for the client organization. Before conducting this study, I did not have access to documents that would be needed for this research study but had the opportunity to request and collaborate with the client organization to obtain any needed information.

There was no direct contact or overlap in the workplace between me and any of the participants in the research study. I did not include any employees from my direct office as participants to limit any conscious or unconscious bias. The motivations behind this research study include wanting to gain more information on employee engagement among remote/mobile workforces, developing professionally to provide recommendations that can shift the client organization, and contributing to the nonprofit field during changing times. Potential biases that I could have brought to the study were confirmation bias and question order bias. To address these, I ensured that no participants had a previous relationship with me, the questions were designed utilizing models of past work done on employee engagement, and that participant responses to interviews and questionnaires were analyzed with tools that eliminate researcher bias. I operated within these outlined roles during this research project.

Summary

This study was shaped by other studies that explored employee engagement and the impact it has on an organization. Engagement models related to the self-determination theory served as guides in completing this study. Engagement is an indicator of the

overall health of organizations (Sahni, 2021). While previous studies on employee engagement exist, studies about employee engagement in nonprofits with remote workforces are still emerging. The client organization currently struggles with low engagement and disengaged team members; therefore, this study sought to understand why and provide the organization with recommendations on how to address the issue. Through gathering information from existing sources along with conducting research within the client organization, I collected, processed, and analyzed data to provide recommendations on addressing low engagement in the client organization.

Section 3: Data Collection Process and Analysis

Introduction

Low engagement among team members was a problem for the client agency. There had been a decline in team member engagement, so the organization wanted to understand the factors causing it to create approaches to address the issue. The purpose of this study was to investigate the causes of low engagement within the client organization and the impact the low engagement has on the mission and productivity as well as to provide the organization with recommendations on how to address it. I conducted in-depth semi structured interviews with participants to gather qualitative data. The client organization began as part of a larger organization in 1982 with only seven service coordinators, providing resource coordination to individuals with disabilities as stated on the organization's webpage. In 2015, leadership at the client agency decided to transition the organization from traditional office structure to a mobile work environment with two hubs. In the last 2 years, the organization has expanded to three programs, multiple departments, and more than 500 employees according to its chief executive officer.

In this section, I present the practice-focused question of this research study. Sources of evidence are also discussed and broken down into current information that existed for me to obtain from the client organization and data that needed to conduct the study to obtain. Target demographics, procedures, and the protections put in place to safely collect the data from participants is described in the section as well. I also explain how the data were recorded, tracked, organized, and analyzed.

Practice-Focused Question

The client organization had a problem with disengagement among team members. As gathered from the client organization's annual engagement survey, this problem negatively impacted team members because they did not know what was expected of them at work or have opportunities to engage in activities to learn and grow in their roles within the last year. The client organization has undergone several changes in the past 2 years, including launching the latest programs, expanding capacity through departments across the agency, and creating new policies and procedures as a response to the current social climate. It was unknown what was causing team members within the organization to identify as being not engaged. The guiding question for this study was: What factors are impacting employee engagement and contributing to low engagement levels among team members within the client organization?

There is limited research evidence on how employee engagement is measured, managed, or addressed in mobile nonprofit organizations. Investigating what the organization sets as target engagement levels, the connection between team members and the mission of the organization, opportunities designated for engagement, and how often team members engage in these opportunities allowed me to identify potential causes for the low engagement. I designed the practice-focused question to align with the purpose of the study to gather information on factors impacting the low employee engagement within the client organization. Work engagement is a global experience that is defined as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Kuijpers et al., 2020 pg. 3).

Sources of Evidence

The sources of information that were incorporated into this project included data from the client organization in the form of existing and in progress policies and procedures, internal data from quality systems reports, and human resources surveys. I also facilitated focus groups, conducted interviews with leaders and team members, had participants complete pre- and post-surveys, and reviewed quarterly evaluations.

Literature from scholarly, peer-reviewed sources and questionnaires was also used. My intention with collecting data through documents from the client organization was to review information on the existing policies and procedures that guide the roles and responsibilities of all team members for the various departments within the organization to analyze how disengaged team members are identified through quality reports and evaluate what is already being done to address engagement within the organization. The client organization conducts engagement surveys annually in the spring. I needed access to historical data from those surveys to successfully complete this research project.

Accessing meeting minutes/transcripts from monthly town hall meetings that the client organization facilitated was also useful. Facilitating focus groups with various sets of employees inside the client organization served to capture the experiences of a mixture of employees collectively. One-on-one interviews with leadership, supervisors, and team members allowed me to gather information with which to address the research question. At the time of the study, there were no existing preliminary approvals from the client organization that were needed to obtain the data necessary to complete the study.

I used both primary and secondary sources in this research project. To acquire the primary data from the client organization, I requested access to archived documents that contain information on the roles and responsibilities of all employees, internal policies and procedures, and other internal changes over the past 5 years. A request for historical data from quality systems on agency compliance measures and historical data from internal surveys conducted by a third-party source was also made. I assembled focus groups using a random selection and open invitation process. The same approach was used for one-on-one interviews with team members, supervisors, and leadership from various departments within the organization. I sent electronic questionnaires to all team members organization wide as well. Relevant scholarly articles and similar studies were also reviewed. I requested consent, from the vice president of People and Culture department in the client organization, for all the above data and information prior to obtaining it. Once collaborating directly with the client organization, my plans for approaching data gathering needed to change. The vice president of People and Culture made me aware I would only have access to the historical data of internal engagement surveys and to conduct electronic questionnaires due to the active reorganization of departments within the client organization; request for all other data gathering was not approved.

