

1-31-2024

# Effective Management Strategies to Increase Employee Engagement

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# Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Lasherdo M. Harris

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

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Walden University  
2024

Abstract

Effective Management Strategies to Increase Employee Engagement

by

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MBA, University of the Southwest, New Mexico, 2015

MA, Webster University, 2013

BA, Baylor University, 2003

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

March 2024

## Abstract

Some midlevel managers lack strategies to increase employee engagement. Disengaged employees contribute to an underproductive, underutilized, and non-competitive workforce. Grounded in the integrated conceptual framework of Clayton Alderfer's existence, relatedness, and growth theory and William Kahn's engagement theory, the purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore strategies that midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement. The participants were eight midlevel managers in the public service industry with 10 years of supervisor experience who improved employee engagement. Data were collected using semistructured video interviews and field notes. Through thematic analysis, three themes emerged: a) understanding workforce insights, b) fostering employee communication and feedback, and c) providing employee recognition. The key recommendations are for midlevel managers to empower employees and advocate for employee feedback. The implications for positive social change include the potential for midlevel managers to increase employee engagement, influence employee self-worth and employee development, and contribute to social responsibility.

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## Dedication

I give honor to God for his grace and for granting me courage and mental agility. Second, I dedicate this study to my extended family circle (Harris, Buford, Dock, Edmonds, Moore, Tention, and Sanford) throughout Texas, Louisiana, and Georgia as we strengthen legacies and break false ceilings. Lastly, it is with a gracious heart that I make a special and posthumous dedication to my high school teacher, Mrs. Ann Shrewsbury who was in my life from the sixth-grade until the day she passed in March 2023. Mrs. Shrewsbury believed in me, encouraging me to surpass generational curses and fear. I strive to provide a margin of inspiration and impact on the youth while also being an excellent example of a servant leader in the United States Army, business environment, and within the greater community.

## Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge and thank my family. They have been the driving force and motivation throughout my doctoral journey. I hope to inspire those I love to pursue their goals with passion and determination. I want to acknowledge my chair and members, Dr. Tim Truitt and Dr. Deborah Nattress for their candid feedback, timeliness, and coaching during my doctoral journey. I want to thank my current and past leaders, peers and subordinates within the United States Army for their support and encouragement throughout my doctoral journey and self-development. Lastly, I acknowledge my closest friends who supported my goals at the expense of quality time over 24 months. There was never a doubt that I would finish but having a supportive circle increased my motivation and enjoyment throughout the journey. Thank you.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

A disengaged workforce impedes organizational change, reduces productivity, and could contribute to high stress, reducing organizational performance. For business management teams to minimize these occurrences within their workforce, leaders, particularly first-line leaders such as midlevel managers, should find ways to increase efficiency and organizational success. One way they can do that is by understanding the importance of keeping their employees engaged, directly impacting the organization's performance. This qualitative pragmatic inquiry, interpretive descriptive study, is designed to identify and explore effective strategies that midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement. I will begin this section of the paper with the background of the problem, followed by the problem statement and purpose. Then, I will discuss the nature of the study, research, interview questions, and theoretical framework. Lastly, I will discuss operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and the significance of the study. The section will end with a literature review and summary.

### **Background of the Problem**

Employee engagement has been a prevalent business problem for over 20 years. Govender and Bussin (2020) asserted that engaged employees are 20% more productive than their counterparts, contribute to an elevated level of efficiency and sustainability, become advocates for their organizations, and enrich the team because they effectively and willingly advocate on behalf of the organization. Since the early 1990s, researchers and executive managers have emphasized exploring and identifying strategies to improve employee engagement to benefit organizational performance and strategic relevancy

(Kahn, 1990; Nu Ngoc Ton et al., 2021). In today's ever-changing and increasingly competitive business environment, business leaders might face challenges leveraging their employees' skill sets and goals to drive the organization's success (Govender & Bussin, 2020). Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, improving employee engagement is vital for business leaders to understand new research that provides midlevel managers with alternative strategies to increase employee engagement.

Employees will bring their skills to the organization, but it is up to the leaders at all levels and change agents to empower and engage them. Chanana and Sangeeta (2021) studied how management teams examined employee engagement practices during the COVID-19 pandemic to increase employee morale and engagement. Chanana and Sangeeta found that if organizational leaders invested in their employees and their human resource management systems, they could foster a more engaged workforce, improving the performance of their organizations and decreasing high-stress work and home environments. Chen et al. (2019) indicated that a lack of supervisor trust within an organization could reduce employee engagement and confidence, further reducing productivity and performance. Moreover, Song et al. (2021) implied that different leadership styles and theories support the claim that employees construct their self-worth based on their perceptions of how others treat them and view work engagement as a source of motivation. Thus, new research could provide midlevel managers with successful alternative methods to increase employee engagement that promote corporate change, encourage employee engagement, and achieve organizational goals.

### **Problem and Purpose**

Business profitability and productivity are three times higher in organizations with engaged employees (Chanana and Sangeeta, 2021). According to Gallup's State of the global workplace 2022 report, disengaged employees contributed 11% to global gross domestic product in lost productivity, amounting to \$7.8 trillion worldwide (Gallup, 2022). Leaders with disengaged employees are susceptible to resistance to organizational change, decreased productivity, and increased organizational stress (Gabriel & Aguinis, 2022). The general business problem that prompted me to search the literature is that a lack of employee engagement affects organizational productivity and revenue. The specific business problem is that some midlevel managers lack effective strategies to increase employee engagement.

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry, interpretive descriptive study, was to identify and explore effective strategies that midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement. The targeted audience was midlevel managers in the public service industries. This population was appropriate for this study because managers must understand the value of keeping an engaged and competent public service workforce for agencies to fulfill their mission to the taxpayers (McCarthy et al., 2020). Among the implications for positive social change is the potential for managers to understand the significance of employee engagement to foster trust and achieve the organization's mission. Gradinaru et al. (2020) stated that engaged workers remain productive and committed to the organization's goals, thus positively contributing to society.

