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Strategies Hotel Leaders Use to Improve Employee Engagement

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
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Abstract

Employee engagement is a significant factor that drives performance and productivity in many organizations. Hotel leaders are typically concerned with the negative impact of disengaged employees, which reduces profitability. Grounded in Herzberg's two-factor theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies hotel leaders use to improve employee engagement. The participants were five hotel leaders in Jamaica who have successfully implemented strategies to improve employee engagement. Data were collected from semistructured interviews and a review of organizational documents. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, and five themes emerged: staff engagement, communication, rewards and recognition, employee training and development, and continuous improvements of the staff work environment. A key recommendation for hotel leaders is implementing staff engagement activities to enhance job satisfaction, which may lead to improved employee engagement. The implications for positive social change include the potential to increase productivity and profitability, which could lead to additional jobs for members of the local communities.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Miss Sharon May Christie, who I lost prematurely in the race called life. She taught me the value of hard work, discipline, commitment, perseverance, and to always aim for greatness. I will always and forever love you. I would also like to dedicate this study to my children: Khloe’-Renee’ H. Dacres and Javier G.O. Dacres. You are my *why* in life, and I love you endlessly. I also dedicate this study to my immediate family members, employer, and friends who encouraged and supported me throughout this entire journey: EN, AW, CS, RB, CD, OF, DT, and EJ. I would not be where I am today without your assistance, love, and motivation.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

Managers should be supportive of training and development activities within a broader context in which they consider specific desired workplace performance from employees (Johnson et al., 2018). Engagement must become a priority for employers to increase productivity in the workforce: By becoming masters of engagement, employers are able to identify disengaged team members and implement strategies to increase engagement (Jamaica Business Development Corporation, 2019). As such, business leaders seek to employ robust strategies to improve employee engagement. Gallup (2013) indicated that only 13% of employees were engaged worldwide; engagement was among the lowest it has ever been. Organizations with employees who are engaged have higher levels of employee retention as a result of reduced turnover and intention to leave the company, performance, gainfulness, customer satisfaction and growth (Stoyanova & Iliev, 2017). Future research could provide managers with crucial information to develop strategies to influence team members and increase their attachment toward an organization (Sahu et al., 2018). Within the hotel industry, employee engagement may be even more critical for customer service and bottom-line profits than employee motivation because engaged employees can provide a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Singh et al., 2019). Muchiri et al. (2019) recommended future research to determine which factors employees might rely on to develop trust in their workplace leader.

Problem Statement

Hotel leaders in Jamaica lacking dedicated, energetic, and engaged employees often experience reduced levels of customer service and satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2018, p. 202). Data from an employee engagement survey conducted by the Jamaica Business Development Corporation, an agency of the Jamaican government, indicated that only 41.5% of service sector workers in Jamaica are actively engaged in the workplace (Jamaica Business Development Corporation, 2019, p. 9). The general business problem is hotel leaders who fail to maintain high levels of employee engagement experience lower customer service and satisfaction rates. The specific business problem is that some leaders in the hotel industry lack strategies to improve employee engagement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies leaders in the hotel industry use to improve employee engagement. The targeted population comprised five leaders of five different hotels in Jamaica who have developed and used successful strategies to improve employee engagement. The implications for positive social change include the potential for leaders of Jamaican hotels to improve worker engagement and productivity, resulting in increased job satisfaction among workers, greater local economic stability, and lower local unemployment in their communities.

Nature of the Study

There are three existing research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Saunders et al., 2015). Qualitative researchers facilitate the discovery of the deeper meaning of a phenomenon or problem using open dialogue with participants and a review of supporting documents (Yin, 2018). The qualitative method was most suitable for this study because I was exploring strategies that leaders have used to improve employee engagement; I gathered data through open dialogue with participants and a review of company documents relevant to improved employee engagement. Quantitative researchers use numeric data to statistically test hypotheses and relationships among variables by employing closed-ended questions collect data to test such hypotheses (Sligo et al., 2018). A mixed-method study requires a researcher to combine qualitative and quantitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study (Onwuegbuzie & Hitchcock, 2019). I rejected using the quantitative or mixed method because testing hypotheses, which is part of a quantitative study or the quantitative portion of a mixed-methods study, would not result in the information needed to answer the research question.

I considered three qualitative research designs: (a) case study, (b) ethnography, and (c) phenomenology. A case study is an in-depth inquiry into a topic or phenomenon within its real-life setting (Yin, 2018). Case study researchers seek to generate insights from intensive and in-depth research (Montes-Rodríguez et al., 2019). A case study was a suitable research design for this research study as I explored a phenomenon in a bounded, contextual real-world setting. Researchers use the multiple-case study design to engage in cross-case analysis to improve the credibility of the findings (Yin, 2018). Case study researchers using a single case want to provide an all-inclusive account of the real-world problem within one organization yet forgo the benefits of engaging in cross-case analysis (Yin, 2018). I used the multiple-case study design to collect diverse data from multiple organizations and to improve the credibility of the findings. I did not choose a single-case study because the intent was to engage in cross-case analysis to ensure dependable data. Business researchers use ethnography, the earliest qualitative research design, to study the culture or social world of a group (Watson, 2011). The ethnographic research design was not appropriate for this study because the objective was not to research cultural or social aspects of leaders of Jamaican hotels. Phenomenological researchers focus on describing the personal meanings of participants' lived experiences regarding a phenomenon (Babu, 2019). The phenomenological design was not ideal for this study because no need existed to focus on the personal meaning of participants' lived experiences to answer the research question.

Research Question

What strategies do leaders in the hotel industry use to improve employee engagement?

Interview Questions

1. What key strategies do you use to motivate employees that results in improved engagement?
2. How do you measure the effectiveness of the strategies you employ to improve employee engagement?

3. What key strategies do you find most effective in improving employee engagement?
4. How, if at all, do you incorporate workplace conditions and factors in your key strategies to improve the engagement level of employees?
5. What are the main challenges you faced in implementing key strategies to improve employee engagement?
6. How did you successfully overcome the key challenges or resistance in implementing strategies to improve employee engagement?
7. How did your employees react to your key strategies to improve employee engagement?
8. What other information can you provide about the key strategies used to improve employee engagement?

Conceptual Framework

The motivation–hygiene theory of motivation, commonly referred to as *Herzberg's two-factor theory*, originated by Herzberg et al. (1959), was the conceptual framework for this study. Motivation and hygiene factors, the two primary tenets of Herzberg's two-factor theory, relate to employee engagement, satisfaction, and dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1987). Motivation factors are concepts, such as praise, recognition, career development and advancement, and nonmonetary rewards that when met increase job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1987). Hygiene factors, also referred to as maintenance factors, include concepts such as organizational culture, the hierarchical structure of the organization, job structures, monetary compensation, supervision, and working conditions, which when not met result in job dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1987). Leaders who fail to implement a strategy that includes effective motivation and hygiene factors often experience high levels of worker dissatisfaction and low levels of employee engagement (Herzberg et al., 1959). Highly engaged workers typically portray high levels of satisfaction with the organizational culture, the working conditions, their leaders, and the monetary and nonmonetary rewards (Stoyanova & Iliev, 2017). Herzberg (1987) noted that effective leaders recognize the motivational value of recognizing, respecting, and rewarding the workforce to improve employee engagement. I therefore expected Herzberg's two-factor theory to be an effective lens to explore the strategies Jamaican hotel leaders use to improve employee engagement because, as noted by Priest et al. (2018), leaders must motivate employees, offer competitive compensation, and provide good workplace conditions to improve employee engagement.

Operational Definitions

Customer retention: Customers continuing to transact with a firm (Ascarza et al., 2018).

Employee engagement: A positive, active, work-related psychological state operationalized by the maintenance, intensity, and direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy (Shuck et al., 2017).

Employee motivation: A psychological process that energizes and maintains human activity in relation to work, a task, or project (Chromjaková, 2016).

Job satisfaction: An assessment of the favorability of a job from the perception of the employee (Judge et al., 2017).

Transformational leadership: A style that leaders use to motivate and encourage their subordinates to carry out tasks beyond their limits, thereby increasing their maturity and self-actualization levels as well as the welfare of organizations and the community (Hu et al., 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Issues, ideas, or positions found anywhere from the beginning of the study design to the final report when taken for granted and viewed as reasonable and widely accepted are assumptions (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). According to Zlatanovic (2016), assumptions are presumptions considered true but not verified by the researcher. In this qualitative multiple-case study, I assumed participants would answer all interview questions completely and honestly. I assumed participating hotel leaders would possess knowledge and expertise regarding implementing successful strategies to improve employee engagement. I reviewed publicly available documents on companies' websites, magazines, etc., regarding company policies and processes related to strategies employed to improve employee engagement.

Limitations

Limitations of any study concern potential weaknesses out of a researcher's control and are associated with the chosen research design, statistical model constraints, funding constraints, or other factors (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Marshall and Rossman (2016) stated that limitations are elements outside a researcher's control that may be a threat to the study and may affect its internal validity. A limitation of this research was that findings could only apply to the country of Jamaica, which limits the potential by future researchers to transfer the findings to other cases in other settings. Another limitation of the study was the lack of previous research on this topic in Jamaica. Time constraints in conducting the interviews was a limitation. Conflicts arising from cultural bias and personal bias of the participating hotel leaders were a limitation. The negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospitality sector in Jamaica was a limitation. Finally, another limitation was that the legitimacy of my research depended on the honest and accurate responses of my participants and supporting data used to identify hotel leaders who successfully applied leadership strategies to improve employee engagement.

Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries created by the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Delimitations limit the scope, define the boundaries of the study, and are under the researcher’s control (Yin, 2018). The sample population of five hotel leaders of the hospitality industry was a delimitation. The geographical location of Jamaica was also a delimitation. The participants’ eligibility criteria of leaders who employ successful strategies to improve employee engagement in their respective organizations was a delimitation. Another delimitation was that the interview questions were related to strategies leaders use to improve employee engagement in the hospitality industry. As such, I did not report on any other management issues that might impact leaders in the hospitality industry.

Significance of the Study

Hotel business leaders face the challenge of improving employee engagement levels and maintaining exceptional customer service (Johnson et al., 2018). The findings of this study may be of significance because of the potential for hotel leaders to gain insights into practical strategies to improve employee engagement for improving business performance. The study findings could potentially contribute to positive social change by educating hotel business leaders about enhancing employee engagement, resulting in improved job satisfaction, increased career opportunities for workers, and an improved local economy.

Contribution to Business Practice

Hotel leaders might improve their business practices by implementing successful strategies to improve employee engagement and can improve customer service with derivative increases in satisfaction rates. Engaged hotel workers promote exceptional customer service, resulting in greater overall customer satisfaction (Singh et al., 2019). Previous researchers have demonstrated that leaders of Caribbean hotels improve their business practices and experience lower employee turnover rates and higher productivity because of implementing successful strategies to improve employee engagement (Singh et al., 2019). Highly engaged Jamaican workers also rank high regarding productivity (Grant, 2019). The findings of this study may enable hotel leaders to improve productivity and profitability because of more effective teamwork, improved customer service, lower employee turnover rates, and increased customer retention rates because of an engaged workforce.

Implications for Social Change

Business leaders in the hotel industry might use the findings of this study to influence positive social change through the improvement of employee engagement. A more productive organization may contribute further to society in a positive manner (Luke & Chu, 2013). Productive, profitable companies are a key factor in the establishment of new business opportunities influencing an increase in employment and greater local economic stability (Casini et al., 2018). Highly engaged hotel employees experience greater job satisfaction and enjoy more career opportunities (Johnson et al., 2018). The implications for positive social change include the potential for hotel leaders to improve employee engagement and productivity, resulting in increased local jobs, improved employee satisfaction rates, greater local economic stability, and lower local unemployment in their communities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

I conducted a review of the professional and academic literature to identify studies pertaining to employee engagement and to explore the strategies hotel leaders have used to improve employee engagement. Researchers formulate literature reviews to address the assumptions within prior research studies and contribute to current perspectives to enhance knowledge within organizations (Wisker, 2015). The foundational knowledge on a research topic in the literature review helps a researcher identify discrepancies such as gaps in research, conflicts in previous studies, and questions raised in previous research (Bodolica & Spraggon, 2018). This literature review served as the foundation for exploring motives for employee engagement in the hotel industry. Correspondingly, my goal for this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore successful strategies that hotel leaders employ to enhance employee engagement. Seuring and Gold (2012) stated that researchers use literature reviews to contribute to the development of topics that contain further research directions.

In this literature review, I gathered an abundance of information about employee engagement from academic and professional works of literature. I provided an analysis and synthesis of existing literature to include peer-reviewed articles accessed through the Walden University Library, books, and an article from Jamaican government resources. Information was extracted from various databases including Business Source Complete, Academic Search Complete, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, and Education Research Complete. Keywords used in my search included *employee engagement, employee motivation, transformational leadership*, *servant leadership, employee retention, job satisfaction, job dissatisfaction,* and *Herzberg's motivation–hygiene theory*. The thematic organization of the review began with discussions on employee engagement, topics related to the research problem, and known strategies that emerged from the vast body of existing literature leading to the study's conceptual framework. The conceptual framework for this study was Herzberg's motivation–hygiene theory, also known as Herzberg's two-factor theory of job attitude or satisfier–dissatisfier theory (Herzberg et al., 1959). Corresponding topics included contributing factors to employee motivation and strategies managers can use to improve employee engagement. Additionally, I discussed employee retention, job satisfaction, employee turnover, advancement opportunities, and transformational leadership.

The target of this literature review was to ensure that 85% of the total sources were peer-reviewed with the majority having publication dates within 5 years of the anticipated completion date of this study. This literature review contained a total of 174 different peer-reviewed sources with the majority of sources within 5 years of anticipated chief academic officer approval. I gathered more items throughout the study. The significant topics of this research included Herzberg's two-factor theory, employee engagement, and transformational leadership. Strom et al. (2014) argued that employees will engage in response to the economic resources and the socioemotional benefits they feel their employers provided.

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Employee Engagement

Sinha and Trivedi (2014) posited that employee engagement is the key success driver for any organization. Globally, business leaders struggle to understand how to engage their employees (Heyns & Rothmann, 2018). Domínguez-Falcón et al. (2016), in agreement with Lee and Ok (2016), argued that employee engagement leads to higher job performance. Singh et al. (2019) suggested that employee engagement may be more critical for customer service and bottom-line profits than employee motivation because engaged employees can provide a source of sustainable competitive advantage. However, other factors that contribute to employee engagement should be given due consideration (Jha & Malviya, 2017).

Employee engagement was first defined in 1990 (Kahn, 1990) as connecting employees to their respective jobs while allowing employees to express themselves while executing their jobs. Levitats and Vigoda-Gadot (2020) supported the idea that engaged employees connect to their job physically, cognitively, and emotionally. Personal disengagement refers to the disconnection of employees from their work roles while employees display defensive behaviors during the execution of their job functions (Kahn, 1990). Additionally, Devi (2009) stated that employee engagement is the extent to which an employee is willing to put their discretionary efforts beyond their job's requirements; Bailey et al. (2017) proposed that employee engagement promotes the physical and emotional experience employees display, connecting them to their jobs.

Park et al. (2018), in agreement with Supanti et al. (2015), stated that employee perceptions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) significantly and positively influence their work engagement. Similarly, Nejati et al. (2019) indicated that ethical leadership has a positive impact on employees' CSR engagement. Park et al. explained how CSR influences employees' attitudes and behaviors that benefit a company's competitive advantage to shed light on the resource-based view about employees being a key resource. Supanti et al. provided new insights into how hotel managers' perceptions of the employer–employee relationship improved through CSR engagement. Nejati et al. provided a better understanding of employees' CSR engagement, which was a crucial factor for effectiveness of CSR implementation in any organization. In accord with Park et al., Supanti et al. acknowledged that CSR substantially enhanced the employer–employee relationship.