Published Outcomes and Research

I reviewed journal articles on employee engagement, organizational health, and self-determination theory to collect data as it related to the practice-focused question for this study. The articles were retrieved from databases and search engines accessible

through the Walden University Library, such as EBSCO, Emerald Insight, Google Scholar, Guide Star, and Sage Publications. Keyword search terms used included *employee engagement, employee health, nonprofit organizational health, mobile work environment engagement, remote nonprofit organization, self-determination, employee satisfaction, and disengagement*. The Boolean operators of “AND” and “OR” were used to pair and populate results to narrow search results. The scope of this review went back 5 years from the present day with no more than 20% of sources being published outside that timeframe. Peer-reviewed articles were used to ensure the validity of the information included in this study. I conducted literature searches in multiple databases to make certain the review was exhaustive and comprehensive.

Archival and Operational Data

In this administrative study, I analyzed pieces of both quantitative and qualitative data. The annual engagement surveys are conducted by Gallup, a third party, over a period of 3 weeks. Employee participation is optional, and responses are made anonymous once the analyzed results are provided to the client organization. It is unknown what methods are used by Gallup to analyze the data. The engagement survey is valid because it targets engagement and provides quantitative information on actively engaged employees, disengaged employees, and actively disengaged employees. The engagement surveys ask 12 questions on a Likert scale to obtain information on how engaged team members are in various aspects of their role in the organization. The surveys are conducted and analyzed by a third party named Gallup, but all the data are

given to the client organization. The client organization has 6 years of engagement surveys that I reviewed for this study.

I intended to use stay interview data from the client organization in this administrative study but was denied access to this data. These open-ended interviews contained responses from all employees within the client organization to understand why team members remain with the organization and what support they need from the organization. The stay interviews are conducted internally by supervisors in each department at each level of hierarchy in the organization. These interviews are also analyzed internally, as made aware by the facilitator of the engagement committee within the client organization. The questions on the stay interview are the same for each employee and were designed to measure themes that keep team members with the client organization. These stay interviews are valid for what is being measured. There was 1 year of stay interview data that would have been used for the purposes of this administrative study.

These pieces of data were relevant to this study of engagement within the client organization and sought to provide insight into the processes and information that has already been obtained by the client organization to understand employee engagement and other organizational satisfaction metrics. The engagement survey data were useful because it presented quantitative information and covered multiple years of information, which allowed me to develop an understanding of current trends that may exist regarding engagement levels and possible factors that impact engagement. To obtain the archival

data, I made a request to the vice president of People and Culture along with the human resources department and the corresponding committees that maintain the data.

Evidence Generated for the Administrative Study

I collected data in addition to utilizing archival data. While one-on-one virtual interviews were requested from the client organization only web-based questionnaires were conducted to obtain information from participants for this research study.

Participants included a sample of employees within the client organization from various programs and department within the organization.

Participants. Participants from within the organization were included to understand the contributing factors to low employee engagement. A sample of 65–85 participants was the target for the web-based questionnaires to capture approximately one third of the organization. A sample of 10 participants for one-on-one virtual interviewees was the desired target to capture a representative from each department. I chose participants from within the organization only. Questionnaires were provided to all employees for their voluntary responses.

Procedures. The primary data were collected using self-developed open-ended questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of a demographics section followed by a section dedicated to employee engagement and satisfaction. Demographic information collected included gender, age range, and length of time with organization. The employee engagement and satisfaction section included questions related to how the participants

identify as being engaged and factors that are important to their engagement in the organization. Interview questions were not conducted.

I ensured validity by having all questions for the questionnaire reviewed by my committee chair. This assisted with making sure the questions aligned properly with the purpose of this study. I distributed and collected the questionnaires electronically utilizing Survey Monkey over a 1-month period.

Protections. I put the following protections in place to protect the rights of all participants. Participant recruitment was done internally within the client organization through partnering with the human resources department and engagement committee for volunteers throughout the agency. The organization made team members aware that this voluntary research study was being conducted for educational purposes ahead of time. Ethical protections included use of a general consent appeared prior to the questions in the questionnaire for web participation. I granted anonymity to all participants completing the questionnaire by utilizing random ID numbers based on when the questionnaire was taken. Demographic information that was obtained (i.e., the participants' gender, age, and years at organization) was collected as an optional response. I saved the collected information within a secured account on the questionnaire platform and information will be permanently deleted from all electronic platforms and physical documents will be shredded.

The client organization approved this research study conditionally. The conditions were that the human resource director in the client organization got to preview the questionnaires prior to dissemination. I also had to work with the human resource

department director and engagement committee to request and recruit participants for the study. The client organization requested to see all information prior to it being published. Approval of this client organization was received by Walden University Institutional Review Board with the approval # 03-04-22-0987709.

Analysis and Synthesis

I analyzed the collected data using qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is the understanding of patterns and themes important to a social reality (Roller, 2019). This method of analysis allowed me to reduce the content received from participants to interpret themes and obtain meaningful interpretations of the information. The content for the purposes of this study were the data collected through questionnaires.