### **Population and Sampling**

I collected data from eight midlevel managers in public service industries in the United States with a minimum of 10 years of supervisory experience. I interviewed the participants using a semistructured interview process to elicit their lived experience of successfully using employee engagement strategies to increase productivity and organizational success. I also collected data by reviewing my notes derived from the interviews.

### **Nature of the Study**

Researchers use one of the three research methods – quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods to conduct their study (Scalcău, 2021). To address the research questions in this study, the research method was a qualitative study to identify and explore effective strategies that midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement. Researchers using qualitative methods ask open-ended questions to discover what is happening and to identify and explore effective perspectives (Morawska, 2018). In contrast, Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) stated that quantitative researchers evaluate hypotheses using closed-ended questions and systematically analyze the relevant research literature to determine the most crucial factors. Furthermore, researchers might conduct mixed methodologies to incorporate qualitative and quantitative elements to convert the data and make predictions based on the results (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). Qualitative was the most appropriate method because this study did not include testing hypotheses that was part of a quantitative study or the quantitative portion of a mixed methods study to identify and explore effective employee engagement strategies.

Researchers could consider three research designs that they could use for a qualitative study on employee engagement strategies: (a) miniethnography, (b) case study, or (c) pragmatic inquiry. Miniethnography involves researchers understanding a community's cultural norms, values, and context over time (Dobbins et al., 2021). Miniethnography was not the most appropriate option for this study because the purpose of this study was not to collect data on cultures through direct observation. Business researchers use case studies to analyze individuals, groups, or events from a particular organization or set of organizations (Atmowardoyo, 2018). Case studies were not the most appropriate option because this study is not designed to gather information from a particular organization or set of organizations to inform the industry. To address the research questions in this qualitative study, the specific research design was a pragmatic inquiry to identify and explore effective strategies that midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement. Ramanadhan et al. (2021) asserted that a pragmatic inquiry, interpretive description, involves researchers combining analytic strategies and methods to meet the needs of a given phenomenon and research purpose.

### **Research Question**

The central question for this research study was as follows: What effective strategies do midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement?

### **Interview Questions**

1. How do you define employee engagement?
2. What strategies do you use to increase employee engagement?



3. What specific engagement strategies produce the best results for your organization?
4. How do you communicate engagement strategies throughout the organization?
5. What challenges did you face when implementing engagement strategies?
6. What additional information concerning effective employee engagement strategies could you share that you have not already addressed?
7. What recommendations could you share with managers who do not have an employee engagement strategy?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The composite conceptual framework was the integration of Clayton Alderfer's (1969) existence, relatedness, and growth (ERG) theory and William Kahn's (1990) engagement theory. Alderfer revised Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs (MHON) to three needs that individuals might display in the workplace – existence, relatedness, and growth. According to Alderfer, existence is in the form of physiological desires like food or material such as pay benefits that correspond to safety needs, relatedness is the need for social acceptance and fulfillment, and growth is the need to fulfill personal desires. Building on individual needs in the workplace, Kahn introduced the concept of employee engagement defined as the psychological presence, attention, connection, integration, and focus employees exhibit in their organization. For individuals to become fully engaged in the workplace, Kahn suggested that three psychological conditions must be present: safety, meaningfulness, and availability.

The logical connections between the frameworks and the nature of my study include integrating tenets from these two theories for managers to consider integrating organizational practices to enrich employee engagement. Managers might expect engaged employees at the workplace without considering that the employees' expectations might vary over time and that they have different definitions of satisfaction. For instance, Cheung et al. (2021) used the ERG theory to identify and explore how management teams addressed psychological depletions, such as well-being, throughout three phases of the COVID-19 pandemic – before, during, and aftermath. Cheung et al. implied that if managers invested time in understanding employees' needs in different situations and cultures, they could enrich an organization where employees trust their leaders because they know their leaders care about their personal needs and achieve organizational success. Moreover, Panda et al. (2021) indicated that when employees find their jobs meaningful, they might develop positive feelings regarding their self-efficacy, resulting in increased physical and mental engagement. Panda et al. agreed with Kahn's (1990) theory that employees might be engaged if they find their jobs meaningful. Organizational leaders could use Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory and Kahn's theory of engagement to develop and implement strategies to increase employee engagement.

### **Operational Definitions**

Listed below are the terms used in this project and their definitions:

*Disengaged employees*: Disengaged employees withdraw their cognitive, physical, and emotional attention from their work roles as a form of self-preservation (Kahn, 1990).

*Employee engagement:* Employee engagement is when employees are committed to providing quality work performance, are cognitively attentive, have direct energy toward their work, are emotionally invested, and are physically active (Kahn, 1990; Mohanty & Purushothaman, 2020).

*Employee levers:* Employee levers are engagement behaviors and actions that employees demonstrate, such as engaged employee voice (feedback), a growth mindset to those around them, and achieving harmony between organizational and personal goal alignment (Jiatong et al., 2022; Lyons & Bandura, 2023; Shin et al., 2022).

*Job meaningfulness:* Job meaningfulness is when employees feel intrinsically connected to their job or position in the organization, exhibit positive work behavior, and achieve their potential (Panda et al., 2021).

*Leadership levers:* Leadership levers refer to transformational, empowering, and proactive actions that leaders implement to support organizational goals and objectives (Gullekson et al., 2021; Kwon & Kim, 2020).

*Midlevel managers:* Midlevel managers work for large-scale organizations and are hierarchically below top strategic managers and above first-level supervision (Pham et al., 2019).