The hospitality industry may undertake CSR practices to increase employee retention. Socially responsible companies have better retention of workers (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). Hospitality organizations benefited from employer–employee CSR engagement activity of having fun, feeling pride, development of skills, and team building (Supanti et al., 2015). A positive relationship exists between a hospitality employee's perception of CSR programs and organizational commitment, which reduces turnover intentions (Kim et al., 2016). Business practices of CSR are expectations of millennial workers (Kultalahti & Viitala, 2015).

Herzberg (1987) extended the work of Herzberg et al. (1959) on employee job satisfaction, reiterating that employee job satisfaction is not a stand-alone construct but includes employee engagement as an antecedent. Shuck et al. (2013) disagreed with Herzberg (1987) and Herzberg et al. (1959) and argued that employee engagement is not an antecedent of employee job satisfaction but instead is an extension of employee job satisfaction. Shuck et al. stated that employee engagement involves positive feelings such as inner desire and willingness to (a) perform work-related tasks, (b) serve customers, and (c) improve the workplace. Blanchett (2014), in agreement with Yeh (2013), suggested that a relationship exists between satisfied employees, engaged employees, and organizational performance.

J. Y. Lee et al. (2020) and Ge and Sun (2020) professed that employee engagement is impacted by factors within the organization. Miloloza (2018) posited that there is an understanding of the relationship between leadership styles and organizational innovation at the organizational level. Ge and Sun indicated that employee strengths used were major predictors of employee innovation and revealed that employee strengths used positively affected employee innovation. Conversely, J. Y. Lee et al. argued that resources were the experiences required to influence employee engagement. In accord with J. Y. Lee et al., Ge and Sun proposed that work engagement promoted innovative behavior.

Gutermann et al. (2017), in agreement with Kaur (2018), stated that employee engagement is impacted by leadership. Li et al. (2018) found that both transformational leadership and transactional leadership promote knowledge workers' engagement in the workplace. Gutermann et al. examined how leaders' work engagement can spread to followers, highlighting the role of leader–member exchange as an underlying explanatory process. Kaur examined servant leadership as the antecedent to employee engagement, mediated by job satisfaction. Leadership styles significantly influence employees' psychological capital and work engagement (Li et al., 2018). In accord with Kaur, Gutermann et al. posited that employee engagement links positively to performance and links negatively to turnover intentions.

Grobelna (2019) and Jung et al. (2021) argued that hotel employees who feel valued and secure in their jobs are not likely to leave. Basnyat and Clarence Lao (2020) posited that hotel employees favor employee-oriented human resources (HR) policies and practices but place greater value on the way HR department handle and implement those policies. Grobelna contributed to a better understanding of the relationships between personality and job characteristics among frontline hotel employees. Jung et al. conducted an appropriate, timely consideration of job insecurity as perceived by deluxe hotel employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. Researchers found that managers need to understand their employees' perspectives as they can help resolve problems at the root level where they grow and send a signal to the employees that the management's interest in resolving their problems and making them happy and satisfied is genuine (Basnyat & Clarence Lao, 2020). In accord with Grobelna, Jung et al. suggested that employee job engagement can decrease turnover intent.

Concepts and Types of Employee Engagement

Budriene and Diskiene (2020) clarified that the concepts of *employee motivation* and *employee engagement* should not be confused. Interpretations of the concept of engagement in various studies indicate a lack of scientific consensus in determining the boundaries of employee engagement. Many terms that seem similar within the meaning of the term employee engagement make it difficult to perceive the phenomenon as an independent construct. According to Bakker (2011), the concepts of motivation and engagement differ in that motivation motivates you to accomplish certain tasks, whereas engagement is not just about tasks, it is about cognition (immersion) and performance (energy), which promotes high performance. With research proving that employee engagement reduces occupational fatigue, interest in engagement has grown even faster (Shuck & Rose, 2013).

Budriene and Diskiene (2020) described the concept of engagement as a stable attitude characteristic of the employee, which involves a prolonged concentration of the employee on solving problems that bring additional effect to the organization, which is reflected in the additional emotional attachment of the employee to the goals and values of the organization. As such, the concept of engagement includes four basic principles: (a) engagement depends on physical, mental, and psychological investments, energy in various objects: pretty generalized (support company innovation policy) or more specific (implementation of transformations on specific work area); (b) efficiency and effectiveness of labor activity are directly related to the focus of this activity on increasing the degree of employee engagement in the ongoing process; (c) various employees manifest, various degrees of engagement movement in the work, even on the same job site, with the same functional, at the same time employee involvement is a floating indicator, which in certain boundaries may vary and the width of the range of change is also determined employee engagement indicator; and (d) employee engagement may have both quantitative and qualitative expressions. Engaged employees are emotionally connected to their roles within the organization (Rožman et al., 2019).

Paek et al. (2015) emphasized that employee engagement is based on employee morale and job satisfaction. Adkins (2015) stated that an employee can be engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged. According to Thompson and Webber (2016), engaged employees are employees who contribute to an organization's overall success and are fully immersed in their work roles using their skills and abilities. Harris and He (2019) advised that nonengaged employees are employees who are led by their managers and only work on the tasks given and provide no supplementary value to the organization. Cesario and Chambel (2017) declared that actively disengaged employees may impede an organization's performance and growth through negativity and low productivity levels, which may result in financial losses.

Alrashidi et al. (2016) argued that there are three types of employee engagement: trait engagement, state engagement, and behavioral engagement. According to a Gallup survey, 87% of employees worldwide are not engaged, costing their employers billions of dollars in lost productivity and staff turnover each year (Mann & Harter, 2016). Imandin et al. (2015) noted that trait engagement is an employee's disposition, state engagement is an employee's current feelings, and behavioral engagement is how the employee executes their job.

Alrashidi et al. (2016) suggested that trait engagement refers to employees who are more engaged than others in the workplace. Konstantinova et al. (2018) indicated five characteristics of trait engagement, positive view of personal life and the work environment, proactiveness, autotelic personality (more experienced employees), conscientiousness, and locus of control. In the organization, managers who apply the characteristics of trait engagement may experience happier and more engaged employees.

According to Bailey et al. (2017), state engagement occurs when employees are more engaged in their duties at work, depending on the circumstances from one day to another. The characteristics of state engagement by an employee include empowered, committed, involved, and satisfied with their job (Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2016). Liu et al. (2015) advised that state engagement and trait engagement result in behavioral engagement.

Employee engagement is significant to front line staff in the hospitality industry. M. Zhang et al. (2020) opined that frontline employees are key actors in the creation of a truly memorable experience for customers. Hotel front line employees are plagued with problems such as job insecurity, inadequate pay, and excessive job demands that may erode their psychological well-being and impede effective service delivery (Cheung et al., 2018). Hence, Kaya and Karatepe (2020) suggested that the management of hotels should establish an environment where such employees are eager to devote energy to their job, exhibit low levels of nonattendance intentions or behaviors, carry out their role requirements, and meet and exceed customer expectations. The three components of behavioral engagement are proactive employees and personal initiative, role expansion, and engaged with other employees and managers (Liu et al., 2015). Deskins (2018) suggested that behavioral engagement offers employees an opportunity to broaden their use of available resources and display this behavior in a workplace environment.

Segalla and DeNisi (2019) stated that there are four types of employee–employer engagement situations that should be the focus of future research: shared engagement, unsatisfied engagement, no engagement, and abusive engagement. Shared engagement is created when employees create engagement due to their strongly held values. If this intrinsic engagement matches a job and organization that support it, shared engagement can be sustained. If a job and organization do not support intrinsic engagement, unsatisfied engagement may be the result. The employee may be disillusioned and decide to work elsewhere. Unsatisfied engagement is likely to lead to higher voluntary turnover. The organization loses a productive employee. No engagement is one where the employee is not engaged. Unengaged employees are unlikely to be the most productive and, if they stay in the organization, can potentially create a financial and psychological drain on the organization and other employees. Abusive engagement is where an employer creates employee engagement but with little employer engagement. This could lead to exhaustion, burnout, or worse (Segalla & DeNisi, 2019).

According to Segalla and DeNisi (2019), shared engagement, unsatisfied engagement, no engagement, and abusive engagement are certain to have significant effects on the profitability and sustainability of the organization. This is especially appropriate as the baby boomer generation leaves the labor force as the millennial generation enters. The two generations appear to have radically different attitudes toward work and organizational commitment (Segalla & DeNisi, 2019).

Employee Engagement Challenges and Barriers

Organizations often develop strategies to overcome challenges and barriers to employee engagement. Holland et al. (2017) professed that to engage employees, managers must effectively communicate and provide employees with opportunities to feel empowered and supported. Chooi et al. (2018) affirmed that managers had significant challenges in creating ways to engage employees, fostering commitment, generating enthusiasm about the job, and inspiring employees to go the extra mile for the organization to meet goals and accomplish the mission. Saks (2017) declared that the five engagement barriers are as follows: (a) engagement definition barrier, (b) engagement referent barrier, (c) engagement measurement barrier, (d) engagement driver barrier, and (e) engagement strategy barrier. Benn et al. (2015) recognized that HR managers in organizations play a critical role in implementing environmental initiatives to promote employee well-being.

Employee engagement definition barrier may exist due to the many definitions presented by various researchers. Kahn (1990) shared that employee engagement occurs when an employee expresses oneself physically, cognitively, and emotionally during their job performance. Shuck et al. (2017) posited that the meaning of employee engagement has several connotations with inconclusive results. Costantini et al. (2017) found that employee engagement occurred when an employee had a positive, fulfilling state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Jindal et al. (2017) stated that many researchers defined employee engagement as the emotional connection between an employee and their work.

Saks (2017) provided six types of engagement, (a) job engagement, (b) task engagement, (c) team engagement, (d) business-unit engagement, (e) organization engagement, and (f) learning engagement. Managers may use referent barriers to measure and improve employee engagement. A satisfied employee equates to a motivated employee providing the highest performance toward an organization's goals (Ciobanu et al., 2019). Organizations with highly engaged employees experience increased customer satisfaction, profits, and employee productivity (Ahmetoglu et al., 2015).

Managers may be challenged to successfully measure employee engagement in the organization. Ukil (2016) declared that mangers utilized the Gallup 12 item scales to measure an employee’s outcome, including productivity level, customer service, quality of work, retention of employees, and the organization’s profit. Mann and Harter (2016) suggested that an excellent way to measure employee engagement should start with how the organization defines employee engagement to develop ways to measure engagement. Jindal et al. (2017) posited that team engagement refers to the roles, responsibilities, and duties related to an employee’s assignment to a specific group.

The engagement barrier was the primary barrier managers use to determine the drivers to engage employees (Saks, 2017). Managers primarily focus on improving employee engagement instead of removing negative factors from the organization (Petrou et al., 2018). Shuck et al. (2017) stated that engagement was consistent with the employees’ values, and when the goals of the organization align with the employees’ goals, the employees become more engaged. Managers may use the engagement barrier to improve employee engagement.

The manager’s ability to develop engagement strategies at the organization level is referred to as the strategy barrier. Saks (2017) stated that the following three approaches are required for engagement strategy barriers: (a) managers should integrate engagement into the HR office policies, (b) managers should design dedicated HR management practices to create high levels of employee commitment and long-term relationships between the employees and the organization. and (c) managers should focus on maximizing collective organizational engagement by using the organization’s resources. Managers may use multiple actions and integrate system-wide approaches to improve engagement at the organization level (Sun & Henderson, 2017).

Managers who are aware of the advantages of employee engagement may actively seek out tactics to reduce the challenges and barriers of employee engagement. Osborne and Hammoud (2017) advised that managers who used useful listening techniques showed that fairness, showed respect, and built trust with employees decreased the challenges of employee engagement. When supervisors find it difficult to be fair minded, employees are likely to pull back and disengage themselves from their work roles (Saks, 2017). Putri (2018) found that a significant and positive relationship exists between leadership styles and employee engagement.

Managers should understand why employees are not engaged and endeavor to remove the barriers or reduce the challenges to provide meaningful work roles so the employees may feel appreciated, valued, and actively engaged. Stoyanova and Iliev (2017) articulated that managers who engage employees contribute to increased productivity and profitability. Fletcher et al. (2020) suggested that for the manager to show appreciation required a more detailed understanding of the organization’s processes and how to handle engaged employees. The openness of a manager’s behavior had been shown as an essential element to engage employees regardless of the skills and knowledge the manager possessed (Kazimoto, 2016).

Importance and Success of Employee Engagement

Budriene and Diskiene (2020) said that identifying the situations that foster work engagement of employees is vital for the sustainability and growth of organizations. Most research of employee engagement address this phenomenon on an individual level (Budriene & Diskiene, 2020). Bakker and Albrecht (2018) professed that engaged employees provide valuable outcomes to businesses. Managers should ensure they fully understand what engagement means. Engaged employees are more productive and provide positive consequences for themselves and their organizations (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Radda et al. (2015) discovered that managers used eight drivers to engage employees proactively: (a) trust and integrity, (b) employee fits the job, (c) synchronization of individual and organization’s performance, (d) career growth opportunities, (e) pride in the organization, (f) team members and coworkers, (g) employee development, and (h) line manager relationship.

Reijseger et al. (2017) posited that actively engaged employees performed at a higher level than disengaged employees and were willing to take extra assignments. Kumar and Pansari (2016) stated that engaged employees express satisfaction, commitment, loyalty, and perform at higher levels which may contribute to the firm’s overall success. Cesario and Chambel (2017) explained that leaders can realize a benefit from highly functional employees that results in increased productivity and profitability and higher levels of employee commitment when executing employee engagement strategies.

Engaged employees may positively impact organizational performance. Engaged employees are involved, dedicated, and enthusiastic about their daily work and display a commitment to the organization’s goals (Jeanson & Michinov, 2020; Magee et al., 2017). Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) shared that managers may use three engagement drivers to engage their employees actively: leadership, communication, and work life balance. The researchers suggested that these drivers will lead to employee performance, which ultimately results in higher organizational performance. Engaged employees may increase organizational profitability and growth by improving customer satisfaction (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017).

Xu and Cooper-Thomas (2011) stated that leadership is a key antecedent of engagement. Leadership research indicated that certain leadership behaviors have clear association with engagement constructs such as motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, proactive behaviors, and organizational citizenship behavior. Trust in the leader, support from the leader, and creating a blame-free environment are considered as components of psychological safety, a condition proposed by Kahn (1990), which led to employee engagement (Xu & Cooper-Thomas, 2011). Walumbwa et al. (2017) denoted that leaders can affect employee engagement by offering rewards for outstanding performance or by dispensing punishment to correct behavior that violates organizational policies or that threatens the safety of others within the work environment.

Communication plays an essential role in ensuring employee engagement (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009; Wiley et al., 2010). MacLeod and Clarke (2009) emphasized that employees require clear communication from superiors to relate their role with leadership vision. The researchers identified poor communication as a barrier to engagement. Engagement is affected by internal communication. The authors also acknowledged that internal communication is an organizational practice that effectively conveys the organizational values to all employees and requires staff support in reaching organizational goals (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009). Bindl and Parker (2010) stated that internal communication is a key factor for ensuring employee engagement.