I will maintain the integrity of the information collected by creating a matrix of themes once identified. This will be done by developing codes from the questionnaires completed by participants. Qualitative content analysis supports the integrity of the data through the creation of codes based on the context of information received (Roller, 2019). Outliers and missing information that may occur was also analyzed through the creation of a matrix of themes. Coding of outliers or missing information has been cited as instilling credibility and validity to qualitative studies when utilizing the qualitative content analysis approach (Roller, 2019).

I followed the steps of obtaining content, determining the unit of analysis, developing unique codes, creating preliminary codes, and coding the context obtained. After which, categories across codes were developed, themes were identified, and interpretations and implications were developed.

Summary

In this qualitative study, I sought to understand what factors in the client organization are resulting in low team member engagement and the impact this low engagement has on the overall organization so I could provide the organization with recommendations to address the issue. This study is significant because research is limited when it comes to employee engagement in mobile/remote nonprofit work environments. I aimed to provide more information on the topic to fill this gap in the literature. Self-determination theory was the guiding conceptual framework used. Employee engagement is impactful on organizational and economic health (Sahni, 2021), making it relevant to all public organizations. Current published research, archival organizational data, and evidence generated during this study were used to understand the issue. Evidence obtained in this research study were analyzed and synthesized to provide an answer to the practice-focused question. In Section 4, I present the study findings and implications.

Section 4: Evaluation and Recommendations

Introduction

Engagement at work involves many things, including team members putting energy into meaningful tasks, actively participating in meetings, and having productive interactions with colleagues and clients (Froiland, 2021). In this basic qualitative study, I investigated causes of low engagement within a growing, mobile work, nonprofit client organization. Engaging employees is a struggle many organizations battle with (Froiland, 2021). Remote or mobile work is the concept of working outside of the physical geographical location of an organization (Anand & Acharya, 2021). The client organization experienced rapid growth and change over the past 2 years, launching recent programs, expanding existing departments, and creating new policies. The level of team member disengagement, as measured through organizational annual engagement surveys conducted by Gallup, has been significant during the growth and change. Research around various aspects of engagement within the workplace exists, but research focused on engagement in mobile/remote nonprofit organizations is still emerging. Anand and Acharya (2021) stated that addressing how to keep employees motivated and engaged in remote working organizations is a challenge that must be focused on and addressed.

The guiding question for this research study was: What factors impact employee engagement and contribute to low engagement levels among team members within the client organization? I developed a questionnaire based on a model of engagement known as self-determination theory to understand what team members identified as being issues leading to low engagement. The self-determination engagement model focuses on three

factors that make up a motivated and engaged team member (Schaufeli, 2017). The purpose of this study was to understand the causes of low employee engagement in the mobile client organization through their season of growth and change.

Sources of Evidence

Data were collected through analysis of historical data from the client organization's annual engagement surveys and an electronic questionnaire sent out by me to all employees. The organization's yearly engagement survey contained 12 questions based on a Likert scale. The questionnaire I developed consisted of six open-ended questions that were informed by the literature and conceptual framework of self-determination theory to understand employee engagement during growth and change in the organization. I analyzed the online questionnaire responses using a thematic approach. Due to current changes in the client organizations the request to conduct focus groups and one on one interviews was denied. The only data I was authorized to collect was that from the web-based questionnaire and historical data of the organization's engagement surveys. Themes and subthemes were identified from the responses to the questions. I also used secondary data from published journal articles to interpret the findings by supporting or critiquing the primary results. Table 1 presents the factors and associated questions from the questionnaire.

I sent the questionnaire to all employees within the client organization through a contact person in the organization. The invitation included a description of the research study and a link to the website that hosted the questionnaire, SurveyMonkey. Once there, the questionnaire contained a consent page followed by three demographic questions and

then six open-ended questions created to identify employee engagement factors. I used the demographic questions to collect information on the participants' gender identity, age group, and tenure at the organization.

Findings and Implications

In this subsection, I present the results of the study. I asked the demographic questions to identify the participants' gender identity, age group, and tenure at the organization. The six open-ended questions were used to determine what factors impact employee engagement and contribute to low engagement levels among team members within the client organization. The section begins with a presentation of the participant demographics followed by the themes generated from thematic analysis.

Participants' Demographics

I collected data from 26 employees, all of whom were female. Most of those who took part were between the ages of 31 to 40 years old, accounting for 38% of the participants, followed by those aged 41 to 50 years old, who made up 35%. Of those who completed the questionnaire, six identified a tenure of less than a year, seven stated they worked for the organization between 1–5 years, eight had tenures of 5–10 years, six reported tenures of 10–15 years, three with tenures of 15–20 years, and two had tenures of 20+ years. All 26 participants worked at the client organization prior to the reorganization, development of recent programs and the expansion of existing departments.

Table 1*Demographics*

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	0	0%
	Female	26	100%
Age	21–30	4	15%
	31–40	10	38%
	41–50	9	35%
	51–60	2	8%
	61+	1	4%
	Tenure	1–5 years	7
	5–10 years	8	31%
	10–15 years	6	23%
	15–20 years	3	12%
	20+ years	2	8%

Results of Thematic Analysis

After collecting data, I conducted a thematic analysis to determine what factors keep employees engaged or lead them to become disengaged. I analyzed the participant responses to the six questions by grouping them into themes by similar responses and patterns. In the following subsections, I discuss each theme and present a table showing the subthemes.