*Organizational levers:* Organizational levers are strategic policies and practices that leaders can use to influence organizational conditions that drive change, enhance efficiency, foster innovation, gather feedback, and achieve the organization's goals and objectives (Budriene & Diskiene, 2020).

*O.L.E.*: Acronym used in this study to mean organizational, leadership and employee.

*Work engagement*: Constructive and satisfying employee state of mind related to work, marked by liveliness, commitment, and immersion is known as work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are beliefs or conditions the researcher believes to be accurate but not verifiable (Roberts & Hyatt, 2018). Identifying all assumptions associated with the study is essential because they can be considered the foundation of the study. The first assumption in this study was that my interview protocol and questions were well-developed and appropriate to meet the study's objectives. The second assumption was that my chosen study participants, midlevel managers, would respond to the interview questions fairly, honestly, and truthfully.

#### **Limitations**

Limitations restrict or hinder data collection and demonstrate inherent weaknesses of the selected methodology (Roberts & Hyatt, 2018). Potential limitations to conducting this study included limited access to in-person interviews because of the post-pandemic impacts, participants' availability because of the level of responsibility, and restrictions on accessing organization documents. Participants' bias could also limit qualitative research credibility, reliability, and objectivity. Moreover, participants might have

presented biased views instead of their valid perspectives, affecting the truthfulness of their responses.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations refer to the study's bounds or scope related to the researchers' decisions to include or exclude elements in the research design, impacting the external validity or generalizability of the results (Tahat, 2021). The first delimitation of this study was that I interviewed only eight midlevel managers with lived experiences of successfully using employee engagement strategies to increase productivity. The second delimitation was selecting one industry, which was the public service industry. The third delimitation was that I used LinkedIn and word of mouth to search for participants within the public service industry, not based on organization. The results of the study may not apply to all sectors and organizations.

### **Significance of the Study**

Corporate sustainable development strategies focus on increasing productivity and organizational success. Gradinaru et al. (2020) stated that when management teams value and understand employee engagement, they can enable social change and create an environment where employees are productive and committed to their company's goals.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

This study is significant because the findings and conclusions could provide managers with valuable insights into increasing employee engagement. Hultman (2020) suggested that engaged employees contribute to a 21% increase in profitability and productivity; therefore, my envisioned study's findings could help managers better

understand alternative strategies, processes, and methods for increasing employee engagement within their mission. For instance, Yadav et al. (2022) implied that alternative human resources management (HRM) approaches, such as work-life balance policies, enrich employee engagement, performance, and organizational productivity, which could be a key goal of corporations' sustainable development strategy. Furthermore, Nam and Hwang (2018) indicated that when managers take the time to understand alternative employee engagement strategies in competitive environments, they might discover how to meet the organization's strategic objectives and prepare employees for rapid transformations in a competitive environment.

### **Implications for Social Change**

This study might be of value to midlevel managers who want to understand how to identify and explore effective employee engagement strategies in public service industries toward increased economies of scale and productivity within their enterprises. According to Song et al. (2021), employees might view their self-worth primarily by how others treat them and consider work engagement a motivational factor. The study's results could contribute to positive social change by influencing employee self-worth, employee development, and managers' willingness to identify strategies to increase employee engagement. Gradinaru et al. (2020) suggested that engaged employees are more productive, self-motivated, and dedicated to the organization's goals, which can lead to employees contributing to society as community leaders.

## **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry, interpretive descriptive study, was to identify and explore effective strategies that midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement. This study was grounded in the integrated conceptual framework of Clayton Alderfer's (1969) ERG motivational theory and William Kahn's (1990) engagement theory. The targeted audience was midlevel public service managers in public service industries. Public service managers should understand the value of keeping an engaged and competent public service employee for agencies to fulfill their mission to taxpayers (McCarthy et al., 2020). To gain knowledge about improving engagement, researchers and leaders should understand that there are no one-size-fits-all management strategies to increase employee engagement and organizational efficiency. I organized this literature review using five focus areas, including a discussion of the conceptual frameworks, alternative theories to employee engagement, relevancy of employee engagement, and three levers to drive employee engagement: a) organizational, b) leadership, and c) the employee.

Subtopics include the development, implementation, and execution of business strategies, managerial implications, human resource management initiatives, innovation practices, transformational leadership, mindfulness techniques, proactive behavior, employee voice, growth mindset, and employee fulfillment. I selected multiple sources and conducted much of my research utilizing the Walden University library and Google Scholar. I conducted a comprehensive review of employee engagement literature, which included peer-reviewed articles, journals, books, and websites. I used ProQuest, Google

Scholar, Science Direct, Sage Journals, APA PsycINFO, EBSCO Primary, Emerald Management Academic Search, Business Source Complete, and Walden University Library Sources searches. The keywords and databases searched included *employee engagement, midlevel manager, middle management, leadership, transformational leadership, productivity, employee voice, buy-in, human resources, innovation, change management, satisfaction, employee fulfillment*, and combinations of these terms. This literature review contains 75 references, six references published before 2019 and 69 references published between 2019 and 2023, representing 87.5%; 71 were peer-reviewed sources, and 94% were within the last 3 to 5 years and peer-reviewed. The complete study contains 139 sources, of which 130 (94%) articles published between 2019 and 2023 in peer-reviewed journals.

The integration of Clayton Alderfer's ERG theory and William Kahn's engagement theory was the composite conceptual framework for this study (Alderfer, 1969; Kahn, 1990). The logical understanding of the connections between frameworks includes integrating aspects, such as meaningfulness, existence, relatedness, and growth, that managers could consider increasing employee engagement. Cheung et al. (2021) asserted that managers could boost their organization's success by learning about their employees' needs in diverse cultural and situational settings. Thus, when managers grasp the needs of their employees in various contexts, they can foster a work environment where employees feel appreciated by their leaders. In turn, managers could lead to increased commitment and accomplishments for the organization. Moreover, Kumar (2019) indicated that researchers should apply rigor in studying the different antecedents



of employee engagement by exploring different frameworks and drivers that impact the organizational environment. Midlevel managers are the center of gravity for organizational strategies and should remain agile to foster effective management strategies.