A balance between work and life is important to many employees. According to Bedarkar and Pandita (2014), work–life balance emerged as a principal driver of employee engagement. Work–life balance, in its broadest sense, may be defined as a satisfactory level of involvement or fit between the multiple roles in an employee’s life. The ability of employees to find time for their work and families was a fundamental factor to the success of their performance at the workplace. Mostly work life balance comprises flextime, which permits the employees to vary their start and finish times provided a certain number of hours is worked; compressed work week, in which employees work a full week’s worth of hours in 4 days and take the fifth off, working from home, sharing a full-time job between two employees (job sharing), family leave programs (e.g., parental leave, adoption leave, compassionate leave, etc.), onsite childcare, and financial and/or informational assistance with childcare and eldercare services (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014). Employees use flexible work arrangements to help manage work-life balance and professional responsibilities (Ugargol & Patrick, 2018).

Victor and Hoole (2017) declared that engaged employees often expect managers to invest in relationships with employees, which may increase loyalty and trust. Li et al. (2018) articulated that dedicated, engaged employees contribute to the success of the organization and often had a long tenure. Supanti et al. (2015) suggested that managers who emotionally connect with employees often display key critical characteristics of employee engagement. Chandani et al. (2016) indicated that the positive attitude of a manager who gives recognition to employees through awards contributes to employee engagement. Amicable relationships between managers and employees may enhance employee engagement within the organization.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation

Herzberg et al. (1959) interviewed 200 engineers and accountants to classify the motivators and hygiene factors based on employee job satisfaction. The two-factor theory focused on two types of rewards: motivators and hygiene factors, to explain employee job satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). High level of employee engagement in an organization leads to employee retention, improved performance, increased customer loyalty and increased stakeholder satisfaction (Sinha & Trivedi, 2014). When employees become emotionally connected to their job, they experience feelings such as pride, sense of purpose, and self-importance (Khan & Lakshmi, 2018).

Herzberg proposed the two-factor theory of motivation, arguing that both satisfaction and dissatisfaction do not belong to the same dimension (Herzberg, 1987; Herzberg et al., 1959). Hur (2018) stated that Herzberg (1987) posited that the opposite of satisfaction is not dissatisfaction, but no satisfaction. In other words, satisfaction and no satisfaction are located at the opposite ends of the same continuum. The opposite of dissatisfaction is not satisfaction, but no dissatisfaction, and dissatisfaction and no dissatisfaction are located at the opposite ends of the same continuum. According to Herzberg's theory mentioned above, a set of factors that are related to the feeling of satisfaction are called motivators and a set of factors, called hygiene factors are related to the feeling of dissatisfaction, as aforementioned (Hur, 2018).

According to Ann and Blum (2020), Herzberg et al. (1959) argued that the six intrinsic factors that motivate employees at work were achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, growth, and advancement. Hygiene factors, also known as maintenance factors, related to issues of the organization or environment, and specifics of the job, and were extrinsic include interpersonal relationships with peers, subordinates and supervisors; security; working conditions; salary; status; supervision; company policy and administration; and personal life. Without all these factors at work, employees typically become unengaged (Ann & Blum, 2020; D. B. Smith & Shields, 2013). Intrinsic and extrinsic factors are a part of any workplace and understanding these can be major for managers in determining solutions that can decrease employee turnover (Schopman et al., 2017).

Motivating Factors

Hur (2018) explained that motivators are connected to the work itself such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, and self-development opportunities (advancement and personal growth). According to Fareed and Jan (2016), an employee feels a sense of achievement when he completes given task before the prescribed time period and receives appreciation. This situation can enhance the employee’s level of job satisfaction. On the other hand, if an employee fails to complete the given task in the prescribed time period or fails to perform his task in a well manner, his level of job satisfaction will be lower (Fareed & Jan, 2016). Herzberg et al. (1959) proclaimed that the relationship between job satisfaction and achievement is positive.

Employee recognition is a factor of employee engagement (S. B. Choi et al., 2015). Herzberg et al. (2017) professed that recognition includes feedback from both managers and coworkers. Recognition is typically accepted by employees from all sources, including, but not limited to, supervisors, managers, coworkers, clients, peers, professional colleagues, or the public. Saks (2017) found that rewards and recognition had a positive relationship to job engagement and organizational engagement. Herzberg et al. opined that the work itself provides a level of accomplishment and satisfaction when the work provides growth or a sense of meaning for the employee. The work itself is also the input to the output of achievement and growth provided the work is quality and meaningful (Herzberg et al., 2017). Tiwari and Lenka (2016) reported that lack of rewards and recognition can trigger burnout, which is also necessary for engagement.

Herzberg et al. (2017) defined responsibility as self-scheduling, the authority to communicate, control of resources, and accountability. Some employees appreciate that their employers trust them to perform duties, which adds to an employee’s motivation to do well in the organization. Advancement and growth give employees goals to strive for. Factors of advancement and growth align with work itself and responsibility (Herzberg et al., 2017). Kim (2015) determined that intrinsic factors such as self-development and training reduced voluntary employee turnover intentions.

Hygiene Factors

Herzberg et al. (1959) indicated that hygiene factors are related to the job context associated with employees’ job dissatisfaction and are extrinsic to the job. Hygiene factors include interpersonal relationships with peers, subordinates and supervisors;

security; working conditions; salary; status; supervision; company policy and administration; and personal life. These factors may influence dissatisfaction, but they do not lead to job satisfaction. When hygiene factors seem good or acceptable, workers do not become satisfied; they simply become *not dissatisfied*. If hygiene factors are absent from a job, workers tend to reduce their productivity (Herzberg et al., 1959). Herzberg et al. (2017) advised that hygiene factors are tied to emotional connections an employee feels about a situation.

According to Herzberg et al. (2017), an unreasonable boss or unfair manager can lead to employment unhappiness for the worker. Conversely, a good supervisor does not lead to employee motivation because a good boss is expected. Supervision is a hygiene factor within Herzberg's two-factor theory when inadequate supervision is a consideration. Herzberg et al. (2017) posited that boss relations are included in interpersonal relations. An employee's motivation is positively or negatively affected by interaction with leadership (Herzberg et al., 2017).

Herzberg et al. (2017) denoted that company policy dissatisfies employees when organization policy is unfair or inadequate. Policy ties into hygiene factors more than motivation factors, because the policy is expected to be good and does not stimulate additional employee motivation. When the policy is unfair or inadequate, employees are more likely to resign prematurely (Herzberg et al., 2017).

Vlacsekova and Mura (2017) defined salary as any form of compensation received by employees for performing their duties. Salary in Herzberg's two-factor theory is referenced in the motivator factors and the hygiene factors (Herzberg et al., 2017). For motivator factors, employees were not motivated by expected pay or benefits. For hygiene factors, employees were motivated or dissatisfied by salary when the pay was considered unfair (Herzberg et al., 2017). Using Herzberg's framework, Pandža et al. (2015) articulated that employee salary and leadership competencies influenced employee motivation. Tania (2016) concluded that while a lack of salary might cause someone to seek alternative employment, the presence of a good salary will not guarantee employee commitment to the organization. Herzberg et al. (2017) professed that job security is an employee's tenure consideration or a company's stability or instability.

Significance of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Ann and Blum (2020) further professed that in the absence of the motivators (intrinsic factors) at work, employees do not tend to be dissatisfied; they simply are *not satisfied*. Workers who are *not satisfied* do not demonstrate reduced productivity, but they tend not to become involved in their jobs or invest extra effort in doing them well. In contrast, workers who are *satisfied* invest more effort and productivity increases as a result. Work motivation and job satisfaction have received great attention in various fields and numerous previous researchers have found a positive relation between motivation and job satisfaction; the more workers are motivated, the greater their job satisfaction (Suttikun et al., 2018).

Hsiao et al. (2017) investigated employees' perceptions of motivators and hygiene factors in Taiwanese hotels using both Herzberg's two-factor theory and an importance-performance analysis. The study findings revealed that hotel employees with a high level of organizational diversity had higher levels of job satisfaction compared to those with a low level of organizational diversity (Ann & Blum, 2020). Holston-Okae and Mushi (2018) used the two-factor theory to assess the relations among hospitality employees' turnover intentions, job satisfaction, motivation and motivational factors. Their results suggested that job satisfaction, compensation, employee engagement and work environment are significant predictors of turnover intentions, while motivation is not. This new finding of the relation between motivation and turnover intentions needs further examination (Ann & Blum, 2020).

According to Redditt et al. (2019), many researchers focused on younger generations, such as Generation X and millennials, and there are many studies on their motivation, job satisfaction, and turnover based on the premise that younger and older workers may differ in their perceived motivational needs. Kultalahti and Viitala (2014) indicated that previous researchers' findings are very consistent and illustrated that millennials' top motivators are challenging and interesting work, work-life balance, recognition, and friendly workplace relationships, etc. Solnet and Hood (2008) argued that the most significant determinant of millennials' turnover intentions is job satisfaction overall, which does not differ significantly from that of older generations.

Ann and Blum (2020) posited that researchers have examined different generations' work values by comparing the three prevailing workforces, boomers, Generation X, and millennials. Gursoy et al. (2008) conducted a focus group on both managers and employees of a North American branded hotel chain with over 50 hotels and suggested that significant generational differences exist. Work centrality, authority, growth, loyalty, advancement, and job security are the boomers' work values, while centralized authority, collaboration, teamwork, supervisors' personal attention, challenging work, flexibility, and multitasking are millennials' work values. Generation X employees expect immediate promotion, pay, title, and recognition to work and live (Gursoy et al., 2008). Different generations have different work values and as such, employers should be aware of these values in order to positively impact work engagement.

The qualitative work of Herzberg et al. (1959) and Herzberg (1987) provided evidence that a relationship exists between employee job satisfaction and organizational performance. Kalhoro et al. (2017) showed the importance of organizations helping to provide both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to their employees and how both factors improved organizational commitment in addition to increasing employee efficiency. However, many organizations focus on the extrinsic needs of the employee and fail to address the intrinsic needs (Kalhoro et al., 2017). Organizational leaders can use appreciation and recognition as one way to effectively provide inspiration and motivation to their employees (Shonubi et al., 2016). Showing appreciation and recognition reinforces the employees' self-esteem and self-worth. Ensuring good employees have opportunities to advance also aids with intrinsic motivation (Holmberg et al., 2017).

The key to understanding the two-factor theory is that motivators and hygiene factors are separated into two different dimensions that affect different aspects of job satisfaction (Jaworski et al., 2018). Hur (2018) stated that although Herzberg's theory of motivation has been widely tested and applied in various motivational studies (e.g., Parsons & Broadbridge, 2006; Y. Zhang et al., 2011), Herzberg's theory has not been without criticism due to a fixed distinction between motivators and hygiene factors, regardless of differences in employees' personalities or job categories (Furnham et al., 1999; Judge et al., 2002).

Rival Theories

Since 2000, the most applied motivational theories have been Maslow theory, Herzberg theory, and Vroom theory, but unlike the first two, the expectancy theory focuses on the drivers behind individuals' decision making, assuming that effort leads to performance (Beiu & Davidescu, 2018). Jing et al. (2017) argued that Herzberg (1987) presented an inadequate theory. Matei and Abrudan (2016) decided Herzberg's two-factor theory does not apply to research in Romania because of the cultural context of the primary factors Herzberg listed as motivators and hygiene factors. Many researchers do not agree Herzberg's theory adequately addresses the topic of employee motivation. Matei and Abrudan did agree with Herzberg's basic premise that employee satisfaction stems from intrinsic and extrinsic factors, but the factors are reversed in Romanian research.

Expectancy Theory

Vroom's (1964) explored motivation in the context of why employees chose one behavior over another in the expectancy theory. The expectancy theory indicated a positive correlation exists between motivation and the reward for that motivation was positive for the employee. Bandow and Self (2016) posited that supporters of the expectancy theory believe that employee expectancy levels will match the level of energy exerted to complete a task. According to Vroom, an employee works hard and is loyal to a company because that employee expects a positive outcome in return. The positive return could be things as benefits or high compensation. Based on Vroom's expectancy theory, managers should focus on using rewards that resemble the performance of the employees. As employees perceive a reward the motivation to perform to achieve that reward increases. The expectancy theory is connected to motivation where employees are further encouraged and motivated to work hard (Whittington, 2015).

Beiu and Davidescu (2018) stated that the expectancy theory involves three main elements: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence and the interactions of such elements will lead to motivation force based on the equation proposed by Chiang and Jang (2008). Expectancy is seen as the conviction that performance could be obtained if the effort is applied. Instrumentality refers to the perspective of rewards when the conditions of performance are achieved. Valence is more related to rewards (Regis et al., 2008) while motivation force refers to a force that leads an individual towards certain behavioral alternatives (Ghoddousi et al., 2014). Instrumentality and valence concern outcomes, and both have two kinds of components: intrinsic and extrinsic (Beiu & Davidescu, 2018).

Similar to Herzberg (1987), Vroom (1964) advocated no good model existed at the time to measure workplace motivation. Vroom developed the expectancy theory in 1964 (Hoffman-Miller, 2019), around the same general time frame as Herzberg's two-factor theory. According to Baciu (2017), Vroom's expectancy theory suggested people derive motivation based on the expected return of their efforts. The three variables in expectancy affect each other dependent on the individual person. Expectancy is when the employee believes a certain amount of effort will result in the desired outcome (Beiu &

Davidescu, 2018). Instrumentality is when the employee's belief that if they achieve the desired outcome, they will receive the reward (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). Valance refers to the employee's desire for the expected outcome or reward (Baciu, 2017).

Baciu (2017) explained that expectancy is the expectation in relation to the individual effort that needs to be made. In other words, expectancy is the chances of success attributed to one's own capacities to achieve performance. Employees are generally motivated to get seriously work involved when they believe that the efforts they make will be reflected in high performance if the outcomes meet expectations. The most studied factor of the Vroom theory is instrumentality, which was the most confirmed factor of both practical and theoretical experiments. Instrumentality is the probability perceived by an individual as an effort to be or not accompanied by a reward. For example, people work much faster if they get financial rewards, or if they think the way they do their work affects their opportunities for promotion. According to B. K. Choi and Moon (2016), instrumentality also involves helping where employees believe that if they adopt a helping behavior, it becomes instrumental to their interests. Valence is the subjective value, attachment, or preference that each individual attributes to a reward. Valence does not exist as such, but only in relation to a certain result: wage increase, promotion, transfer to a new job, more responsibility at work, etc. Job satisfaction, wage increases, incentives, and work recognition are motivational factors that increase employee engagement (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). Baciu stated that it is not enough that rewards are correctly perceived, but the individual to really want to get them (to be meaningful for him). Valences can be pay, promotions, interesting tasks, etc. The level of valence can be determined by answering the following questions: Am I interested? And is it important to me?

Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Ghatak et al. (2019) advanced that for finding out the factors that motivate a person to do better in life and work and to understand what encourages the most, psychologist Maslow in 1934 postulated Maslow's pyramid or theory of human behavior. This model describes different levels of fulfillment of needs. This theory is being used as a tool predominantly in HR-related activities in different corporate setups. Maslow classified human necessities into the five-tiered pyramidal structure, that is, *hierarchy of needs*. According to this pyramidal structure, a higher-level need is significant than the lower levels of obligation. Maslow further emphasized that skipping a degree is not possible at all (Ghatak et al., 2019). A psychologist like Herzberg, Maslow (1943) attributed motivations at work to the basic human needs, unlike Herzberg et al. (2017) who attributed motivation at work to attaining rewards and incentives.