Theme 1: Helping Others

The first theme of what keeps employees inspired and motivated is helping others. This was inferred from 22 responses of employees who believed that they enjoyed and derived satisfaction from helping others. For instance, one respondent said, “supporting and serving people. Watching people grow and learn,” which is similar to another participant response, “I love the coaching factor. Coaching others to see them eventually thrive is so rewarding.” This is reinforced by the respondents who said, “Helping people

achieve their dreams and live an independent lifestyle with all of the support they desire” and “I enjoy knowing that someone else is benefiting from the work that I'm doing, not just me.” Two other respondents said, “I love being able to provide high-quality mental health services to an underserved population” and “being able to help people each day.” This shows that the nonprofit organization’s objectives of helping those in need inspires and motivates employees, thereby keeping them engaged.

The results showed that helping others kept the employees motivated and inspired and that they enjoyed supporting and serving people. This can be attributed to the fact that the NGO attracts people who desire to help others; hence, when the employees are given the opportunity to realize their passions, they will be engaged. This finding shows that the organization’s mission and vision of helping vulnerable members of society is a source of motivation and inspiration.

Theme 2: Connectedness

The second theme is connectedness, which can be termed affiliation motivation. This theme entails creating and sustaining a good and productive relationship between the organization’s employees. When employees have constructive and fruitful interactions with their colleagues, they are more likely to stay more motivated than those who feel disassociated (Pappas, 2021). The theme comprises four subthemes: communication, meaningful interaction, regular interaction, face-to-face interaction, and work connection.

Subtheme 2.1: Communication. The first subtheme was communication between employees. This was inferred from three respondents who said, “good

communication,” “clear communication,” and “I have consistent communication with my team.” This finding underscores the importance of communication with colleagues.

Subtheme 2.2: Meaningful Interaction. The second subtheme was meaningful interaction as inferred from respondents who said, “Building good relationships with our teams to help ensure we are providing the best supports we can” and “I am the happiest when I am in the company of my team and my favorite co-workers who I have found a connection with.” Furthermore, three employees said, “Meaningful interactions, Downtime to connect personally with peers,” “Being able to feel like you are a part of a team or group. Not being in isolation, able to be a part of the world outside of you,” and “Happy, enthusiastic teams.”

Subtheme 2.3: Regular Interaction. The third subtheme was regular interaction, which underscores the time and consistency of communication at work and even after. This was evident from the patterns of responses where participants were of the view that “*Shared calendars, the opportunity to use an instant messenger/chat feature,*” “Having opportunities to connect with peers even if only virtually” and “Outside activities with peers not necessarily work-related activities.” While communicating, one respondent reported that it should be seamless, saying, “Less distractions, more scheduled time to meet with people.” Two respondents also said, “Having access to peers” and “Easy access to co-workers.”

Subtheme 2.4: Face-to-Face Interaction. The fourth subtheme was face-to-face interaction, which highlights the importance of in-person communication in realizing affiliation motivation. The respondents said, “ability to have conversations with peers,”

“Opportunity to connect with others in-person frequently,” and “Regularly scheduled in-person work sessions.” All three respondents were of the view that in-person communication and interaction should be regular.

Subtheme 2.5: Connecting With Work. The fifth subtheme was connecting with work. This was evident from respondents who believed that interactions enable them to work and celebrate organization achievements. Three of the respondents said, “Having team members that are committed to the success of the company,” “Having obligations, involvement in something,” and “Being an active participant in the activity or task.” This was similar to the views that “Coaching others to see them eventually thrive so rewarding” and “Various team members looking to me for guidance/answers.” After accomplishing their objectives and goals, the employees interact to “Celebrate every new milestone with each client.” Table 2 shows the codes, number of participants who expressed the theme, and subthemes related to Theme 2.

Table 2

Theme 2: Connectedness

Code	Number of Participants	Subtheme
Exchanging information	5	2.1 Communication
Quality and intention of interaction	8	2.2 Meaningful interaction
Frequency of interaction	6	2.3 Regular interaction
Personal communication	5	2.4 Face-to face interaction
Relationship with work	5	2.5 Connecting with work

The theme of connectedness can be attributed to the importance of employees' need to have a sense of belonging where they feel like part of the team. It is human nature to desire recognition and the feeling of being recognized for efforts and talents (Froiland, 2021). This theme underscored the importance of effective and timely communication between employees, departments, and managers. The communication should be meaningful, well intended, and regular. Employees also value personal interaction, which meets the human need for communication. The interaction can be on personal and/or work issues if it is respectable and meaningful.

Theme 3: Incentive Motivation

The third theme was incentive motivation, which denotes being motivated due to recognition, rewards, professional development, and other fiscal and nonfiscal benefits derived when working for an organization. This theme was composed of two subthemes: monetary reward and professional development.

Subtheme 3.1: Monetary Reward. Monetary rewards were the fiscal benefits that motivated employees to be engaged and deliver their job responsibilities. This was inferred from three respondents who said that “income,” “Incentives, praise,” and “lots of incentives.” Concerning nonmonetary benefits, respondents were of the view that they were inspired and motivated by the noncash benefits they derived from the organization. For instance, one respondent said, “Doing what I love to do,” which was echoed in “being involved in things that interest me.” Furthermore, three respondents shared, “the people/job that I do,” “to be physically and mentally present with clients,” and “I'm part of a common cause.”