### **Kahn's Engagement Theory**

In 1990, Kahn introduced employee engagement as the psychological state where employees show presence, attention, connection, integration, and focus on their organization (Kahn, 1990). Disengaged employees withdraw their cognitive, physical, and emotional attention from their work roles to self-preserve (Kahn, 1990). To foster engagement, managers should consider employees' needs, goals, and desires because an employee's desires, combined with internal and external organizational factors, could influence the employee's level of engagement and disengagement. Kahn implied that three psychological conditions must be present for engagement: a) safety, b) meaningfulness, and c) availability to achieve fully engaged employees in the workplace. Psychological safety means expressing oneself without fear of facing negative consequences that may harm one's self-image, social status, or career prospects (Kahn, 1990). For example, Kahn and Oeij et al. (2022) asserted that when a leader demonstrates a supportive, approachable, and active communication style, they can positively affect an employee's psychological safety, creating an environment of trust to reinforce engagement.

Kahn defined meaningfulness as a juncture when employees feel that their efforts and interactions with their work tasks and roles produce valuable results, and they feel

helpful while experiencing a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Panda et al. (2021) supported Kahn's theory, which suggests that employees with a clear sense of purpose tend to experience positive emotions and higher levels of physical and mental engagement. Panda et al. found that employees are more likely to be engaged when they view their jobs as meaningful. Kahn defined psychological availability as a juncture where the employees have the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary to invest in their role performances. Kahn further indicated that managers should understand that different distractions can impede psychological availability, such as diminishing emotional energy, and external factors, such as home life.

Park et al. (2021) and Yadav et al. (2022) also supported Kahn's (1990) vision that managers should consider the employee's work and home stimuli to enrich work-life balance priorities and enhance employee engagement, productivity, and commitment. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, Park et al. contended that managers could balance work and home stimuli to enhance employee engagement and improve productivity, revealing that there are alternate methods for midlevel managers to enhance employee life satisfaction and fulfillment. Moreover, Yadav et al.'s findings revealed that managers should consider the employee's psychological state to encourage employees to be more engaged, increasing their feeling that the manager cares about their personal and professional well-being. The evolution of Kahn's engagement theory is essential for employee engagement because when managers understand employees' psychological states, they can cultivate an environment where employees can express their true selves, enhancing role performance (Kahn, 1990).

## **Existence, Relatedness, and Growth (ERG) Theory**

Clayton Alderfer's (1969) ERG motivational theory, known as the ERG theory, indicated that there are three needs that individuals might display in the workplace: a) existence, b) relatedness, and c) growth to feel engaged and can coexist and influence each other. Emanating from Maslow's (1943) five hierarchy of needs, Alderfer labeled physiological desires as food and safety needs, material benefits as existence needs, and social acceptance and fulfillment as relatedness needs. Personal desires that fuel growth are critical, but all needs can intermix and depend on the individual at different time horizons and satisfaction levels (Alderfer, 1969). Midlevel managers could use the ERG theory as a framework to understand how to identify and explore effective strategies to increase employee engagement. Managers can foster an engaged workforce when they recognize that employees have different needs at different times for different reasons. For example, by extending the ERG theory, Haumer et al. (2021), Kubiak (2022), and Newman et al. (2020) claimed that managers should learn how to identify areas where they can promote positive relationships to address growth needs, such as tailored communication, rewards, and recognition programs, and involving employees in decision-making processes.

### ***Existence***

Alderfer (1969) described existence as the material, physiological, and safety needs individuals must meet to function effectively and feel a sense of well-being. Leaders and managers can create a foundation that enables employees to thrive, engage, and focus on goals aligning with the organization's goals when they try to understand

how physiological needs such as pay, benefits, and working conditions affect employee motivation. For instance, Upathissa (2022) found that motivation factors such as challenging work, recognition, and opportunities positively affect employee performance. Midlevel managers should comprehend how employee motivation and organizational productivity are interconnected to create a work atmosphere that encourages employee engagement. Alderfer's ERG theory also includes two additional types of needs: relatedness and growth.

### ***Relatedness***

Alderfer (1969) defined relatedness as a mutual connection and interaction between individuals through family ties, professional relationships, friendships, or opposition. Hansen et al. (2022) affirmed that relatedness pertains to the individuals feeling connected to the people around them, determining if their interactions are safe or threatening. Thus, business leaders and managers can enhance relatedness by building a working environment where employees are willing to share their feedback and ideas without feeling their leaders disregarding their input. Underpinned by Kahn's (1990) definition of employees' need for psychological safety, managers could also leverage Hansen's findings to drive employee motivation and empowerment, providing a safe, free-expression environment and an enriching job environment. Moreover, Cheung et al. (2021) indicated that when people fulfill their need for connection and belonging, they might also become more motivated to pursue personal growth and development. Alderfer (1969) asserted that growth is what employees seek to feel satisfied, engaged, and motivated to pursue personal development and reach their full potential.

### ***Growth***

Alderfer (1969) and Cheung et al. (2021) conveyed growth as the need for individuals to improve themselves through creative and engaging endeavors that enhance their development and leave them feeling fulfilled. Referring to the previous definition of meaningfulness from Kahn (1990) and findings from Panda et al. (2021), business leaders can foster growth needs when they empower a juncture when employees feel that their efforts are meaningful to yield valuable results and experience a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Midlevel managers should have effective strategies to identify and increase employee engagement to help their employees develop their skills and pursue their career aspirations. Integrating with Alderfer's need for growth and Kahn's vision of meaningfulness, when employees have a sense of competence, they become familiar and skilled with the routine aspects while also stimulating growth and learning.