Ghatak et al. (2019) manifested that Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory identified five levels of needs that must be fulfilled in order from the most basic to the most complex, and a person's motivations fall within their current need. The five levels consist of (a) physiological, such as the need to eat, sleep, and reproduce; (b) safety, such as shelter and the need to be free of physical harm, (c) love, such as the need to connect with others and have meaningful relationships with friends and family; (d) esteem, such as stability, respect, and achievement; and (e) self-actualization in that a person must do what they feel they were meant to do to feel satisfied (Maslow, 1943). Cherry (2018) argued that within the hierarchy, a lower need must be met for the motivation to shift to the next higher need. Without food and rest, a person will leave safety to satisfy their hunger. Maslow's theory presents both strengths and weaknesses as it pertains to Herzberg's two-factor theory (Ghatak et al., 2019).

Maslow's theory would explain why in studies such as Ahmad (2018) and Fareed and Jan (2016), employees in depressed economies would prefer extrinsic motivators such as additional compensation. Decker and Cangemi (2018) posited that although Maslow's hierarchy of needs is visualized as a pyramid, there is substantial overlap between need levels. Recent models demonstrate that basic needs, safety needs, and love and belonging needs overlap with one another and form lower order needs; these lower order needs must be at least minimally met to satisfy the higher order self-esteem needs (Decker & Cangemi, 2018). Helbling (2018) argued Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory contains some merit but was also flawed as Maslow did not account for a fundamental oddity of human nature because humans are irrational and illogical creatures. Jyothi (2016) opined Maslow's theory in the professional environment may apply to different life stages rather than immediate needs.

Self-Determination Theory

Deci and Ryan (1985) provided a different perspective on motivation with the self-determination theory. Self-determination and intrinsic motivation in human behavior stemmed from Deci and Ryan's collaborative works on motivation in the 1970s and 1980s (Terry, 2013). Deci studied under Vroom but developed his early works based on the works of White and de Charms (as cited in Terry, 2013). Deci and Ryan posited that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors play a role in motivation, but as extrinsic rewards increase, the effect of intrinsic motivation to complete the task decreases (Olafsen et al., 2017). Osborne and Hammoud (2017) illustrated that motivation derives from a balance of the employer and employee according to the self-determination theory. The level of engagement and motivation of the employee comes from within, but the employer may conduct activities that can positively influence the employee (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017).

Pasi et al. (2021) professed that the self-determination theory is a needs-based theory of motivation. Pasi et al. indicated that the quality or type of motivation is paramount in determining behavior, rather than quantity alone. Donald et al. (2020) found that researchers used self-determination theory for studying the self-motivation and self-determination of an employee. Central to the self-determination theory is the distinction between autonomous and controlled forms of motivation. Autonomous forms of motivation reflect motives or reasons for participating in a given behavior that are perceived as chosen, personally consistent, and endorsed by the individual’s true sense of self. Controlled forms of motivation reflect participation in behaviors for externally referenced reasons such as obtaining rewards, gaining approval from others, or avoiding punishment or others’ disapproval. Autonomous and controlled forms of motivation are often viewed on a continuum reflecting relative level of self-determination (Pasi et al., 2021). Wilson et al. (2016) shared that managers use self-determination theory as a work theory to motivate employees who desire to grow independently in the organization to achieve self-defined goals.

Herzberg Two-Factor Theory and Employee Engagement

Hackman and Lawler (1971) stated that Herzberg's two-factor theory indicated that task performance will lead to high levels of satisfaction if (a) the employees have the opportunity to do a meaningful and identifiable portion of the work, (b) performing the task results in outcomes that are intrinsically meaningful and worthwhile, and (c) employees are given intrinsically positive feedback about what they accomplished. Supporting the theory, previous studies indicated positive relationships among employee engagement, intrinsic rewards, and job satisfaction. Engaged employees feel a sense of return on investments of self and that the return on those investments should add value to the accomplishment itself (Kahn, 1990). Employees become engaged when they find personal meaning and motivation in their work and receive positive feedback. Employees engaged in performing their task/role through intrinsic motivations may receive certain intrinsic rewards when the job is successfully completed, and thus become satisfied with their job. Employee engagement indicates that an employee's perceptions of intrinsic rewards for their engagement will mediate the relationship of engagement to job satisfaction (Srivastava & Bhatnagar, 2008).

Benton (2016) argued that organizational leaders who desire to understand and achieve increased employee job satisfaction use Herzberg's (1987) intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. According to Jabeen et al. (2018), employees are the main asset for the success of any organization, and it is paramount to fulfil their affective, emotional, physical, and cognitive psychological self through a culture of high motivation and high satisfaction. Job satisfaction, a well-established topic, is a psychological perception comprised of affective and emotional association with preference and liking of job leading to the attainment of organizational objectives (Jabeen et al., 2018).

Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement

Employee job satisfaction and employee engagement both support and strengthen organizational outcomes (Shantz et al., 2013). Employee job satisfaction, according to Shantz et al. (2013), mediates organizational citizenship, and when employee engagement combines with employee job satisfaction, syntheses occur that allow task performance and other behaviors related to organizational citizenship to strengthen variable relationships associated with employee job satisfaction and employee engagement. Martin et al. (2016), found that leaders exercising high levels of leader–member exchange create personal relationships with employees to enhance employee job satisfaction and commitment. Uncertainty, a possible result of organizational change, is a contributing factor to a lack of commitment to an organization, decreased job satisfaction, and higher attrition rates, which are indicators of degraded morale and degraded organizational effectiveness (Petrou et al., 2018).The comprehensive work of Shantz et al. suggested that the main factors, beyond attitudes, that determine employee contributions to the organization, are job design, employee job satisfaction, and employee engagement.

Employee engagement is considered a major characteristic of employees in the 21st century (Walt & Klerk, 2013). Accumulated evidence manifests that employee engagement affects employees' intrinsic motivation, job performance, turnover intentions, and other work-related outcomes (Akkerman et al., 2018). Based on the conversation of resources theory, highly professional employees will be able to understand their value in the organization; people tend to seek, acquire, retain, and protect what they value (Hobfoll, 2011). Eventually, they will show higher job satisfaction and employee engagement (Apostolidou, 2015). Brien et al. (2017) argued that employees with high professional identity prevent the continuous decrease of work enthusiasm, which leads to increased job satisfaction and employee engagement.

According to Wang et al. (2020), job satisfaction is one of the most frequently studied issues in HR literature. Job satisfaction is an assessment of the favorability of a job from the perception of the employee (Judge et al., 2017). Locke (1969) theorized that employee job satisfaction or employee job dissatisfaction is generated when interactions are greater than or worse than the level of value that one places on the outcome of the interaction. Locke outlined that values require an awareness of a desired condition or state, and the degree of alignment between values and needs regulates actions and determines emotional responses. According to Locke, employee job satisfaction and employee job dissatisfaction are perceived relationships between the employees and their work, where complex emotional reactions result from the ability to perceive what one wants or needs from the job versus what the job offers. Locke proposed that employee job satisfaction and employee job dissatisfaction are functions of dual value judgments where the degree of value discrepancy (content) and the relative value importance (intensity) determines emotional reactions.

Leadership Styles Associated With Employee Engagement

Organizational leaders who understand the importance of employee engagement may seek to recruit managers who possess the correct leadership style that works correspondingly with employee engagement. A. Othman et al. (2017) posited that researchers conducted previous studies to investigate the influence of various factors including leadership styles and organizational culture that might contribute to employee engagement. Among those factors, researchers found leadership styles to be strong predictors of employee engagement (A. Othman et al., 2017). Putri (2018) declared that several theorists indicated that a significant and positive relationship exists between leadership styles and employee engagement. It is advantageous to understand which leadership styles have close associations with employee engagement. Regarding leadership styles associated with employee engagement, I discussed transformational leadership and servant leadership.

Transformational Leadership

Burns (1978) developed the transformational leadership theory. The primary propositions underlying this theory are (a) individualized consideration, (b) intellectual stimulation, (c) inspirational motivation, (d) idealized attributes, and (e) idealized behaviors (Burns, 1978; Northouse, 2016). Later in 1985, Bass extended the works of Burns. Transformational leadership theorists have supported the explanation for leadership based upon the concept that leaders can inspire followers to change expectations, perceptions, and motivations to work toward common goals (Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership is the most effective type of business leadership style as it facilitates greater team building spirit and higher levels of creativity (Herrmann & Felfe, 2014).

The advanced propositions by transformational leadership theorists may serve to effectively explore the knowledge of study participants' and experiences regarding transformational leadership characteristics pertaining to employee engagement. As noted by Rehman et al. (2018), leaders may exercise a transformational leadership style to cooperate and collaborate with employees to improve engagement levels. Furthermore, Jha and Malviya (2017) professed that leaders may use individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, idealized attributes, and idealized behaviors to improve employee engagement.

Mozammel and Haan (2016), in agreement with Caniels et al. (2018), stated that transformational leadership had no significant relationship with employee engagement. Sahu et al. (2018) postulated that transformational leaders in teams contributed to developing employee engagement, employer branding, and psychological attachment. Additionally, Mozammel and Haan argued that the application of transformational leadership in a work environment did not assure fully engaged employees. Correspondingly, Caniels et al. posited that transformational leadership moderated the relationship between proactive personality and work engagement, but only when employees have a growth mindset. Transformational leadership style directly influenced employee intention to leave (Sahu et al., 2018). In harmony with Mozammel and Haan, Caniels et al. acknowledged the critical views on transformational leadership but adopted a different angle and analyzed the conditions under which transformational leadership works or may not work in stimulating engagement.

Balwant et al. (2019) and Jha and Malviya (2017) declared that there is an overall positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement. Strom et al. (2014) examined both transactional and transformational leadership styles as serving in the role of moderators in the relationship between organizational justice and work engagement. Balwant et al. investigated the role of job resources in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement. In accord with Balwant et al., Jha and Malviya posited that transformational leadership creates and nurtures an ecosystem for employee engagement among other variables within an organizational context.

Muchiri et al. (2019) and Feng et al. (2016) argued that a relationship exists between transformational leadership and employee engagement. O.-K. Choi and Cho (2019) explored the mechanism that forms trust and affects collaboration in virtual teams. Muchiri et al. examined direct and indirect relationships among transformational leadership, employees' trust in leaders, empowering leadership, and employees' safety behaviors. Feng et al. professed that leaders should be agile to exercise the most suitable leadership styles to support the respective organizational situations at hand. However, researchers examined the way in which trust influences three distinct aspects of collaboration: cooperation, coordination, and knowledge sharing (O.-K. Choi & Cho, 2019). Furthermore, in accord with Muchiri et al., Feng et al. suggested that transformational leadership style can predict specific positive outcomes given a radical change.

Nagendra and Farooqui (2016) and Maamari and Saheb (2018) recognized that leadership styles and organizational culture impact the performance of firms. Likewise, Mokhber et al. (2015) posited that there is an understanding of the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational innovation at the organizational level. Maamari and Saheb supported the concept of a strong organizational culture typified by a specific leadership style will affect the performance of the many who do not champion this same style. Conversely, Mokhber et al. supported the potential positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational innovation. Transformational and democratic leadership styles focus on the development of value system of employees, their motivational level and moralities with the development of their skills which motivated employees to perform as expected (Nagendra & Farooqui, 2016). In accord with Nagendra and Farooqui, Maamari and Saheb suggested that organizations employing the most appropriate leadership styles corresponding to the respective work environment tend to achieve higher levels of employee performance.

Sattayaraksa and Boon-itt (2018), in agreement with Delić et al. (2017), stated that leadership styles can influence a firm's financial performance. Likewise, Davidson et al. (2007) posited that organizational culture may also impact a firm's financial performance positively or negatively. Sattayaraksa and Boon-itt supported the concept of transformational leadership. Conversely, Delic et al. supported the leader–member exchange theory. Organizational goals are readily achieved through the credibility and authenticity of transformational leadership (Sattayaraksa & Boon-itt, 2018). Firms with stronger partnership between leaders and followers also achieved higher profitability compared to firms with less cooperative relations.

Mokhber et al. (2015) postulated that transformational leaders influenced organizational commitment positively. This leadership style was a key driver of innovation at the organizational level (Mokhber et al., 2015). Transformational leadership style was effective for encouraging employee engagement (Lee Chin et al., 2019). Sattayaraksa and Boon-itt (2018) stated that transformational CEOs can influence how firms formulate and execute their innovation strategy. Sattayaraksa and Boon-itt confirmed that organizational engagement and innovation were positively or negatively influenced by transformational leaders. The performance of enterprises could be significantly enhanced through the appropriate application of transformational leadership.

Dartey-Baah (2016) professed the achievement of organizational goals readily through the credibility and authenticity of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership reduces the level of corruption within organizations and facilitates goal integration (Dartey-Baah, 2016). This leadership style must be grounded in principles that are captured in the virtues of authenticity, integrity, truthfulness and credibility (Raffo & Williams, 2018). Muchiri et al. (2019) opined that transformational leaders may support employees to raise organization-related safety issues. Muchiri et al. declared that transformational leadership should be an expression of authenticity and integrity in order to motivate its target audience. Therefore, effective transformational leadership may be a vivid expression of genuineness.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is an alternative leadership style aligning with employee engagement. D. Carter and Baghurst (2014), in agreement with Alafeshat and Tanova (2019), declared that servant leadership empowered employees and increased their satisfaction. Bao et al. (2018) professed that servant leadership may help produce engaged employees. D. Carter and Baghurst supported the concept that employees in the servant leader environment held strong ties to the organization because of peer-to-peer relationships. Alafeshat and Tanova highlighted the importance of the sociability of the servant leaders to enhance the morale at work and increase the satisfaction of the employees. Servant leadership was often seen as a promising and stand-alone leadership approach that could help leadership researchers and practitioners better explain a wide range of outcomes (Bao et al., 2018). In accord with Bao et al., Alafeshat and Tanova highlighted the importance of the sociability of the servant leaders to enhance the morale at work and increase the satisfaction of the employees.

Servant leadership may be a suitable leadership style to exercise in the hotel industry. The servant leadership approach occurs when managers create a service-oriented environment; demonstrate the willingness to give of themselves by implementing training programs designed to motivate, advance, and engage employees; and establish policies and procedures surrounding giving and receiving good customer service (Briggs et al., 2018). Bao et al. (2018) revealed that servant leadership promoted followers’ work engagement mostly through the social exchange mechanism. Servant leaders also provide direction and stimulating assignments for their employees, keeping them actively engaged and productive (Yang et al., 2017).

Researchers may apply numerous theories and models to obtain a thorough analysis of a study. In my literature review, I focused on Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation to illustrate the connection between employee engagement and motivation factors of employees' behaviors in the organization. I provided information on employee engagement, employee disengagement, job satisfaction, associated leadership styles, management strategies, and explored some alternative theories on employee engagement. Employee engagement in an organization creates an environment where employees are motivated and care about their jobs. Aguinis and Glavas (2012) posited that employee engagement should be a primary concern for organizations. Similarly, Bakker (2011) stated that employee engagement creates an environment where employees are motivated, connected, and care about their jobs. Engaged employees display motivation and good job performance which contributes to the achievement of organizational goals.

Transition

In Section 1 of this study, I provided information on the background, problem statement, purpose statement, the research question, the nature of the study, and the significance of the study. In this section, I introduced the conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. In the literature review, I provided an analysis and synthesis of existing research on employee engagement theories, concepts, and strategies, including the themes required to provide a conceptual view of, and insight into, the research topic.