Subtheme 3.2: Professional Development. Concerning professional development, employees are motivated when they get opportunities to advance skills, traits, and competencies that contribute to their workplace success and can lead to new opportunities and career advancement. This was inferred from the responses, “When I am learning new skills that will be beneficial to the people we support. When I achieve long and short-term goals that I have set for myself,” and “Being actively involved in professional pursuits as it pertains to growth in my respective field.” Furthermore, three respondents were of the view that they are motivated and thereby engaged because “*I believe my work is valuable and makes a difference for future counselors,*” “being involved in creating and developing a program,” and “learning something new.” When others are developing and advancing their careers, it motivates and keeps employees engaged, given that they know that they too can grow. This was inferred from the responses that “Seeing the growth of employees and the people we support” and “watching people grow and learn.” One of the respondents underscored the importance of performance by saying, “My description of engagement involves performance and energy. These two factors tell me that you are present, accounted for, and interested in your role within the organization and participating in company areas that align with their personal strengths.” Table 3 shows the codes, numbers of participants who expressed the theme, and subtheme related to Theme 3.

Table 3

Theme 3: Incentive Motivation

Code	Number of Participants	Subtheme
------	---------------------------	----------

Income	4	3.1 Monetary reward
Career growth	8	3.2 Professional development

The theme of incentive motivation can be attributed to the fact that employees are motivated and inspired by realizing their goals, which can be monetary or nonmonetary. There is a human need to have resources or income to meet their needs. In human resource management, the salary employees receive is an attraction to a company; hence, it is a factor in keeping employees engaged.

Theme 4: Achievement Motivation

The fourth theme was achievement motivation, which denotes the attainment of personal and organizational goals. The theme comprises three subthemes: accomplishing goals, being in control, working remotely, and self-organization.

Subtheme 4.1: Accomplishing Goals. Concerning accomplishing goals, one respondent said they are motivated because the respondents said, the ability to accomplish tasks set forth for the day, "Accomplishing tasks", "being able to check things off my to-do list," and "Completing tasks to check off my to-do list" "the ability to accomplish tasks set forth for the day," "Accomplishing tasks", "being able to check things off my to-do list," and "Completing tasks to check off my to-do list" helped them stay motivated and engaged. Completion of tasks and priorities requires a supportive environment. This is inferred from two responses where one said, "Actively be productive in my work, with limited distractions," which is reinforced by the view that "When I am able to feel productive. It is hard to stay engaged when the day just feels like it is lagging. But when I am able to stay on top of all of my administration duties, have

meaningful sessions with clients, and communicate with my team, that is really helpful” and plays a role in staying engaged and motivated.

Subtheme 4.2: Being in Control. The subtheme of being in control was inferred from responses that show that employees seek to oversee their schedules and responsibilities. For instance, one respondent said, “I am happy when I have control over my schedule,” which is comparable to the response “Having control over my workflow.” Also, the employees seek to be given the freedom to be creative and apply their own thinking as inferred from “The ability to be creative in the way I approach problems,” like the response “Consistency and routine. While each day is different, I typically follow the same daily routine and stay consistent with what I do. If I did not, my thoughts would be elsewhere, and I wouldn't be able to focus on just work”.

Subtheme 4.3: Self-Organization. Regarding self-organization, the responses show that employees prefer to be given the liberty and resources to organize their schedules and fulfill their responsibilities. This was inferred from the responses “Privacy to get things done, having my own schedule,” “a schedule that best fits me,” “When I have a schedule, I created, and I work against deadlines,” and “Tackling my to-do-list keeps me extremely engaged and busy.” Further, the freedom to “Organize/making things accessible for others” and “organize, setting small task goals” as well as “time management” are essential to employees for them to stay engaged. Table 5 shows the codes, numbers of participants who expressed the theme, and subtheme related to Theme 4.

Table 4*Theme 4: Achievement Motivation*

Code	Number of Participants	Subtheme
Achievements	8	4.1 Accomplishing goals
Being in charge	6	4.2 Being in control
Personal schedule	6	4.3 Self-organization

In line with the concept of achievement motivation, employees are engaged when they accomplish realistic goals and receive feedback. Achievement-motivated employees will be inspired and engaged when they are equipped and supported to achieve targets, evaluated, and given timely and constructive feedback. They are likely to feel energized and satisfied with their jobs because goals are set, and they are given positive or negative feedback on past behaviors and rewarded accordingly.

Theme 5: Reasons for Disengagement

The fifth theme was reasons for disengagement. These denote events or settings which make employees feel disengaged from their work and responsibilities at the organization. The theme comprised three subthemes namely, job stress and burnout, negative work environment, and poor communication.

Subtheme 5.1: Job Stress and Burnout. This subtheme was inferred from the responses where respondents said, “When feeling more isolated, overworked, and behind on the endless administration and charting. I sometimes have difficulty reaching out to others when I feel this way”, “Being overwhelmed” and “demands of the job; workload; burn out.” The response reinforces this that having more than enough workload is a cause of burnout, where one of the study participants said, “Too many things being thrown at me at one time. It's harder for people to know what your day looks like in a remote

environment” and “Having to put out back-to-back to backfires.” The type of management can also overwhelm work, as one respondent “micro-management, disgruntled employees, items that need immediate responses, workload too heavy, long meetings, lack of privacy.” Encountering interruptions and disruptions can also lead to job stress was evident from the responses “When I do not have control over my schedule, and I have multiple interruptions to my calendar” and “Too many interruptions and not being able to complete all tasks.”