### **Alternate Theories and Models of Employee Engagement**

Organizational leaders could integrate tenets from Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory and Kahn's (1990) theory of engagement to identify and explore strategies to increase employee engagement. They could foster employees' physiological and workplace needs linked to interpersonal relationships, recognition, growth opportunities, and individual fulfillment. Supporting theories and models such as MHON, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and Job Demand Resources (JD-R) Model also provide some logical connections to the field of employee engagement to help midlevel managers identify and explore strategies to increase employee engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001; Herzberg et al., 1959; Maslow, 1943). Organizational leaders could find alternative strategies that fosters

the demand of their workforce and meet the organization's intent and mission. Pagan (2019) asserted that qualitative researchers strive to contribute positively through their studies by offering diverse perspectives to business managers and fellow researchers.

### *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*

Abraham MHON provides a framework for researchers to understand human motivation and five factors: a) physiological needs, b) safety, c) social, d) self-esteem, and e) growth needs or self-actualization that contributes to personal fulfillment and well-being (Maslow, 1943). Although Maslow acclaimed that individual needs might vary from a set routine, MHON theory indicates that individuals fulfill their needs in a specific order, with each level requiring satisfaction before moving on to the next level.

Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory recognizes the existence of a hierarchy of needs but counters the idea that individual needs should occur in a particular sequence. According to Gao (2023) and Alderfer, when employees' higher-level go unmet, individuals might shift their attention to lower-level needs or vice versa. For instance, if employees lose their jobs, their motivation might switch from emotional and social requirements to physical necessities due to a lack of financial means (Gao, 2023). Mohanty and Purushothaman (2020) asserted that employees might have varied motives for having a job. Still, one of the primary incentives is to secure a livelihood by completing specific tasks in return for a specified monetary compensation (Gao, 2023). Managers should make getting to know their employees a routine so they can understand the employees' motivational drivers at a given stage in life. Gao indicated that managers could reference MHON to increase employee productivity and engagement, but its impact varies among

employees based on the employee's needs at that time. For example, as employees progress to a senior managerial role, their needs typically fall between Maslow's fourth and fifth levels, self-esteem and self-actualization. This idea will render Maslow's theory ineffective in meeting the organizational requirements because managers might have to apply different techniques to keep employees engaged, such as requiring the need for relatedness to family and belongingness, which is Alderfer's second level (Acquah et al., 2021; Alderfer, 1969; Gao, 2023; Hansen et al., 2022). Therefore, the ERG theory was appropriate for this study because it can provide midlevel managers with more flexibility across a range of needs, increasing their ability to accommodate individual experiences and fluctuations in employee motivation to increase employee engagement.

### **Herzberg Two-Factor Theory**

Herzberg et al. (1959) two-factor theory of motivation indicated that two sets of motivating factors – job satisfaction and dissatisfaction influence employee engagement underpinned by two distinct sets of factors – motivators, such as recognition and personal growth, and hygiene factors, such as relationships and working conditions. Herzberg et al. (1959) and Acquah et al. (2021) affirmed that heightening hygiene factors can prevent dissatisfaction while encouraging motivators can contribute to job satisfaction.

Furthermore, because Acquah et al. and Herzberg et al. implied that the opposite of satisfaction is no satisfaction instead of dissatisfaction, it is possible that an employee can be motivated and not satisfied. For example, if employees perceive their work conditions as unsatisfactory, their level of engagement might be low or not exist despite a manager's attempts to recognize their performance. Aligned with Alderfer's (1969) definition of

existence needs, managers could take the initiative to understand how physiological needs like working conditions impact employee motivation to establish a solid groundwork that facilitates employee thriving, engagement, and alignment with organizational goals.

Koziol and Koziol (2020) expanded upon Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory to explore the notion of employee motivation. Koziol and Koziol implied that managers could enhance employee engagement, satisfaction, and productivity in the workplace if they recognize individual motivation factors, such as motivators, hygiene factors, and demotivators. For instance, Lee and Ham (2021) examined job satisfaction among public (government) employees using Herzberg et al.'s two-factor model. Lee and Ham found that interpersonal factors such as recognition affect job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, contrary to Herzberg et al.'s theory, which implied that recognition is a motivator, thereby solely increasing employee satisfaction. Managers should recognize and react to their employees' ever-changing and diverse needs to foster a truly engaged workforce. They should also acknowledge that their employees' needs will inevitably shift over time and for several reasons.

Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory is interrelated with Alderfer's (1969) relatedness need and Kahn's (1990) notion that an employee's internal desires influence the employee's level of engagement and disengagement. However, managers should identify areas where they can promote positive relationships to address growth needs and tailor communication, rewards, and recognition programs to understand and address employees' needs that promote engagement. The composite conceptual integration of



Kahn's engagement theory and Alderfer's ERG theory was appropriate for this study because they provide midlevel managers with a foundational understanding of engagement while allowing flexibility in employment based on individual experiences and fluctuations in employee motivation.

### ***Job Demand Resources (JD-R) Model***

Demerouti et al. (2001) designed the job demands-resources (JD-R) theory to explain the impact of employee and organizational traits on workplace results categorized into two components: a) job demands and b) resources. Demerouti defined job demands as physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspects that require sustained physical or psychological effort or skills, such as high work pressure and unfavorable work environment. Moreover, Demerouti asserted that job resources are the means managers provide to employees to achieve their goals, reduce burnout, and facilitate personal development. Thus, resources are crucial not only for managing job demands but also for enhancing employee engagement. With resources available, employees can concentrate on job resources even when job demands are present and maintain an elevated level of engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001; Kunte & Rungruang, 2019). Supported by Demerouti et al.'s insights, managers can reduce job demands and fair resources to alleviate burnout and increase employee engagement.