In Section 2, I provided an explanation of cover the following topics: my role as the researcher, the participants, the research method and design, the population and sampling, and ethical research. I included a description of the data collection, organization, and analysis techniques, which included avenues to increase reliability and validity by applying verification strategies. In Section 3, I presented the findings, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for future research. The section closed with reflections and a conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I describe the purpose of the study and the research conducted. The research method and design was a qualitative multiple-case study. For this study, I interviewed participants and reviewed company documents to explore successful strategies that hotel leaders have used to improve employee engagement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies leaders in the hotel industry have used to improve employee engagement. The targeted population comprised five leaders of five different hotels in Jamaica who have developed and used successful strategies to improve employee engagement. The implications for positive social change include the potential for leaders of Jamaican hotels to improve worker engagement and productivity, resulting in increased job satisfaction among workers, greater local economic stability, and lower local unemployment in their communities.

Role of the Researcher

The primary function of a qualitative researcher is to serve as the primary data collection instrument (Valipoor & Pati, 2016). I chose participants who met the criteria for my research study. I was the primary data collection instrument, and I collected data from hotel leaders in Jamaica who have successfully employed strategies to improve employee engagement. I used both semistructured interviews and a review of publicly available organization documents. Cairney and St. Denny (2015) stated that as the data collection instrument for a qualitative research study, a researcher ought to demonstrate the ability to mitigate any conflict of interest that might arise when conducting social science research.

I am a native of Jamaica. I have worked in the banking and finance industry for over 13 years in Kingston, Jamaica. I do not have any personal or professional relationship with members of the targeted audience for this study. Qualitative researchers are responsible for recruiting research participants who do not possess a current prior personal or professional relationship with the researcher (Killawi et al., 2014). I did not select friends or professional colleagues to participate in the study. However, I used my knowledge of my research topic and my familiarity with the geographic location of the study to mitigate risks associated with executing a multiple-case study. According to Killawi et al. (2014), researchers must familiarize themselves with the geographic area of their study.

Muganga (2015) recommended that qualitative researchers outline the critical activities they must undertake to demonstrate their understanding of their role in qualitative research. According to the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research [NCPHSBBR] (1979), *The Belmont Report* identifies basic ethical principles with guidelines that address ethical issues arising from the conduct of research with human subjects. The three key tenets or basic ethical principles of *The Belmont Report* are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Respect for persons incorporates at least two ethical convictions: that individuals are autonomous agents and that persons with diminished autonomy receive protection (NCPHSBBR, 1979). Beneficence denotes that persons gain ethical treatment not only by respecting their decisions and protecting them from harm, but also by making efforts to secure their well-being. Similarly, justice assesses who ought to receive the benefits of research and bear its burdens (NCPHSBBR, 1979).

My role in adhering to *The Belmont Report* (NCPHSBBR, 1979) as a researcher involved consideration of the following requirements: informed consent, risk–benefit assessment, and the selection of subjects of research. Informed consent denotes respect for persons and requires that subjects, to the degree that they are capable, be given the opportunity to choose what shall or shall not happen to them. This opportunity arises when adequate standards for informed consent meet satisfaction. There is widespread agreement that the consent process contains three elements: information, comprehension, and voluntariness. The assessment of risks and benefits requires a careful array of relevant data, including, in some cases, alternative ways of obtaining the benefits sought in the research. Thus, the assessment presents both an opportunity and a responsibility to gather systematic and comprehensive information about proposed research. Just as the principle of respect for persons finds expression in the requirements for consent and the principle of beneficence in risk–benefit assessment, the principle of justice gives rise to moral requirements that there be fair procedures and outcomes in the selection of research subjects.

Kepes et al. (2014) argued that bias in the research is a significant threat to the validity and credibility of the results of analysis of data collected. I did not recruit research participants with whom I have personal or professional relationships. Silverman (2015) proclaimed that researchers should avoid relying on subjective, personal viewpoints to mitigate biases. As such, I mitigated bias and avoided viewing data through a personal lens by shunning preconceptions about the research topic. Qualitative researchers need to report all data collected from the participants without bias (Toews et al., 2017). I used my interview protocol to facilitate the interviews with all the participants. I reported all collected data to enhance the reliability and validity of my research outcome. Researchers use data saturation to demonstrate rigor and enhance transparency, validity, and dependability of the research outcome (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To support data saturation, I employed member checking accordingly.

Qualitative researchers use an interview protocol to conduct consistent interviews, improve interview retinue, reduce data collection bias, and capture participants' thoughts when making complex decisions (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). I used an interview protocol to ensure consistency and reduce discrepancies and oversights before, during, and after the interviews. Researchers must prepare the interview questions in advance to adhere to the protocols outlined in *The Belmont Report* (Fiske & Hauser, 2014). Maintaining the interview protocol, I asked each hotel leader participant the same open-ended questions in the same order while using the bracketing technique to mitigate bias.

Participants

Researchers must select participants who possess the requisite knowledge to answer the overarching research question of a study (Connelly, 2014). The overarching research question for this study was: What strategies do some hotel leaders in Jamaica use to improve employee engagement? The eligibility criteria for participants were: (a) a leader in the tourism industry, (b) an employee of a leading hotel, (c) have successfully implemented strategies to improve employee engagement, and (d) work at a hotel in Jamaica. Grobelna (2019) maintained that in the hotel industry, management should constantly assure employees through a variety of management actions about the influence and importance of their roles and the contribution to the service and organizational success. Thus, employee engagement has a significant impact on employee performance (Ayub & Islam, 2018). The participants have successfully used employee engagement strategies aligned with the research question. Hotel leaders who met the criteria were eligible to participate in the study.

Participants targeted in the study were five hotel leaders who have successfully used strategies to improve employee engagement. A qualitative researcher needs to purposefully select participants who possess appropriate experience and knowledge about the central research question (Asiamah et al., 2017). I focused on five leading hotels located in Jamaica. First, I leveraged all contacts I possessed that could have had business relationships with hotel leaders in Jamaica. Subsequently, I emailed and called authorized individuals of organizations to gain access to participants. I sent an invitation to each potential participant with a detailed explanation of the nature of the study and requested authorization so that hotel leaders in the organization could participate in the research. I obtained permission to review company documents through the owner by signing a letter of cooperation and confidentiality agreement. I reviewed the respective organization’s records and documents such as employee engagement surveys, productivity reports, employee performance appraisals, policies regarding employee engagement, and written memos related to leadership strategies to improve employee engagement in order to identify potential participants who met the eligibility criteria. I obtained approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before contacting any potential participants. After IRB approval and a signed letter of cooperation, I distributed the informed consent form to all participants.

Building relationships with research participants promotes support, leading to positive qualitative research study outcome (Van Praag & Sanchez, 2015). In establishing a positive work relationship with the participants, I explicitly discussed the nature of the research and resolved any queries from the five participants via email, telephone, or virtual meeting. As the researcher, I displayed honesty, respect, and trust to cultivate a strong comfort level with the participants. A qualitative researcher needs to purposefully select participants who possess appropriate experience and knowledge about the central research question (Kline, 2017). Building relationships with research participants promotes support, leading to positive qualitative research study outcomes (Wall, 2015).

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed are the three existing research methods (Saunders et al., 2015). Yin (2018) stated that a qualitative researcher conducts an in-depth investigation of people, groups, or organizations to explore experiences in a real-world setting. I employed the qualitative research method for the study because I was exploring strategies that leaders have used to improve employee engagement. I gathered data from open dialog with participants and a review of company documents relevant to improved employee engagement. Researchers use the qualitative method for identifying themes derived from data collected from participants (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2017). As such, the qualitative method was appropriate for this study because the purpose of the study was to explore successful strategies employed by hotel leaders to improve employee engagement. Qualitative researchers collect data from the views, perceptions, knowledge, and interpretations of the participants (Watkins, 2017).

Brannen (2017) stated that researchers use the quantitative method to examine and test theories or hypotheses using statistical analysis. Guided by a common question, the testing theory supports an understanding of the phenomenon in a collective experience between participants and the researcher (Park & Park, 2016). Researchers use structured techniques and closed-ended questions to collect data for their quantitative research studies (Baş & Sağırlı, 2017). The quantitative method was not appropriate for the study because I was not testing theories or hypotheses using statistical analysis.

Molina-Azorin et al. (2017) stated that mixed-methods research involves combining quantitative and qualitative research methods to collect and analyze data. Mixed-methods researchers report the outcome of each study independently and then use comparison techniques to integrate and report the results of both studies (Katz et al., 2016). An advantage of using mixed methods is the profound understanding gained using scientific-data triangulation (Turner et al., 2017). A mixed-methods approach was not apposite for the study because I did not use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to collect and analyze data.

Research Design

Qualitative researchers often employ one of four types of research designs to explore a social science phenomenon: (a) phenomenology, (b) ethnography, (c) narrative inquiry, and (d) case study (Ridder, 2017). Choosing the right research design maximizes the opportunity for gathering relevant data to answer the research question (Wallace et al., 2018). A case study research design is useful when various data sources are available, such as artifacts, documents, observations, and interviews (Yin, 2018). I used a multiple-case study design to execute the study to gain a diversity of data from hotel leaders in different companies versus data from only one hotel, as in a single-case study. Researchers use multiple-case studies to enhance the exploration of human actions based on participants' experiences, knowledge, and perceptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2018). Case study researchers can employ various qualitative data analysis techniques to synthesize, code, and create common themes and patterns to facilitate the interpretation and in-depth description of the experiences from participants' perspectives (Onwuegbuzie & Weinbaum, 2017).

Petrescu and Lauer (2017) posited that case study researchers possess background knowledge of their research topic and use rigor to ensure reliability and validity of the research outcome. Case study researchers continue data collection and the analysis process until they no longer identify new themes and patterns (Newman et al., 2017; Skea, 2016). Case studies are apposite when a researcher plans to observe the behavior of their participants (Mills et al., 2017).

Qualitative researchers use phenomenological research to describe the uniqueness of lived experiences through participants' interpretations of the phenomenon (Van Manen, 2017). Researchers use structured interviews, written words, direct observation, and recorded audio to collect data to address the research topic (Danielsson & Rosberg, 2015). Researchers use classification and ranking techniques to analyze phenomenological research data to identify themes to facilitate the explanation of the findings (Alase, 2017). I did not employ a phenomenological research design because I did not explore my research participants' lived experiences.

Shedrow (2017) stated that the objective of narrative researchers is to explore life experiences of individuals through the retelling of people's stories. Researchers use personal storytelling of life experiences, interviews, reflective journal, autobiographies, written letters, pictures, school records, newsletters, and audio recordings to collect data for this research study type (Chakraborty, 2017). These researchers employ multiple techniques to analyze narrative research data to identify direct quotes, paraphrase common ideas, identify themes and patterns, and use member checking to validate the interpreted data (Wall, 2015). Jagals and Van der Walt (2016) noted that narrative researchers use the interpreted research data to construct narratives of how individuals create meaning in their lives. I did not use a narrative inquiry because I did not study individual life experiences through the retelling of participants' stories.

Researchers use the ethnographic design to focus on studying the cultures of individuals to gain perspectives on their perceptions (Fusch et al., 2017). Similarly, ethnographic researchers explore how culture influences behavior and values (Draper, 2015). An ethnography researcher focuses on studying cultural groups in a natural environment over an extended period to understand the lived experiences of the individuals (Eika et al., 2015). Ethnographic researchers use structured or unstructured interviews, observation, and collection of documents to gather data for the research study (Bikker et al., 2017). The ethnographic design was not apposite because I was not exploring the demographics of a group based on their culture over an extended period.

In case studies, researchers achieve data saturation by using interviews, company documents, and physical artifacts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Failure to achieve data saturation in a qualitative study significantly affects the quality and the overall validity of a study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The lack of new information indicates the achievement of data saturation (Hammarberg et al., 2016). To ensure that no new information is revealed, researchers frequently employ member checking (Bowen, 2008; Yin, 2018). In my quest to achieve data saturation, I requested company documents, asked open-ended interview questions, and asked research participants to elaborate on their responses until no new information emerged. I interviewed all participants and compared the collected information and documents. Additionally, I conducted member checking by providing the participants with my interpretations of their responses and allowing participants time to review and respond for accuracy and validation.

Population and Sampling

Palinkas et al. (2015) argued that researchers extensively employ purposeful sampling in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest. Researchers use purposeful sampling to target participants who have knowledge and experience in a specific area of study (Gentles et al., 2016). I selected participants for this study through purposeful sampling. The population for this study was hotel leaders working in five hotels in Jamaica. Eligible participants were hotel leaders who successfully implemented strategies to improve employee engagement.

The sample size is appropriate for a study if the sample can provide sufficient and support data that contributes insight regarding the central research question (McLeod, 2017). Researchers use purposeful sampling to choose participants who meet specific eligibility criteria, who possess the knowledge needed to answer the research question, and because of who they are and what they do (Baur et al., 2015). Purposeful sampling was appropriate for this study because this sampling technique allowed me to choose participants who met specific eligibility criteria, who possessed the knowledge needed to answer the research question, and because of who they were and what they did. I used purposeful sampling to narrow the larger targeted population to the sample population. Lin and Paez (2020) posited that researchers can address transferability with the use of purposeful sampling and a thorough description of the context in the open-ended questions. Researchers use snowball sampling to obtain future participants from existing participants, but risk breaking the confidentiality of participants (Yingling & McClain, 2015). I did not use snowball sampling to avoid the potential breaking of participants' confidentiality. Census sampling is appropriate when the number of people in the targeted population equals the number of people needed in the sample population (Lacy et al., 2015). I did not use census sampling because the targeted population exceeded the number of people in the sample population.

Qualitative case study researchers use central research question as the guide to ensure the selection of acceptable sample size (Boddy, 2016). Yin (2018) stated that researchers may conduct a case study with small sample size. Researchers conducting a limited scope case study use a small sample population to acquire rich data and reach data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Research participants should meet the eligibility criteria to participate in this research study. The eligible participants consisted of leaders from five different hotels who have applied motivation strategies to improve employee engagement in Jamaica. Leaders who do not meet the criteria were not be eligible to participate in the research study.

Boyd (2020) conducted a qualitative multiple-case study to explore strategies that three small business owners in Virginia used to improve employee engagement. Stephens (2020) conducted a qualitative multiple-case study to explore effective strategies used by leaders in the hospitality industry to improve millennial employee engagement. The participants were five hotel leaders in Virginia who successfully engaged their millennial workforce. Marshall (2018) conducted a qualitative case study to explore effective communication strategies managers used to improve employee engagement and increase productivity as well as profitability, using a sample size of three purposefully selected managers. Because my study was similar to research conducted by Boyd, five participants was an appropriate sample size.

Bowen (2008) stated that data saturation is the stage when there is enough information to replicate the study exhausts the ability to obtain additional new information, and when further coding is no longer feasible. Failure to reach data saturation has a negative impact on research validity (Bowen, 2008). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), determining the point of data saturation is complex because researchers have information on only what they have found. Researchers decide when to stop data collection based on their judgment and experience. Data collection and analysis continue to the point when additional input from new participants no longer changes the researchers' understanding of the concept. This is the point of data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Researchers reach data saturation when there is enough information to replicate the study (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013), when the ability to obtain additional new information is exhaustive, and when further coding is no longer feasible (Guest et al., 2006). I achieved data saturation primarily by collecting data until no new information emerged, employing member checking, and using methodological triangulation.

Ethical Research

Informed consent is a voluntary agreement to participate in research (Bok, 2017). However, the ethical protection of participants is the basis of the informed consent process (Greenwood, 2016; Iphofen, 2016; Thomas, 2016). I followed the informed consent process approved by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for this study. I emailed the informed consent form to each eligible participant for their edification. The informed consent form included the following information: (a) background of the study, (b) purpose of the study, (c) research responsibilities, (d) risks and benefits associated with participating in this study, (e) information on the researcher, (f) process for ensuring confidentiality, and (g) role of the participant. Dating and signing the consent form indicates a desire to participate (Sawyer et al., 2017). I asked the eligible participants to provide informed consent by replying "I consent" to the e-mail before the start of the interview. In the informed consent form, I included a statement notifying each participant that they may withdraw from the study at any time by advising me via email or telephone. Participants will be able to withdraw from the study without giving a reason and with no consequences (Aguila et al., 2016; Perrault & Keating, 2017). The informed consent form also apprised the participants that they will not receive any monetary or other incentives for participating in the study. Offering participants incentives may affect the reliability and validity of the study (VanderWalde & Kurzban, 2011).