Subtheme 5.2: Poor Communication. Responses showed that poor communication was caused when employees felt that the management was not listening to their views and concerns. In this line, one respondent said they are disengaged “When I feel like I’m not heard,” “Feeling unheard; not being able to see positive change in the industry,” and “When I’m not able to get clear answers and feel stuck.” This is comparable to the view that “Unclear expectations and policies,” “Long meetings where the purpose is lost,” and “Long meetings, teleconferences, webinars that are not critical to my job function” lead to disengagement. Further, poor communication can be caused by not providing necessary information; where one employee said, “The unknown. For example, if things change and you ask questions, but there are no answers, it makes me less engaged. Another thing is sometimes things are so secretive, making me question our role.”

Subtheme 5.3: Negative Work Environment. The subtheme of a negative work environment was caused by several factors that can be interrelated. For instance, one respondent said, “I tend to disengage when I become frustrated with something or

someone.” Also, “Politics, knowing that individuals are different, and they need different things. Politics tries to structure and keep every individual in the same box which is not effective in this line of work” is another cause of disengagement. Further, two respondents believed that “Not having help when needed or frustrations with others not doing their part” and “having rude people” were the causes of disengagement.

The findings showed that disengagement is caused by job stress and burnout, a negative work environment, and poor communication. The stress and burnout are caused when employees have more work than they can manage because of the available resources and time. Employees overworked are likely to disengage, given their view that the organization does not care about their welfare.

Poor communication results in the management not responding to employee queries and concerns and feeling unheard. Employees sometimes raise genuine concerns about aspects that may affect their job delivery. When these queries are not responded to nor handled effectively, it gives the impression that the management does not value its employees, creating disengagement. Table 5 shows the codes, numbers of participants who expressed the theme, and subtheme related to Theme 5.

Table 5

Theme 5: Reasons for Disengagement

Code	Number of Participants	Subtheme
Overwhelmed with work	7	5.1 Job stress and burnout
Quality of communication	7	5.2 Poor communication
Type of work environment	5	5.3 Negative work environment

Archival and Operational Data

The client organization conducts annual engagement surveys of all its employees. The engagement surveys ask 12 questions with a Likert scale to obtain information on how engaged team members are in various aspects of their role in the organization. The surveys are conducted and analyzed by a third party named Gallup, but all the data were given to the client organization.

The findings in Table 6 show that in 2019 40% of employees were engaged while 60% were disengaged. In 2020 this reduced by 6% to 54% who were disengaged while 46% were engaged. In 2021 it decreased further to 52% disengaged and 48% engaged. The findings show that there has been a reduction in the number of employees who are disengaged over the last three years. However, more than half of the employees are disengaged; hence there is a need to understand the reasons why and how this can be addressed. This is in line with a study in 2011 which revealed that roughly half the workforce in the United States identified as disengaged (Sahni, 2021).

Table 6

Engagement archival data

	Total		
Year	Respondents	Engaged	Disengaged
2019	347	40%	60%
2020	449	46%	54%
2021	468	48%	52%

Unintended Limitations

The main limitation of the data collection is that most participants offered brief responses, which led to low-quality information. Some responses, such as good my

coworkers, public serving, and distractions, did not provide many details on the respondents' views. This affected quality of the analysis and conclusion.

During the data collection, the organization underwent another reorganization with the human resources department and added a new department titled People and Culture. I was unsuccessful in getting archival data due to the organization discontinuing current procedures or archival data around engagement. The only data I could obtain were the overview of the Gallup surveys presented in Table 6 above. As such, there is a limitation where the researcher could not get archival data on employee engagement.

Potential Implications for Social Change

The findings showed the importance of helping others to the employees. In this regard, the organization and others should dedicate their resources to supporting vulnerable members of society. In this regard, NGOs should continue their objectives while business corporations should set aside resources for corporate social responsibility. This will also help keep some employees engaged.

The findings showed that some employees enjoy working remotely. As such, the organization should evaluate how best to integrate remote working into its operations. This can change the social lives of employees, among other benefits. However, remote working should be included only when it maintains required employee and cumulative organizational performance.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore what is causing lower engagement among team members within the client organization. Qualitative data were collected from

26 employees, and the data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings showed that job stress and burnout, negative work environment, and poor communication are the reasons for disengagement. Further helping others, connectedness, incentive motivation, and achievement motivation inspire, motivate, and ultimately keep employees engaged.

The management should take measures to ensure a supportive work environment, effective and timely communication, and employees are not overwhelmed with their work. The NGO should recruit employees whose ambitions and passions align with the need to help others, remunerate them, accordingly, supports employees, provide them with the requisite resources to achieve their targets, and offers constructive feedback.

Recommendations

The management within the client organization needs to address the causes of job stress and burnout, negative work environment, and poor communication. This can be through ensuring an adequate staff-to-work ratio so that employees are not overworked. Further, there should be outlined job responsibilities that should be adhered to and re-evaluated for competency periodically. Competency is a component of self-determination theory that feeds into motivation and engagement of team members (Schaufeli, 2017).

The management should provide a supportive work environment that encourages employees to be productive. This can be addressed by creating trust between employees, departments, and management and eliminating toxic politics that negatively affect employees. Development of virtual suggestion or comment box, departmental collaboration on projects, and both formal and informal meetings between senior

leadership and team members on a consistent basis are ways the client organization can build up trust and begin to address disengagement.

The management should also address the challenge of poor communication. This can be realized by having clearly outlined communication channels that should be followed. Utilizing procedures that are easily accessible in a mobile work environment for team members to reference regarding who to contact and when to contact them. One element to be included in response time to concerns and queries. Managers should respond to all employee queries to address the effects of not being heard, which creates disengagement. The management should also involve employees in the decision-making process to create a shared leadership approach. This would support connectedness as well as address poor communication in the mobile environment that the client organization operates in.