Memon et al. (2020) used the JD-R to describe employee engagement and investigate the connection between disengaged employees and burnout theory. Afrahi et al. (2022) and Turner (2020) noted that disengaged employees distance themselves from work because of increasing work demands, which supports Kahn's (1990) argument that

disengaged employees withdraw physical attention from their work roles as a way of self-preservation. For instance, if an individual feels overwhelmed and overworked, they might withdraw from an activity because they are tired and not necessarily dissatisfied with their task. After examining how organizations could combat employee burnout by creating healthier workplaces during crises and beyond, Gabriel and Aguinis (2022) implied that innovative job crafting, and employee decision-making could help business leaders reduce job burnout. Moreover, Kubiak (2022) implied that managers could employ performance management practices that enable employees to make decisions and offer opportunities for employee growth and development to bolster the employee's need for meaningfulness. Supported by other researchers, Panda et al. (2021) also uncovered that employees are more likely to be engaged when they view their jobs as meaningful.

Jiang and Shen (2020) and Rahmadani et al. (2020) have also extended the JD-R model to investigate how leadership styles, such as authentic, transformational, and servant leadership, might improve organizational transparency and communication, fostering employee engagement. More specifically, Jiang and Shen (2020) expanded on ERG theory along with previously noted researchers, Haumer et al. (2021), Kubiak (2022), and Newman et al. (2020) to indicate that managers should proactively identify opportunities to enhance positive relationships, meet growth requirements, and adapt communication strategies to meet the individual needs of their employees. However, while the JD-R model describes employee engagement, it does not consider additional variables such as personal differences, personal environment fit, recognition, and employee value proposition as potential moderators of employee engagement (Koroglu &

Ozmen, 2021). Therefore, the composite conceptual integration of Kahn's engagement theory and Alderfer's ERG theory was appropriate for this study because they provide midlevel managers with a foundational understanding of engagement while allowing flexibility in employment based on individual experiences and fluctuations in employee motivation.

### **Levers to Drive Employee Engagement**

As previously mentioned, Govender and Bussin (2020) stated that engaged employees are 20% more productive than their counterparts, contribute to an elevated level of efficiency, become advocates for their organizations, and enrich the team on behalf of the organization. Thus, business leaders could drive employee engagement by employing different methods that bridge organizational practices, leadership actions, and the individuals themselves. As stated earlier, Kahn (1990) defined employee engagement as the mental state where workers display presence, attention, connection, integration, and focus within their workplace. Expanding on Kahn's description of employee engagement, Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined work engagement as a constructive and satisfying employee state of mind related to work, marked by liveliness, commitment, and immersion.

Used interchangeably, this literature review mentioned employee engagement and work engagement when referring to employee engagement. Both terms referred to physical, cognitive, and emotional energies and manifest as employees devote their energies toward work to be effective (Kwon & Kim, 2020). In this section, I used a three-pronged approach to describe underpinning levers that midlevel managers and business

leaders could use to drive employee engagement: a) organizational, b) leadership, and employee (O.L.E). Effective employee engagement strategies are methods that top-level executives take the time to develop, midlevel managers and leaders take the time to implement, and employees are willing to follow (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2021; Knight et al., 2019; Kwon & Kim, 2020; Yanchus et al., 2020). Business leaders should understand that using diverse employee engagement techniques through different methods can promote inclusivity and enhance morale, teamwork, creativity, and overall productivity in the workplace.

### **Organizational Levers to Drive Employee Engagement**

In this literature review, I described organizational levers as strategic policies and practices that executive leaders can use to influence organizational conditions that drive change, enhance efficiency, foster innovation, and achieve the organization's goals and objectives (Budriene & Diskiene, 2020). Yanchus et al. (2020) asserted that executives should seek alternative employee engagement strategies that are reliable, effective, and tailored to the organization. To support their efforts, executives can develop a business strategy that accentuates the importance of employee engagement within the mission and vision statement to foster early buy-in and actions from all involved stakeholders.

According to Laser (2021), leaders could employ an organization's vision to promote employee engagement, trust, transparency, teamwork, and transformation, increasing the stakeholders' willingness to adopt new strategies supported by commitment. Moreover, Benzaghta et al. (2021), Hu (2023), and Islam et al. (2020) asserted that executive leaders could use a strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis as a tool to

develop a business strategy and to understand internal and external factors underpinned by holistic organizational influences, such as human resource management and innovation, that impact employee engagement.

### ***Human Resources Management Initiatives***

Azevedo et al. (2020), Hu (2023), and Shin et al. (2022) conducted a SWOT analysis to reveal that leaders could employ electronic human resource management (e-HRM) integration to embrace digital development and globalization post-COVID-19. According to Hu (2023), leaders who develop and implement e-HRM to enhance employee performance gain the trust and cooperation of their employees. Building on Alderfer's (1969) conceptual implications that growth is the need for individuals to improve themselves, Hu implied that if leaders integrate e-HRM into their strategy, employees might feel valued and appreciated when their leaders prioritize their growth and development using technology. Moreover, Shrivastava et al. (2022) asserted that E-HRM is a practical web-based HR approach for planning, executing, and utilizing data systems to support crucial human resource functions underpinned by innovation.

### ***Innovation Practices***

Shin et al. (2022) implied that leadership teams that combine management practices with innovation-oriented business strategies like research and development (R&D) and technological leadership are more likely to adopt employee voice practices (ideas and suggestions) than those without significant emphasis on innovation. Further, Azevedo et al. (2020) investigated two think-a-thons events to examine the connection between HRM strategy and actions while focusing on nurturing employee voice and

fostering innovation endeavors in employees' daily experiences. Azevedo et al. found that leaders who adopt a comprehensive and unified HRM strategy make a positive step toward fostering innovation in the workplace. A comprehensive and unified HRM strategy promotes a social environment that encourages innovative behaviors and empowers employees to speak up and share their opinions.