To maintain ethical standards, I obtained approval from the Walden University IRB before contacting the participants or collecting data. After receiving IRB approval, I began scheduling interviews once I received the consent from the participants. I informed the participants I will provide them a summary of my findings and that the final research study will be available for them to view once I completed the research. Researchers must ensure the confidentiality of participants as a fundamental guide in ethical research (Adams et al., 2015). I removed and coded all personally identifiable information to ensure privacy. I did not divulge the names or any identifying data on the participants or organizations that participated in the study. I labeled each participant as follows: L1 for the first participant, L2 for the second participant, L3 for the third participant, L4 for the fourth participant, and L5 for the fifth participant. During the research study, I referred to principles learned from the NIH's Office of Extramural Research training to protect human participants. The Walden University IRB approval number for this study is 10-13-22-0992758. I stored all confidential data on an encrypted USB drive and locked in a storage cabinet along with any supporting material. I will delete all electronic data permanently and shred all documents provided by the participants after 5 years have passed.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument for the study. Stewart (2016) advised that a researcher was the principal data collection instrument and was responsible for obtaining and evaluating the information; Fusch et al. (2017), in agreement with Clark and Vealé (2018), stated that the qualitative researcher is the main data collection instrument because they have access to interview the participants. Gaikwad (2018) supported the notion that researchers act as the primary data collection instrument, understanding that possible sensitivity, as well as communication skills, are essential to contributing positively to the value of the data collected. Similarly, Yin (2018) declared that a researcher was the primary data collection instrument for a qualitative research study. Yin posited that the following six resources exist for case studies: (a) archival records, (b) direct observation, (c) documentation, (d) interviews, (e) participant observations, or (f) physical artifacts. Qualitative researchers use open-ended questions to develop awareness of the central research question (Yin, 2018). As the primary data collection instrument, I collected data from semistructured interviews asking open-ended interview questions and respective organizational documents. van den Berg and Struwig (2017), in agreement with Cleary et al. (2014) and Petrova et al. (2014), argued that conducting semistructured interviews and asking open-ended interview questions provided additional insight surrounding the phenomenon.

To help reduce personal bias and provide structure to the interview process, I utilized an interview protocol. The interview protocol contained process steps data (see Appendix A) used to identify the phases to follow before, during, and after completion of all interviews. Castillo-Montoya (2016) suggested the application of an interview protocol during the initial planning phases of the research. Hilton (2017) stated that researchers used interview protocols to help develop a suitable approach to the interview process. The interview protocol contained prompts (see Appendix A) that consisted of actions required before the interviews, during the interviews, and after the interviews. I followed the steps in the interview protocol; I asked each participant the same questions in the same order to collect rich data during semistructured interviews focused on the primary research question. In addition to asking open-ended interview questions, I reviewed and analyzed company documents, and audio recorded the interviews using Zoom with the participant’s permission to ensure accuracy. My Samsung A52 model cellphone was employed as a secondary recording device for backup to avoid key data loss should there be any contingent technical issues. Reviewing company documents may enable me to gain additional insight on responses provided and verified information received during the interview process. Brace (2018) emphasized the need for researchers to encourage participants to ask clarifying questions accordingly during the respective interview sessions.

The validity and reliability of qualitative case studies are essential. Qualitative researchers are required to understand that validity and reliability of the data collection process is significant and their personal opinions and perspectives may affect the outcomes of the study (Clark & Vealé, 2018). I conducted member checking to ensure that I have accurately interpreted each participant’s responses following each interview. As such, I scheduled a follow up session with each participant to help ensure that the interpreted information accurately represented their respective responses they provided during the interview sessions. Member checking is a rigorous process used to validate, verify, or assess the trustworthiness of qualitative results (Doyle, 2007; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Birt et al. (2016) stated that the trustworthiness of results is the bedrock of high-quality qualitative research. Member checking, also known as participant or respondent validation, is a technique for exploring the credibility of results. The researcher returns their interpretations of the participants’ interview responses to the respective participants to validate the accuracy of the researcher’s interpretations of the participants’ responses captured by the interviewer (Birt et al., 2016). I sent my interview response interpretations to each corresponding interviewee for them to confirm my interpretations of the data I acquired during each interview session were accurate. I also used methodological triangulation to enhance the credibility of the study. Methodological triangulation technique is the use of multiple theories to interpret data and multiple data collection methods used by the researcher (Petrova et al., 2014; Sargeant, 2012). To test data for validity, the researcher may use methodological triangulation (MacPhail et al., 2016; Randles et al., 2018).

Data Collection Technique

I collected data using semistructured interviews and requisite organizational documents. To collect data, all participants were contacted in advance to schedule interview appointments. Once the hotel leaders agreed to participate in the study, I emailed an invitation (see Appendix B) to each participant to briefly describe the interview process (see Appendix A). Additionally, the participants received a consent form explaining the purpose of the study and the expectations. All prospective participants were asked to respond to the email with the Informed Consent Form with “I consent” which provided written confirmation of the participant’s acknowledgement of their understanding they are providing their informed consent to participate in this study. Subsequent to receiving the participants written confirmations, I scheduled a date and time to conduct the interviews. According to Yin (2018), it is essential to provide each participant with flexible times and dates to increase the chance of their involvement. Each interview took place in a quiet and comfortable setting where there were no distractions. The interviews were conducted at my work office or home office via Zoom which facilitated the audio recording of the meetings with the consent of the participants.

The usual face-to-face semistructured interviews would have been the primary data collection technique used for this study. However, because of the coronavirus pandemic, online interviews were conducted via Zoom. During the online meetings, I followed the procedures outlined in the interview protocol (see Appendix A) for each participant. Dikko (2016) asserted that following interview protocol rules and guidelines decrease inconsistencies when conducting semistructured interviews. Arsel (2017) detailed that the interview protocol provides an outline for the interview that should include three parts: a mini introduction, which includes a brief explanation of the research to be conducted; an explanation of the interview process; and some time for the participant to ask questions relative to the study and procedures. Guest et al. (2006) asserted that interview questions should be structured to facilitate asking multiple participants the same questions, otherwise one would not be able to achieve data saturation as it would be a constantly moving target. I audio recorded the semistructured interviews via Zoom for each participant and obtained documents via email from the participants on strategies used to improve employee engagement.

There are several advantages regarding data collection techniques used for qualitative research. The interview process was the main data collection technique I employed for the study. I asked open-ended interview questions. There are many advantages of conducting semistructured interviews. Nusbaum et al. (2017) asserted that the advantage of face-to-face semistructured interviews improves verbal and nonverbal communication with participants. When a researcher asks open-ended interview questions, participants respond by sharing in-depth experiences and details about a phenomenon (Dikko, 2016; Yin, 2018). Sanjari et al. (2015) stated that conducting semistructured interviews facilitate immediate interpretation which supports the ability to elicit clarification of data not understood. When a researcher conducts face-to-face interviews, they become aware of nonverbal cues that cannot be captured via the telephone or an online questionnaire (Oltmann, 2016; Yin, 2018).

There are also disadvantages with respect to data collection techniques used for qualitative research. These disadvantages may include the cost, quality of information provided, biased responses, and time constraints. Cardno (2018) argued that researchers may also take a lot of time reviewing documents to support themes. There are disadvantages to conducting semistructured interviews. Rizzo et al. (2016) indicated that in the face-to-face interviews, participants may be reluctant to share information due to nervousness or hesitancy. McIntosh and Morse (2015) shared that a researcher's time and money might conjointly be disadvantageous to the interview method. Participants may also refuse to provide an official policy document for research purposes, which in turn may create a challenge for the researcher who requires accurate information. To combat the aforementioned disadvantages, I structured the interviews to last no longer than 60 minutes to collect the required information from participants. I will send all the participants a copy of the approved research in gratitude for participating in the research study.

Subsequent to each individual interview session, I transcribed the audio recorded responses captured via Zoom. I also compiled the notes taken posthaste, along with any documentation presented after each interview. I synthesized the participants' answers for every question to facilitate member checking. According to Madill and Sullivan (2017), researchers use member checking to authenticate the correct clarification of the data and to gain additional knowledge supporting different participant responses. By employing member checking, the participants were given the opportunity for 2 days to review and confirm my interpretations of their responses to the interview questions to ensure that I correctly understood the meaning of their responses. This process continued until the data indicated an accurate reflection of the interview. I advised all participants that I am willing and able to discuss any changes to my interpretation of the respective interviews for clarity. González and Campbell (2018) professed that member checking interviews will enhance the reliability and integrity of the data. I used member checking of the data interpretation of the interview responses to validate data saturation, which enhanced reliability and validity of this study.

Data Organization Techniques

The techniques implemented in organizing research data are significant components of the research process. Yin (2018) asserted that creating an efficient way to organize data is a major part of data analysis. To accurately and effectively track the participants' data, I used a naming convention; the participants were labelled as L1, L2, L3, L4, and L5 to help ensure their confidentiality and privacy. Arora and Dhiman (2015) advised that participants could remain confidential when generic codes are used as identifiers. The participants were not aware of their unique study identifier. To help protect the participants, I created an electronic filing system and used the aforementioned labels assigned during the interview process. For qualitative studies, data should be organized providing a candid explanatory synopsis of the information provided by the participants (Colorafi & Evans, 2016).

Subsequent to collecting the participants' data, I stored the synthesized information in Word format on my HP ProBook personal computer supported by password protection. I also stored audio recorded data with the electronic files on my laptop and encrypted USB drive. All data were stored in folders corresponding to their respective nomenclature. Each folder contained the participants' specific interview responses, executed consent forms, and all other correspondences obtained from the interviewees throughout the study process. Placing data into manageable folders allows the researcher to break down, examine, reconstruct, and reflect on the data to gain a greater understanding of the participants' responses (Yazan, 2015). I used NVivo 12 Plus as the qualitative analysis software tool. I used NVivo 12 Plus to code the raw data into themes and provided a framework for the study analysis. I also established a reflective journal to gain deeper insights into strategies leaders may exercise to improve employee engagement. Nusbaum et al. (2017) demonstrated how a reflective journal with semistructured interviews enhanced a researcher's ability to document participants' conduct and demeanor during the interviews. Researchers use reflective journaling to document their learning experiences (Hermansyah, 2016; Hood et al., 2018).

Protecting research data collected from participants is a sensitive and major responsibility for the researcher. Almalki (2016) stated that access to the data should be restricted, where only the person(s) that have clearance should be allowed to retrieve it. Company documents and memos will be stored in a locked file cabinet. I will store all raw data securely for 5 years. After 5 years from the completion date of this study, I will expunge the data stored electronically by deleting the corresponding data from my laptop and USB flash drive and shred all hard copy documents.

Data Analysis

According to Lewis (2015), data analysis is used by researchers to organize and report collected data obtained from a research study. The incorporation of the collection, analysis, interpretations, and the meaning of data and reporting on those findings define qualitative data analysis (Cleary et al., 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2018). Guo and Guo (2016) described data analysis as an analytical review of data for effective use. The conceptual framework of the study was the two-factor theory of Herzberg et al. (1959). The foundation of Herzberg’s two-factor motivation framework confirmed explanations and motivational factors that affect the study participants’ job satisfaction or dissatisfaction which may ultimately influence employee engagement.

I analyzed the data collected by primarily employing the thematic analysis technique in analyzing interviews and archival documents such as strategic plans, employee handbooks, and website data on the respective organizations and industries. According to Gale et al. (2013), researchers can best interpret data by organizing it into themes. Researchers should be able to identify patterns across more than one data collection method (Cronin, 2014). Nowell et al. (2017) shared that thematic analysis was the foundation for data analysis for a qualitative research study and used by researchers for recognizing, evaluating, organizing, and describing themes identified in a data set. Vaismoradi et al. (2013), in agreement with Robinson (2014), posited that researchers used thematic analysis to process and analyze data into data sets.

Maguire and Delahunt (2017) asserted that there are six steps of thematic analysis. Accordingly, Braun et al. (2015) and Robinson (2014) denoted the following six steps of thematic analysis: (a) become familiar with the data, (b) generate initial codes, (c) search for themes, (d) review themes, (e) define themes, and (f) write a report based on findings. I followed these six steps for analyzing and interpreting the data to identify themes and extract subsequent conclusions. The identification of key themes was correlated with corresponding existing literature and this study's conceptual framework to garner conclusions.

Qualitative researchers transcribe information obtained from interviews to mirror the responses provided by participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). For the study, I used NVivo 12 Plus and Microsoft Excel to interpret data received from the interviews, company documents, and thematic analysis. I used NVivo 12 Plus for the qualitative analysis of the data because of the popularity and ease of use. I used NVivo 12 Plus to perform coding data analysis, identifying the occurrence of critical themes and word frequencies. Qualitative researchers use NVivo software to establish themes of the findings (Lunny et al., 2016; Pokorny et al., 2018). Zamawe (2015) advised that researchers use the features embedded in the NVivo software to aid in coding and categorizing data into themes. One of the data analysis tools a researcher can use to code common themes and topics to identify relationships within the text is an Excel spreadsheet (Saldaña, 2014). In Excel, I categorized and labelled all data by type of information; participant code identifiers (L1, L2, L3, L4, and L5); data obtained; and collection location. For the research, I transcribed the data, entered the findings into the

Excel spreadsheet, and highlighted any similarities identified within the data in addition to performing any possible correlation with NVivo 12 Plus. The research for the study included online resources, journals, and peer-reviewed articles aligned with the conceptual framework.

For triangulation purposes, I reviewed organizational documents to correlate with the interview responses. Data, theoretical, researcher, and methodological triangulation are the four triangulation methods researchers use to gain a rich insight of the phenomena (Abdalla et al., 2018; Jentoft & Olsen, 2019; Yin, 2018). Denzin (2009) suggested data triangulation for correlating people, time, and space; investigator triangulation for correlating the findings from multiple researchers in a study; theory triangulation for using and correlating multiple theoretical strategies; and methodological triangulation for correlating data from multiple data collection methods. I employed methodological triangulation in this study. Methodological triangulation is a way that researchers can intensify the legitimacy of their research and is best suited with qualitative case studies (N. Carter et al., 2014). Methodological triangulation adds rigor to research providing a more wholistic view of the research topic, as the information is corroborated via several sources (Leung, 2015; Yin, 2018). As such, I employed methodological triangulation as I used multiple data sources, including interview responses and company documents, to enhance this study's validity.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are key constructs in ensuring trustworthiness for a qualitative research study. Connelly (2016) argued that trustworthiness or vigor indicates trust in data, interpretation, and how the researcher used the data to validate the research study. Researchers ensure reliability and validity through dependability, credibility, transferability, conformability, and data saturation (Yin, 2018). According to Morse (2015), the quality of qualitative studies is evaluated by credibility, dependability, and transferability. Credibility is a validation instrument that measures items such as peer reviews, lengthy engagement, and continuous observation. Dependability focuses on consistency while transferability is a validation instrument that assesses generalization and applicability to other topics (Morse, 2015). During this research, several techniques were used to facilitate the reliability and validity of the study such as member checking and methodological triangulation.