The employees who took part believed that long meetings that were out of scope for their role were a reason for disengagement. Further, those who worked remotely said they preferred the arrangement of having targeted meetings because it reduced the number of meetings they sat in on. In this regard, the management should ensure that the meetings that take place include the appropriate team members, have outlined agendas, and set time frames creating briefer meetings.

The theme of helping others shows that the organization's mission and vision of helping vulnerable members of society is a source of motivation and inspiration. This is a direct component of what goes in to creating motivated and engaged team members in self-determination theory. In this regard, the client organization should seek to recruit

employees whose ambitions and passions align with the need to help others. Achieving this can be done from the beginning of the recruitment process which is the job description that is advertised for open positions all the way through the onboarding process of new team members. Focusing on obtaining and retaining employees who relate to the mission and vision can support increasing the overall engagement and culture of the client organization.

Concerning connectedness, the management should ensure that it creates opportunities for employees to interact with others and have meaningful conversations. Focusing on implementing spaces in the remote work environment as well as incorporating opportunities for team members to engage in person through conferences, trainings, employee appreciation week, or an organizational day for all team members employed at all levels. Also, there should be timely and effective communication, from appropriate levels of leadership, when employees seek clarification, new processes are introduced, or major changes take place such as reorganization that the client organization is currently undergoing. The employees should also be encouraged to communicate with one another regularly as it is crucial to create a functioning team, especially in a remote work environment.

Concerning incentive motivation, the organization should ensure that employees are well compensated and remunerated for their efforts. This can be in terms of fixed salary and other monetary incentives, which can be performance related, addition of paid time off separate from annual or sick leave (mental health days), or a recognition system that can be applied to all departments of the organization. Further, employees who

achieve targets should be recognized through appraisal and offering feedback. The organization should also ensure that it supports employees and provides them with the requisite resources to achieve their targets. Such examples would be appropriate technology to work remote, clear access points to reach appropriate departments or members of leadership, and ongoing training as changes take place.

Strengths and Limitations of the Project

A strength of this research project was the qualitative research design. The qualitative research design assisted in obtaining detailed responses from the participants. Another strength of the project is the use of a sample size of 26. A qualitative research sample size of more than 15 is large enough and can allow a researcher to attain saturation. However, a limitation of this project was also the sample size. The target sample size was not obtained. Another limitation of the project is that the responses entailed self-appraisal, where employees had to understand what made them engaged or disengaged. This can lead to subjective biasness, where one can underestimate or overestimate their responses depending on firsthand experiences. Additionally, a limitation of collection of data from one organization limits the heterogeneity of the sample. Further, the respondents gave brief responses, which led to low-quality data and inferences. In depth insights on the factors that are impacting participants engagement was not obtained through the brief responses. Future researchers should replicate this study utilizing a larger sample size across multiple organizations. In addition to administering a questionnaire completing interviews with a sample of participants could yield a stronger data.

Section 5: Dissemination Plan

I will share the findings and my recommendations with the management of the client organization through a PowerPoint presentation and one-page summary to enable them to better understand the issue of employee engagement. Furthermore, the findings will be shared with the employees through a summary that will be provided by email and disseminated via the point of contact at the client organization. My goal is to create awareness around addressing engagement as an ongoing need for all team members and not just at a specific time of the year.

The findings will also be disseminated to scholars, researchers, and other interested parties. They will be published in a peer-reviewed journal and shared on ProQuest. ProQuest publishes millions of dissertations and theses, making it an ideal platform for this study to be accessed by others in academia and the research community, including researchers, students, and scholars. The findings will also be presented in a relevant symposium to be discussed by peers and like-minded professionals.

The findings from this study could also be expounded upon and used to investigate further engagement in remote work environments in both for-profit and nonprofit organizations.

Summary

Employee engagement is an important concept because it influences worker and organizational productivity. Additionally, it influences employee motivation and organizational citizenship behaviors. In this study, I investigated lower engagement among team members within a nonprofit organization. The findings show that the

reasons for low engagement among the workers include job stress and burnout, negative work environment, and poor communication. Nonprofits, such as the client organization, should embrace the recommendations outlined in the study, including hiring more workers to improve the staff-to-work ratio, creating a supportive work environment, creating clearly outlined communication channels, and reducing long meetings to enhance worker engagement.

References

- Aboramadan, M., & Dahleez, K. A. (2020). Leadership styles and employees' work outcomes in non-profit organizations: The role of work engagement. *Journal of Management Development, 39*(7/8), 869–893. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-12-2019-0499>
- Alavi, M., Archibald, M., McMaster, R., Lopez, V., & Cleary, M. (2018). Aligning theory and methodology in mixed methods research: Before design theoretical placement. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 21*(5), 527–540. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2018.1435016>
- Albro, M., & McElfresh, J. M. (2021). Job engagement and employee-organization relationship among academic librarians in a modified work environment. *Journal of Academic Librarianship, 47*(5). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2021.102413>
- Anand, A. A., & Acharya, S. N. (2021). Employee engagement in a remote working scenario. *International Research Journal of Business Studies, 14*(2), 119–127. <https://doi.org/10.21632/irjbs.14.2.119-127>
- Anderson C. (2010). Presenting and evaluating qualitative research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, 74*(8), 141. <https://doi.org/10.5688/aj7408141>
- Bakker, A. B., & Leiter, M. (2017). Strategic and proactive approaches to work engagement. *Organizational Dynamics, 46*(2), 67-75.
- Blomme, R. J., Kodden, B., & Beasley-Suffolk, A. (2015). Leadership theories and the concept of work engagement: Creating a conceptual framework for management

implications and research. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 21(2), 125–144. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2014.71>