### ***Managerial Implications***

Executive, senior managers and leaders should take the time to develop a business strategy that integrates HR and innovative faucets that enrich employee engagement. When leaders take the time to develop a business strategy that integrates HR and innovative faucets, they could increase employees' relatedness because they feel their leaders are committed to fostering an engaged workforce through executive-driven mechanisms. For instance, Mani and Mishra (2020) found that perceived organizational support predicted employees' job and organizational engagement, so if management teams adopt incremental, agile, and iterative methods when developing strategies, they could enhance employee engagement, profitability, and competitiveness. If the top management teams prioritize the state of the organization as their primary concern, it could become easier for midlevel managers to pursue and replicate business strategies that support the organizational mission.

### **Leadership Levers to Drive Employee Engagement**

In this literature review, I described leadership levers as transformational, empowering, and proactive actions that midlevel managers implement to support organizational goals and objectives (Gullekson et al., 2021; Kwon & Kim, 2020).

Midlevel managers should translate the organizational vision and intent while considering the employees' perspective. According to Knight et al. (2019), interventions by middle managers boost work engagement by 70%, indicating that middle managers should understand their employees to gain a competitive edge. Managers can guide and direct employees toward organizational performance by translating top-level guidance and direction into actionable steps (Kwon & Kim, 2020). As mentioned, midlevel managers could use organizational-level SWOT analysis feedback to recognize the organizational gaps to align effectiveness against the business strategy and individual employee needs (Benzaghta et al., 2021; Hu, 2023; Islam et al., 2020). Although executives have the authority to implement significant changes, Davis (2022) asserted that midlevel managers could impact daily operations and cultivate a culture that prioritizes ongoing learning, innovation, and user-focused employee engagement strategies.

### ***Types of Leadership Levers***

A leader's approach to driving change in an organization can vary based on factors such as the size, type of the organization, the industry it operates in, and the specific mission. Business leaders could empower midlevel managers to take part in identifying and improving employee engagement because their proximity makes them often the bridge between top leadership and frontline employees (Davis, 2022). Managers could use Kahn's (1990) and Alderfer's (1969) foundational tenets to employ leadership levers to drive employee engagement. Kahn and Alderfer indicated that managers could increase engagement by enriching employee motivation, meaningfulness, and empowerment by providing a safe, free-expression environment that develops

employees' existence, relatedness, and growth needs. Thus, managers could enhance employee engagement in an ever-changing and competitive environment by leveraging transformational leadership, mindfulness techniques, and proactive actions (Gradinaru et al., 2020; Mubarak et al., 2021). Although execution might vary by individual, midlevel managers could foster leadership tenets to build trust, enable empowerment, and ignite employee performance, leading to higher employee engagement (Laser, 2021; Oeij et al., 2022).

### **Transformational Leadership.**

Canterino et al. (2022) examined the role of transformational leadership and human resources (HR) and found that leadership styles, specifically transformational leadership, enrich employee engagement, motivation, and awareness. Transformational leaders enhance strategy implementation outcomes and inspire and motivate all parties to achieve a shared vision and accomplish positive organizational changes (Doeleman et al., 2021). Transformational leaders are valuable in the public sector, where managers face unique challenges in driving change and delivering services to their customers (McCarthy et al., 2020). Gradinaru et al. (2020) implied that Jeffrey Preston Jorgensen (Jeff Bezos), Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Amazon, employed a transformational leadership style to challenge organizational norms by maximizing resources. Gradinaru et al. and Page and Schoder (2019) implied that transformational leaders elevate motivation to encourage innovation, trust, and transparency, fostering employee engagement and productivity. Moreover, transformational leaders can achieve organizational goals while mindful of employees' needs, maximizing leadership levers that drive organizational change.



**Mindfulness Techniques.**

As previously indicated, when a manager demonstrates a supportive and approachable leadership style and active communication practices, they can positively affect an employee's psychological safety (Oeij et al., 2022). Leaders could employ mindfulness techniques to foster engagement in brick-and-mortar and remote work environments. For instance, Pattnaik and Jena (2020) studied the relationship between mindfulness and employee morale in remote work environments after the COVID-19 pandemic. Pattnaik and Jena revealed that managers could employ mindfulness techniques to decrease anxiety levels and boost morale to improve employee work engagement and productivity. Underpinned by Kahn's (1990) insights, psychological safety includes an employee having a voice without fear of facing negative consequences that may harm one's self-image or career prospects. Mubarak et al. (2021) implied that managers should proactively show employee mindfulness and enhance innovative work to foster employee engagement.

**Proactive Actions.**

Midlevel managers should demonstrate proactive leadership because they function as a conduit between top management teams and employees. As previously implied, top management teams might create an employee engagement strategy. Still, it is incumbent on mid-level managers to execute the strategies and improve organizational performance, leading to increased employee engagement (Davis, 2022). For instance, Knight et al. (2019) asserted that midlevel managers have the potential to inspire enthusiastic employees to undertake challenging projects, leading to personal growth and

skill development. Proactive leaders yield localized impacts, focusing on individuals and specific work environments rather than having organization-wide effects. Moreover, a significant relationship exists between a proactive personality, innovative work behavior, transformational leadership, and work engagement. Mubarak et al. (2021) found that transformational leaders enhance proactive personalities among employees, thereby enticing work engagement and innovative behavior.

### ***Managerial Implications***

There is no one size fit approach to increasing employee engagement, so there is also not one type of leadership lever that midlevel managers should use to elevate engagement. Cheung et al. (2021) suggested that managers understand the needs of their employees in different contexts to ensure that they can lead a work environment that values employees while increasing engagement. Midlevel managers could find the best method or hybrid of the methods based on their organization and not on generic models. Employing tenets from human resource management and innovation strategies could be a way for managers to improve employee engagement. Still, they should explore their employees' needs to implement the most effective approach. For example, Cheung et al. revealed that when managers understand employees' needs, they can make them feel valued, leading to greater buy-in and organizational achievements. Lyons and Bandura (2022) and Shin et al. (2022) implied that business leaders could develop a business strategy that includes employee engagement and foster an organization that highlights transformational leadership practices. However, the outcomes will not significantly

impact if employees are unwilling to use their voices and do not embrace a growth mindset.