Reliability

By comparing data from a variety of sources, including but not limited to interview responses, company website, social media, and published literature, the reliability of data may be validated. Reliability is employed to support objectivity and to measure the consistency of the data collection, coding, and analysis (Cleary et al., 2014). Abdalla et al. (2018) argued that maintaining reliability is a critical component of the qualitative research process. To enhance the dependability of the data in the research, I used member checking by sharing with the participants my analyses of their interview responses for verification by each respective participant. I also employed methodical triangulation and adhered to the interview protocol.

Use of member checking allows the participants to confirm that the interviewer's interpretation of the participants' responses to the interview questions are accurate

(Dickson-Swift et al., 2007; Sargeant, 2012). Birt et al. (2016) shared that a researcher used member checking to allow participants to engage, add to the interviews, and interpret data after the completion of the semistructured interviews. Cypress (2017) suggested that member checking is completed when the researcher verifies data and interpretations with the participants. I was also guided consistently by the interview protocol. Haahr et al. (2013) shared that a researcher should develop and abide by the interview protocol with the participant to limit biases in the data collection phase in the research study.

The member checking process requires several steps to augment dependability and reliability. According to Birt et al. (2016), the member checking process in engaging participants is as follows: (a) the researcher conducts the initial interview, (b) the researcher reviews and interprets the interview responses, (c) the researcher writes each question followed by a succinct synthesis of the participant’s responses (one-paragraph), (d) the researcher provides a printed copy of the synthesis to the participant, (e) the researcher asks if the synthesis represents the answer or if there is additional information, and (f) the researcher continues member checking process until there is no new data to be collected (Birt et al., 2016). I enhanced research dependability by incorporating member checking data interpretation with the participants and following the interview protocol.

In establishing dependability of the study, I also used two data sources as part of my methodological triangulation strategy. Leung (2015) argued that researchers should verify the content of data accuracy with other data sources to support findings. Similarly, Joslin and Müller (2016) opined that researchers make sound judgment through methodological triangulation by using multiple lines of evidence to ensure the reliability of the study.

Validity

A researcher may use validity checks to address any potential internal or external threats which may negatively influence the credibility of the data analysis (Cho & Lee, 2014; Dickson-Swift et al., 2007; Petrova et al., 2014). Internal and external validity methods are strategies researchers use to increase the accuracy of the research findings (Moustakas, 1994; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Petrova et al., 2014). For qualitative research, the researcher should address validity determined by credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation of the research study. I enhanced validity through credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation.

Credibility

Connelly (2016), in agreement with Anney (2014), suggested that researchers enhance credibility through transparency and integrity of the findings of the study conducted. Christensen and Miguel (2018) posited that researchers use the credibility criterion to help ensure trustworthiness and research transparency by verifying findings with the participants. To enhance the credibility of the study, I employed member checking. Researchers use member checking to provide an opportunity for participants to review the intended meaning of the information provided by participants (Birt et al., 2016). I communicated with each participant via email with my interpretations of their respective interview responses for their individual corroboration to enhance the credibility of the study.

Transferability

Coon et al. (2016) stated that transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. Transferability can be improved by presenting the context of the research and the assumptions central to the study in a thorough manner (O'Leary, 2017). Readers gain knowledge and insight when the researcher provides detailed descriptions pertaining to the research topic, thereby, supporting potential transferability (Carminati, 2018). In a qualitative research study, Sarma (2015) labelled the reader of the study as the primary determiner of transferability. Providing detailed information throughout the research process can help future researchers decide whether the findings are transferable to another context (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transferability can be impacted by various factors such as location, sample size, and population (B. Smith, 2018). To support the transferability of the study, I provided enough information with corresponding sources so that readers can determine whether the study is transferable to their situation or experience.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the objectivity that the findings of the study are reliable and can be replicated (Connelly, 2016; Yin, 2018). According to Sarma (2015), researchers enhance confirmability through triangulation. The confirmability of the study involves the neutrality, or the degree to which the findings are consistent (Connelly, 2016). Al-Natour et al. (2015) described confirmability as a criterion by researchers to ensure data findings do not contain any personal viewpoints. To enhance confirmability of the study, I asked probing questions, carefully documented the interview proceedings, and returned the interpreted data back to the participants for member checking. I also used multiple data sources including company documents to support the rigor of the study and applied methodological triangulation.

Data Saturation

Qualitative researchers employ various data collection techniques to achieve data saturation including interviews, company documents, and physical artifacts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Data saturation in qualitative research is a way to help ensure that the researcher obtained accurate and valid data. Using too small of a sample or too large of a sample will not ensure data saturation. In simple terms, data saturation means the researcher left no data behind; the researcher gathered enough available data to answer the research question. Bowen (2008), in agreement with Guest et al. (2006), stated that data saturation is the stage when there is enough information to replicate the study, when the likelihood of obtaining new information is low, and when further coding is unlikely to be feasible. The lack of new information indicates data saturation is achieved (Hammarberg et al., 2016). In a robust effort to achieve data saturation, I requested company documents, asked open-ended interview questions, and asked research participants to elaborate on their responses until no new information was produced. I also ensured that my sample size facilitated data saturation. I interviewed all participants and compared the collected information and documents. If data saturation was not achieved after my target population of five participants were interviewed, I would have expanded my target population until data saturation was achieved. However, if data saturation was achieved after the third or fourth interview, I would still conduct the fifth interview to validate that data saturation was achieved. I also employed member checking and methodological triangulation in support of data saturation.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I delivered a thorough narrative of the study and rationale for the selected study's methodology and design. I presented the role of the researcher, study participants, research method and design, population, and sampling method. I concluded the section with a description of the need for ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, data analysis, reliability, and validity.

In Section 3, I present my findings, provide applications to professional practice, list implications for social change, offer recommendations for action, propose recommendations for further research, provide my reflections of the research, and share a conclusion of the study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore key strategies hotel leaders have used to improve employee engagement. This section includes the presentation of the findings of data gathered during Zoom interviews of five hotel leaders responsible for creating and implementing employee engagement strategies. In my interviews with these hotel leaders and through my review of company documents provided by some research participants, I found that the hotels place significant importance and resources toward enhancing employee engagement levels. The following themes emerged in the leaders' strategies to improve employee engagement: (a) staff engagement, (b) employee communication, (c) rewards and recognition, (d) employee training and development, and (e) continuous improvements of staff work environment. Each theme aligns with Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory, as described in the conceptual framework.

Presentation of Findings

The objective of this qualitative multiple-case study was to answer the central research question: What strategies do leaders in the hotel industry use to improve employee engagement? To answer this research question, I conducted semistructured interviews with five hotel leaders in Jamaica via Zoom because of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Executing semistructured interviews and asking open-ended questions provided participants the opportunity to share their knowledge and expertise on strategies they employ to improve employee engagement. Before the interview officially started, each participant was allowed time to review the consent form, ask questions regarding the interview process, and reaffirm their consent verbally to participate. I ensured that I reiterated that participation was voluntary and that participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. I also advised participants of the member checking process that would be conducted subsequent to the interviews. The Zoom interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour. In conjunction with the interviews, I reviewed organizational documents, including newsletters and employee engagement activity flyers provided by some participants.

I assigned the participants codes to maintain their confidentiality (L1, L2, L3, L4, and L5). The coded data consisted of keywords and common terms from the interview transcripts and secondary data obtained from the hotel leaders. I audio recorded the interviews and stored the data on my laptop, encrypted USB drive, and my Samsung cellphone. I conducted member checking after the interviews with each participant to validate their responses. To successfully achieve member checking, I reviewed interview notes and transcribed the responses of each participant. I then provided each participant with a summary of my interpretation of their responses for their validation. Researchers use member checking to confirm the responses of the participants (McGannon et al., 2021). An assessment of data from the interviews produced five primary emerging themes, which are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1

Themes

Themes	Number of participants	Mentions
Staff engagement	5	19
Continuous improvements of staff work environment	5	12
Employee communication	4	11
Rewards and recognition	5	9
Employee training and development	3	6

Theme 1: Staff Engagement

The predominant theme that emerged from the data analysis was staff engagement. As indicated in Table 1, staff engagement was supported by all participants, denoting 19 mentions. All the hotel leaders underscored the importance of establishing staff engagement activities to improve employee engagement. Work engagement is currently one of the most desirable psychological work outcomes (Schaufeli, 2021). Two subthemes emerged from staff engagement: implement staff engagement activities and improve staff welfare.

Data Collected

L1 shared, “We conducted monthly staff activities.” L2 stated, “We implemented events for staff the last Friday of every month, executed scheduled departmental meetings, and worked alongside staff members to provide support.” L3 indicated, “Our organization implemented staff engagement activities.” L4 said,

> We executed monthly breakfast clubs which facilitated staff engagement with management and established *Let’s Talk* forums to garner challenges to improve employee engagement. …We established an active foundation that addressed

> wellness and education of staff members, implemented a canteen survey to assess the quality of food for staff, and executed management retreats.

L5 declared, “We improved staff welfare and redefined company values.” L2, L3, L4, and L5 asserted that staff engagement was one of the most effective key strategies they use to improve employee engagement in their respective organizations. Upon review of the supporting company documents provided by L2, I confirmed monthly and annual staff engagement activities.

Subthemes

Two subthemes emerged from the main theme of staff engagement: implement staff engagement activities and improve staff welfare, as indicated in Table 2. The implement staff engagement activities subtheme indicated 14 mentions and the improve staff welfare subtheme showed five mentions. L3 stated, “We implemented staff engagement activities to include staff working on the graveyard shifts.” L5 emphasized, “We continuously strive to improve staff welfare.”

Table 2

Subthemes of Theme 1

Subthemes	Number of participants	Mentions
Implement staff engagement activities	4	14
Improve staff welfare	2	5

Connection to Existing Literature and Conceptual Framework

The motivation–hygiene theory of motivation, commonly referred to as Herzberg’s two-factor theory, originated by Herzberg et al. (1959), was the conceptual framework for this study to which the theme of staff engagement was aligned. According to Ann and Blum (2020), Herzberg et al. argued that hygiene factors, also known as maintenance factors, related to issues of the organization or environment and specifics of the job and were extrinsic include interpersonal relationships with peers, subordinates, and supervisors; security; working conditions; salary; status; supervision; company policy and administration; and personal life. Theme 1, staff engagement, may be classified as a hygiene factor relating to interpersonal relations with peers, subordinates, and supervisors. An employee's motivation is positively or negatively affected by interactions with organization leaders (Herzberg et al., 2017). Sakr et al. (2019) posited that workplace fun can help an organization attain goals by increasing the level of engagement regardless of financial satisfaction.

Theme 2: Continuous Improvements of Staff Work Environment

Continuous improvements of staff work environment supports employee engagement. This major theme was supported by the five participants indicating 12 mentions. The five hotel leaders who participated in the research described how improving the staff work environment magnifies employee engagement. Two subthemes emerged from continuous improvements of staff work environment: improve staff facilities and incorporate value-added services.

Data Collected

L1 stated, "We established a small laundry for staff which produced satisfaction." L2 explained, "We refurbished the staff canteen to include television, air conditioning, and better-quality food; we don't just improve guest areas, we improved staff areas as well. … Our company refurbished the bathrooms and changerooms for staff to include air conditioning." L3 said,

> We continuously improve staff work environment. … We refurbished the canteen with television, installed air conditioning units in staff restrooms, locker rooms, and the canteen, established lounge area, which included television and beverage [coffee, tea, juice, and water] area, and are on the verge of establishing a tuck shop and barber shop for staff.

L4 echoed, "Our company improved the staff lounge with television and tuck shop. … We enhanced the staff gym with an instructor and established a lactation room for mothers who just gave birth and returned to work." Similarly, L5 stated, "We remodeled the staff canteen with television, air conditioning, and provided more healthier foods."

Subthemes

Two subthemes emerged from the main theme of continuous improvements of staff work environment: improve staff facilities and incorporate value-added services, as indicated in Table 3. The improve staff facilities subtheme indicated nine mentions and the incorporated value-added services subtheme showed three mentions. L3 mentioned, "We improved staff facilities by refurbishing staff bathrooms and change rooms to include air conditioning units." L4 indicated, "We incorporated value-added services by establishing a lactation room for mothers who just gave birth and returned to work."

Table 3

Subthemes of Theme 2

Subthemes	Number of participants	Mentions
Improve staff facilities	4	9
Incorporate value-added services	3	3

Connection to Existing Literature and Conceptual Framework

Theme 2, continuous improvements of staff work environments, aligned to the hygiene factors described by Herzberg et al. (1959) for working conditions in the organization. Continuous improvements of staff work environment is a key strategy to improve employee engagement. Priest et al. (2018) affirmed that leaders must motivate employees, offer competitive compensation, and provide good workplace conditions to improve employee engagement. If a workplace can satisfy employees’ needs, employees develop a strong, positive emotional, and cognitive bond with the workplace (Mura et al., 2023). When employees perceive a positive and supportive work environment, they are more likely to produce positive work outcomes in response to the favorable treatment by their organization (Teo et al., 2020).

Theme 3: Employee Communication

Employee communication is a key strategy employed by hotel leaders to improve employee engagement and a major theme that emerged from the data collected. This theme was supported by four participants with 11 mentions. Three subthemes emerged from employee communication: foster clear communication to staff, establish open-door communication, and invite employee feedback.

Data Collected

L1 explained, “Effective communication with employees was vital to improve employee engagement.” The company leaders professed that they encouraged open communication, set clear expectations and goals, and provided timely feedback. L2 stated, “We fostered clear communication to staff.” L3 said, “We implemented an open-door communication policy to build trust among staff and management.” L5 added, “Our company executed clear and effective communication for information to be understood using different media [e.g., WhatsApp group created for all departments].” L1, L3, and L5 also admitted that communication was one of their most effective key strategies in improving employee engagement.

Subthemes

The three subthemes that emerged from the main theme of employee communication were foster clear communication to staff, establish open-door communication, and invite employee feedback, as indicated in Table 4. The foster clear communication to staff subtheme indicated five mentions, the establish open-door communication subtheme showed four mentions, and the invite employee feedback subtheme highlighted two mentions. L1 declared, “We fostered clear communication to staff by articulating clear expectations and goals.” L3 stated, “We implemented open-door communication which was accessible to all staff.” L5 said, “We invited employee feedback and recommendations.”

Table 4

Subthemes of Theme 3

Subthemes	Number of participants	Mentions
Foster clear communication to staff	3	5
Establish open-door communication	2	4
Invite employee feedback	2	2

Connection to Existing Literature and Conceptual Framework

Theme 3 was supported by the hygiene factors described by Herzberg et al. (1959) relating to supervision in the organization. Hackman and Lawler (1971) stated that Herzberg's two-factor theory indicates that task performance will lead to high levels of satisfaction if the employees (a) have the opportunity to do a meaningful and identifiable portion of the work, (b) perform the task results in outcomes that are intrinsically meaningful and worthwhile, and (c) are given intrinsically positive feedback about what they accomplished, a measure of communication. Tarnowski et al. (2019) stated that managers must effectively communicate the company's goals and objectives to actively engage employees. Managers should leverage internal communication practices that invite employee participation in organizational activities (Kang & Sung, 2017).

Theme 4: Rewards and Recognition

Rewards and recognition were other major themes that emerged from the data collected from participants. The five hotel leaders revealed that rewards and recognition are used to enhance employee engagement. These themes had nine mentions. Only one subtheme emerged from rewards and recognition, which was the implementation of rewards and recognition programs.