BoardSource. (2010). *The handbook of non-profit governance*. Wiley.

du Plessis, E., & Marais, P. (2017). A grounded theory perspective on leadership in multicultural schools. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 52(5), 722–737. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909615612122>

Froiland, J. M. (2021). Employee engagement. *Salem Press Encyclopedia*. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib&db=ers&AN=108690511&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

Homer, C. (2017). Human services: An essential partner in improving health in the United States. *Public Health Reports*, 132(2), 127–129. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033354916689662>

Joplin, T., Greenbaum, R. L., Wallace, J. C., & Edwards, B. D. (2021). Employee entitlement, engagement, and performance: The moderating effect of ethical leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 168(4), 813–826. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04246-0>

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2017). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 2: Context, research questions and designs. *European Journal of General Practice*, 23(1), 274–279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375090>

Kaltiainen, J., Lipponen, J., Fugate, M., & Vakola, M. (2019). Spiraling work engagement and change appraisals: A three-wave longitudinal study during

organizational change. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 25(4), 244–258 <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000163.supp>

Knight, C., Patterson, M., & Dawson, J. (2017). Building work engagement: A systematic review and meta-analysis investigating the effectiveness of work engagement interventions. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 38(6), 792–812. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2167>

Kuijpers, E., Kooij, D. T. A. M., & van Woerkom, M. (2020). Align your job with yourself: The relationship between a job crafting intervention and work engagement, and the role of workload. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 25(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000175>

Laxmiprada, P., & Lalatendu, K. J. (2020). Mindfulness, remote engagement, and employee morale: conceptual analysis to address the “new normal.” *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 29(4), 873–890. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-06-2020-2267>

Malinowska, D., & Tokarz, A. (2020). The moderating role of self determination theory’s general causality orientations in the relationship between the job resources and work engagement of outsourcing sector employees. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 153. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.109638>

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research : A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Brand.

Mitchell, A. (2018). A review of mixed methods, pragmatism and abduction techniques. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 16(3), 103–116.

- Nienaber, H., & Martins, N. (2020). Exploratory study: Determine which dimensions enhance the levels of employee engagement to improve organisational effectiveness. *The TQM Journal*, 32(3), 475–495. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-05-2019-0151>
- Osborne, S., & Hammoud, M. S. (2017). *Effective employee engagement in the workplace*. ScholarWorks.
- Pappas, S. (2021). *Rousing our motivation*. Monitor on Psychology.
- Rafiq, M., Wu, W., Chin, T., & Nasir, M. (2019). The psychological mechanism linking employee work engagement and turnover intention: A moderated mediation study. *Work*, 62(4), 615–628. <https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-192894>
- Roller, M. R. (2019). A quality approach to qualitative content analysis: Similarities and differences compared to other qualitative methods. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 20 (3), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-20.3.3385>
- Saeed, M., & Mughal, Y. H. (2019). Role of transactional leadership style upon performance: Mediating role of culture. *Journal of Managerial Sciences*, 13(1), 47–57.
- Sahni, J. (2021). Employee engagement among millennial workforce: Empirical study on selected antecedents and consequences. *SAGE Open*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211002208>
- Sarmah, A. K., & Chaudhuri, P. (2021). New role of human resource development in Covid-19 crisis. *Parikalpana: KIIT Journal of Management*, 17(1), 283–391.

- Schaufeli, W. B. (2017). General engagement: Conceptualization and measurement with the Utrecht General Engagement Scale (UGES). *Journal of Well-Being Assessment*, 1(1–3), 9–24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41543-017-0001-x>
- Shier, M. L., & Handy, F. (2016). Executive leadership and social innovation in direct-service non-profits: Shaping the organizational culture to create social change. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 27(2), 111–130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10428232.2016.1155429>
- Teegarden, P. H., Hinden, D. R., Sturm, P., & Brinckerhoff, P. (2011). *The non-profit organizational culture guide: Revealing the hidden truths that impact performance* [Electronic resource]. Jossey-Bass.

Appendix: Questionnaire

I am Shukura Crevelle, a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am inviting you to participate in my study titled “A Study of Work Engagement in a Changing Nonprofit Environment” You are invited to participate due to the fact that you are an employee of XXXXXXXX If you agree to participate in the study, you will be prompted to answer nine questions. It should take 5 to 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire, depending on how much information you have to include. This communication and enclosed document(s) are privileged and confidential and are for the sole use of research and educational purposes. **Please take your time and answer each question as accurately as possible.**

Which gender do you identify with?

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) Other

Which age group do you belong to?

- a) 21-30
- b) 31-40
- c) 41-50
- d) 51-60
- e) 60+

What tenure group do you belong to?

- a) 1-5 years
- b) 5-10 years
- c) 10-15 years
- d) 15-20 years
- e) 20+ years

What inspires you about your work?

What makes you happy or most energized when at work?

What is your description of engagement?

What keeps you most engaged during the workday?

What causes you to disengage during the workday?

What is needed in the remote workplace environment to keep you engaged?