Data Collected

L1 and L2 stated that their company implements rewards and recognition programs for staff, which include annual staff award events and newsletters. L3 said, “Our company implemented rewards and recognition program, which facilitated day passes and miscellaneous gifts.” L4 opined, “We established rewards and recognition programs, which included points systems to get vouchers to purchase miscellaneous items.” L5 declared, “We implemented rewards and recognition programs that ran quarterly for respective departments.” Of note, L2, L3, L4, and L5 asserted that rewards and recognition are one of the most effective key strategies they employ to improve employee engagement in their corresponding institutions.

Subtheme

The only subtheme that emerged from the main theme of rewards and recognition was the implementation of rewards and recognition programs, as indicated in Table 5. The subtheme revealed nine mentions. All study participants supported the establishment of rewards and recognition programs. L3 explained, “We implement rewards and recognition programs to facilitate tangible incentives.”

Table 5

Subtheme of Theme 4

Subtheme	Number of participants	Mentions
Implement rewards and recognition programs	5	9

Connection to Existing Literature and Conceptual Framework

Motivation and hygiene factors, the two primary tenets of Herzberg's (1987) two-factor theory, relate to employee engagement, satisfaction, and dissatisfaction. Motivation factors are concepts, such as praise, recognition, career development and advancement, nonmonetary rewards, which when met, increase job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1987). Hygiene factors, also referred to as maintenance factors, include concepts such as organizational culture, the hierarchical structure of the organization, job structures, monetary compensation, supervision, and working conditions, which when not met result in job dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1987). As such, rewards may be classified as both motivation and hygiene factors while recognition would be classified as a motivation factor.

Rewards, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, improve employee work engagement and increase productivity (Victor & Hoole, 2017). Several studies have indicated that when staff members earn rewards and benefits, their performance usually increases. Nasreen et al. (2019) explained that when employees are rewarded and recognized by management as top performers and leaders in the workplace, they inherently strive to continue to work hard and help the company meet organizational goals. Herzberg et al. (2017) opined that recognition includes feedback from both managers and coworkers. Employee rewards and recognition tend to have a positive impact on job engagement and organizational engagement (Saks, 2017).

Theme 5: Employee Training and Development

Employee training and development was another major theme that emerged from the data collected from hotel leaders. This theme was supported by three participants with six mentions. Jiang and Men (2017) argued that an engaged workforce that has the requisite expertise, experience, and skills is essential to any company that wishes to achieve high rates of business performance. Two subthemes emerged from employee training and development: implementation of training and development and implementation of succession planning and cross training.

Data Collected

L1 said, “Our company invested in employees to upskill themselves through training.” L3 stated, “We implemented succession planning and cross training in our organization and training and development initiatives with external stakeholders.” L4 declared, “Our organization established cross training via our own schools and workshops.” L3 and L4 asserted that this theme was one of their most effective key strategies employed to improve employee engagement at their organization of employment.

Subthemes

Two subthemes emerged from the main theme of employee training and development. They were implementation of training and development and implementation of succession planning and cross training, as indicated in Table 6. The implementation of training and development subtheme and the implementation of succession planning and cross training subtheme indicated three mentions each. L3 stated, “We executed training and development programs with government agencies.” L4 indicated, “We incorporated cross training in our organization.”

Table 6

Subthemes of Theme 5

Subthemes	Number of participants	Mentions
Implementation of training and development	2	3
Implementation of succession planning and cross training	2	3

Connection to Existing Literature and Conceptual Framework

Motivation factors are concepts, such as praise, recognition, career development and advancement, nonmonetary rewards, which when met, increase job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1987). Employee training and development may be classified as a motivation factor in Herzberg’s two-factor theory, aligning with career development and advancement. Training and development programs facilitate employees to develop interest and acquire the requisite skills needed to complete job-related tasks and advance their careers. Maity (2019) argued that knowledge and skill enhancing programs are likely to improve employee engagement and work performance within organizations. Companies must ensure their training programs properly prepare employees for their jobs (Das et al., 2017). Llopis and Foss (2016) indicated that for training and development to have a substantial effect on employee engagement, employees must perceive the advantages of participating in training activities. Connecting training and development to employee interests and expectations is a powerful way to build employee engagement within an organization (Rexworthy, 2020). High levels of employee engagement are more prevalent when managers provide organizational support, create an environment where employees can learn, and there are opportunities for career development (Gruman & Saks, 2020).

Application to Professional Practice

This study provided strategies organizational leaders employed to improve employee engagement. Based on the study's findings, interview participants utilized strategies such as staff engagement, employee communication, rewards and recognition, employee training and development, and continuous improvements of staff work environment to enhance employee engagement. Business leaders can benefit from the findings of this research because this study described successful strategies to enhance employee engagement within organizations. Improved employee engagement may lead to competitive advantage. As a crucial component of general workplace well-being, work engagement is viewed as a vital predictor of employee health and job performance (Knight et al., 2019). Bakker (2017) asserted that only 7% of employees were highly engaged with their organizations, 51% of employees were neither engaged nor disengaged, and that 42% of employees were disengaged with their organizations. Disengaged employees cause an adverse effect on organizational performance and negatively affect competitive advantage through the loss of productivity (Moletsane et al., 2019). Osborne and Hammoud (2017) identified $350 billion annually as the costs associated with disengaged employees. Consequently, improved employee engagement can lead to increased benefits for an organization.

Emanating from my interviews with participants and my review of company documents provided, I discovered five themes that leaders incorporated into their employee engagement strategies. Participants emphasized that Theme 1, staff engagement, was the predominant theme they employed. Organization leaders should place major focus on staff engagement initiatives in their employee engagement strategies. The lack of staff engagement initiatives may cause organizations to experience adverse effects of disengaged employees. Employee engagement is an optimal predictor of organizational success and financial performance (Mascarenhas et al., 2022).

In Theme 2, participants revealed that continuous improvements of staff work environment is a significant theme in this study. Organization leaders should incorporate budgetary accommodation for continuous improvements of staff work environment. The lack of continuous improvements of staff work environment may lead to disengaged employees, which may result in increased employee turnover. An employee negatively impacted by job dissatisfaction, which includes poor working conditions, poor company policies, negligent leaders, and uncompetitive pay, has the potential for voluntary turnover (Thoma et al., 2017).

Participants also indicated that employee communication, Theme 3, was a strong theme being incorporated by participants in this study. Organizations should adapt effective communication protocols in their employee engagement strategies. Employees thrive in an environment where there are open lines of communication and they are aware of the companies’ overall goals and mission (Mazzei et al., 2019). Hotel leaders could implement employee engagement strategies found within this study, including communication strategies, to effectively communicate with their employees.

In Theme 4, participants discussed the importance of rewards and recognition programs to acknowledge employees for outstanding job performance. Implementing rewards and recognition initiatives based on performance can improve employee engagement. Rewards are influential for the professional advancement of employees, whereas recognition serves as a part of meaningful work, and both rewards and recognition lead to engagement (Rai et al., 2018). The rewards and recognition programs described by the participants can be used by hotel leaders to positively impact employee engagement within their organizations.

Participants explained the importance of Theme 5, employee training and development, to successfully engage employees. Providing training and development, along with access and opportunities will enable employees to learn essential skills and awareness to improve performance (Guan & Frenkel, 2019). Proper training for hiring managers and leaders will enhance their abilities to effectively execute employee engagement strategies and programs. Hotel leaders could use some of the strategies found within this study to implement training and development programs within their organization creating an environment where employees can learn, share knowledge, and potentially advance themselves in the hospitality industry.

The results of this study provided strategies that are valuable to managers who operate in various business industries. Herzberg’s two-factor theory outlined workplace factors for both job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. The five themes supported proven employee engagement strategies which can be implemented by hotel leaders to improve job satisfaction and productivity which may ultimately result in increased profitability. Employees who obtain resources as a result of HR practices are likely to reinvest resources in the organization (Meijerink et al., 2020). Implementation of different strategies manifested in this study could culminate in positive social change.

Implications for Social Change

This multiple-case study was conducted to explore successful strategies hotel leaders used to improve employee engagement. The themes identified may contribute tangibly to individuals, organizations, institutions, communities, and societies. Engaged employees may positively impact their communities by improving their well-being, social interactions, and personal health. There are several positive social change implications associated with the findings of this study. One significant implication denotes that highly engaged employees are more productive, which can enhance firms' profitability. Engaged employees lead to increased productivity and improved organizational performance (R. B. Othman et al., 2019). Research has shown there is a positive correlation between employee engagement and productivity (Choudhury et al., 2021).

When hotels benefit from improved employee engagement, management may invest in the neighboring communities offering jobs with more attractive remuneration packages, which in turn may allow employees to upgrade their standard of living which positively impacts the economic well-being of the residents in the local communities. Hotel leaders may also support corporate social responsibility initiatives in those neighboring communities. Lok and Chin (2019) asserted that engaged employees were more likely to feel pride in their work towards environmental sustainability and social responsibility. Consequently, when leaders engage their employees at work, the employees may bring that positivity and commitment to other social aspects of their lives. The implementation of the identified successful employee engagement strategies from the study may possibly facilitate organizations in the hospitality industry to increase many aspects of their businesses, such as job satisfaction, employee retention, productivity, and profitability.

Recommendations for Action

Organizational leaders should consider improving employee engagement by focusing on implementing successful strategies which include staff engagement, continuous improvements of staff work environment, employee communication, rewards and recognition, and employee training and development. This study can serve as a catalyst to review and modify employee engagement strategies employed in the hotel industry to improve organizational productivity and profitability. According to Orgambídez and Almeida (2020), businesses are beginning to comprehend the effects of carrying out employee engagement strategies on positive outcomes, including productivity, profitability, and customer satisfaction. From the study's analysis of the five themes that emerged, I have five recommendable actions for the hospitality industry: (a) hotel leaders should implement periodic staff engagement initiatives to enhance relationship building and teamwork, (b) hotel leaders should accommodate continuous improvements of staff work environment to facilitate increased productivity and the achievement of organizational goals, (c) hotel leaders should encourage open employee communication through various media, (d) hotel leaders should establish attractive and agreeable rewards and recognitions programs to highlight employees' value to the organization, and (e) hotel leaders should incorporate employee training and development facilities to allow for enhanced skill levels, promotions, and succession planning within the organization.

Initially, the findings from this study will be distributed through the ProQuest/UMI dissertation database used by scholars, which may benefit current and future researchers. Additionally, I will share a 2- to 3-page summary of my findings with the participants of this study. I will seek chances to disseminate this study's findings through distributing articles in scholarly journals and other business-related publications. Other suggested means to disseminate these successful employee engagement strategies would be through literature, seminars, trainings, conferences, and other professional development opportunities. The importance of applying miscellaneous communication channels to broadcast the outcomes is to facilitate organizational leaders in comprehending the positive and significant impact of employee engagement on organizational productivity and profitability.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies leaders in the hotel industry used to improve employee engagement in Jamaica. The study's targeted population consisted of five hotel leaders in Jamaica who had successfully implemented strategies to improve employee engagement. A limitation of this research was the findings may only apply to the country of Jamaica. I recommend for future research to address the geographic limitation and sample size of this study. Efforts should focus on including a larger population sample comprising of participants from other geographic locations in the Caribbean who have also implemented successful strategies to improve employee engagement.

Another limitation was the legitimacy of my research depended on the honest and accurate responses of my participants and supporting data used to identify hotel leaders who successfully applied leadership strategies to improve employee engagement. Future researchers may study the provision of supporting documents from the files or data sources to verify the interview data. Another limitation of the study was the lack of previous research on employee engagement in Jamaica. I would recommend future studies on employee engagement in Jamaica. Future research can provide useful information to organizational leaders to enhance employee engagement in a competitive industry which may result in increased efficiency, increase productivity, and increased profitability. Jena et al. (2018) asserted that the extension of research to a more extensive scope of organizations can assist with summing up the outcome findings.

Reflections

Albert Einstein said, “An investment in knowledge pays the best interest. The measure of intelligence is the ability to change.” My experience as a Walden University doctoral student was a gift and a curse. My academic writing and research skills have been enhanced exponentially but my financial resources were depleted severely. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic was a grave setback during my doctoral journey which is not for the faint of heart. I thought finding qualified participants would be a simple procedure, but the process was challenging similarly in setting up the interviews. I also watched several YouTube videos to learn how to use the NVivo software properly to analyze my data. My experiences in managing family and work life, in conjunction with working on my doctoral degree have been life changing. The experience, knowledge, wisdom, and friendships I have created are inestimable.

In conducting this research, I was able to explore successful employee engagement strategies that organizational leaders employed in the hotel industry when I conducted five interviews with hotel leaders and reviewed organizational documents shared by the participants during the interviews. I did not have any personal relationships with the hotel leaders which mitigated personal biases. I am grateful I learned to think like a doctoral scholar and to write in a manner that reflected the scholarly process. I found employee engagement to be a significant interest of study as I understood more clearly the value successful employee engagement strategies can provide when properly employed and the resulting impact for positive social change.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies hotel leaders use to improve employee engagement. Semistructured interviews executed via Zoom, organizational supportive documents, and member checking were employed to facilitate data collection and ensure accurate data interpretation. Data were collected from five hotel leaders in the hospitality industry who used successful strategies to improve employee engagement. The five emergent themes derived from data analysis were staff engagement, continuous improvements of staff work environment, employee communication, rewards and recognition, and employee training and development, contributed to understanding key strategies to improve employee engagement for increased organizational productivity and efficiency. Mulievi and Tsuma (2021) indicated that employee engagement promotes employees’ positive work behaviors, which in turn produces higher organizational effectiveness and productivity.

The findings of this study were consistent with existing literature regarding strategies to increase employee engagement and supported the motivation-hygiene theory of motivation, commonly referred to as Herzberg’s two-factor theory, originated by Herzberg et al. (1959). The hotel leaders, my participants, successfully employed the identified themes to improve employee engagement in their respective organizations and realized the benefits of increased productivity, increased profits, and reduced attrition. The proposed strategies indicated in this research may provide organizational leaders with tools for creating and implementing effective systems, policies, and procedures to increase employee engagement within the workplace. Employee engagement is a significant management initiative that should be employed in organizations worldwide to increase organizational productivity and efficiency, resulting in enhanced organizational performance.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

A) Before the interview, I will:

- Contact potential participants with an invitation to participate in the study
- Provide a consent form and the list of interview questions if interested in participating
- Obtain the signed consent form prior to start of the interview.
- Schedule the date, time, and place/medium for the interview

B) During the interview, I will:

- Confirm participant’s agreement for the interview to be audio recorded
- Confirm participant’s understanding of the right to withdraw voluntarily from the interview and study at any time, for any reason
- Address any questions or concerns
- Ask the interview questions accordingly

C) After the interview, I will:

- Thank the participant for their contribution to the study
- Transcribe the interview
- Conduct analysis
- Confirm the accuracy of my interpretation with each participant through member checking. During member checking, I will ask the participants about adding any further information to help with clarity, accuracy, and relevance to the analysis of the interview responses. The questions I will ask include:

1. Based on the interpretation from the analysis, do you see any errors or misinterpretations?
2. What additional information might add further clarity to the interpretations from the analysis?

Appendix B: Email Invitation

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is O’neil O. Dacres and I am a doctoral student at Walden University’s Doctorate of Business Administration Program. I am kindly requesting your participation in a doctoral research study that I am conducting entitled: Strategies Hotel Leaders Use to Improve Employee Engagement. This study is to explore strategies hotel leaders use to improve employee engagement in Jamaica.

Please read the attached consent form for details of participation. If you would like to participate in the study, please read the form and return this email with the words, “I consent” which will provide written confirmation of your acknowledgement of your understanding you are providing your informed consent to participate in this study.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. O’neil O. Dacres.

Doctoral Candidate, Walden University, MBA, BBA (hons).

[redacted]