### **Employee Levers to Drive Employee Engagement**

In this literature review, I described employee levers as engagement behaviors and actions that employees demonstrate, such as engaged employee voice (feedback), a growth mindset to those around them, and achieving harmony between organizational and personal goal alignment (Jiatong et al., 2022; Lyons & Bandura, 2023; Shin et al., 2022). Hu (2023), Jiatong et al. (2022), Saks (2022), and Shin et al. (2022) indicated that employees might be willing to provide feedback, inspire others, and commit to the long-term organizational strategy when they feel that they have a voice, have a purpose and that their leaders care. Thus, business leaders should develop and implement engagement strategies that align with an overarching business strategy, driven by transformational leaders and followed by motivated and committed employees to achieve the most significant level of competitive advantage. Allal-Chérif et al. (2022) and Flinchbaugh et al. (2020) agreed that employee levers are significant because shared understanding between stakeholders aligns organizational and employee goals toward increased performance and engagement. Stakeholder understandings enable organizations to achieve sustainable organizational effectiveness in a rapidly evolving business environment.

### ***Employee Voice***

As already informed, managers could use SWOT analysis as the first tool to identify organizational gaps, while employee feedback could be the second tool to access

gaps and misalignments between the business strategy and the stakeholders' needs (Benzaghta et al., 2021; Petzold et al., 2019). According to Allahar (2019), Liao et al. (2020), and Weigt-Rohrbeck and Linneberg (2019), management teams should establish a safe environment that fosters open communication and encourages employees to express their thoughts to improve stakeholder feedback. Kahn's (1990) tenet of psychological safety, which entails the employee's need to express themselves without fear of facing negative consequences that may harm one's self-image, social status, or career prospects, underpins Allahar, Liao et al. and Weigt-Rohrbeck and Linneberg's insights. Thus, innovative approaches, such as employee-driven initiatives (EDI), described by Weigt-Rohrbeck and Linneberg, could help managers establish a conducive environment where all stakeholders can contribute ideas, enhancing market competitiveness, promoting technological capability, and improving organizational performance.

When there is shared understanding, it could be easier for business leaders to use foster employee engagement strategies to determine the best approach for their organization. Weigt-Rohrbeck and Linneberg (2019) further explored how employee-driven initiatives (EDI) contributed to eco-innovation efforts. Top and midlevel managers could foster employee levers to drive engagement by incorporating within the business strategy and then inspire buy-in from all stakeholders. Weigt-Rohrbeck and Linneberg revealed that if managers empower and encourage EDI, they can enable an organizational environment where employees can offer a broader range of ideas and perspectives, enriching innovation and buy-in through a bottom-up approach. Furthermore, Shin et al.

(2022), Laser (2021), Lyons and Bandura (2023) revealed that when leaders foster employee voice practices within their HRM strategy and vision, they can maximize engagement in corporate innovation and achieve a long-term mutual gain strategy to build employee buy-in, growth mindset, and fulfillment.

### ***Growth Mindset***

Human capital is an essential component of intellectual capital as it plays a pivotal role in facilitating the dissemination of knowledge between stakeholders (Fait et al., 2021; Kossyva et al., 2023). Organizational-level HRM practices can create a positive work environment, motivating employees to perform well and contributing to the success of those around them (Kossyva et al., 2023). Thus, having an employee with a growth mindset in a competitive business environment is essential because they foster adaptability, resilience, and continuous learning, enabling them to resolve challenges and seek opportunities for improvement. Chanana and Sangeeta (2021) and Kossyva et al. (2023) indicated that knowledge is a valuable resource that employees seek to acquire because it reveals their willingness to develop new skills and advance their careers while contributing to organizational success. Aligned with the fundamental principles of Alderfer's (1969) need for growth and Kahn's (1990) requirement for meaningfulness, business leaders should prioritize the development of their employees' competence in routine tasks while fostering growth and learning opportunities.

For example, Koch et al. (2019) explored the perceived benefits of corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities to increase employee engagement. Koch et al. and Gabriel and Aguinis (2022) implied that business leaders could leverage their HR

organizational strategy to encourage employees to participate in CSR activities that contribute to changed attitudes and behavior. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an essential aspect of a company's reputation, involving activities like corporate-sponsored volunteering and environmental protection (Gullekson et al., 2021). Moreover, Gullekson et al. (2021) and Nazir et al. (2021) agreed that when managers use CSR initiatives, they could improve organizational-level outcomes, such as financial performance and competitiveness, and individual-level outcomes, like employee engagement and job performance. Employees might feel empowered to participate because they understand how their actions enrich the long-term business strategy and their opportunity for growth.

### ***Employee Fulfillment***

Aligned with Kahn's (1990) foundational input, Kossyva et al. (2023) agreed that employee engagement and fulfillment is the emotional and cognitive investment of employees in their jobs which is crucial for motivating employees to work to their fullest potential and achieving favorable outcomes. An employee's desire for connection and a sense of belonging is instrumental in boosting the drive for self-improvement and development (Cheung et al., 2021). Chanana and Sangeeta (2021) indicated that corporate leaders and employees rely on each other to fulfill their goals and objectives. Thus, the success of an organization could relate to the level of input received from employees as they rely on the organization for resources and tools to develop and achieve their personal goals. Leveraging one of the leadership levers, Siangchokyoo et al. (2020) asserted that transformational leadership fosters intrinsic employee motivation, leading to increased dedication to the organization's goals.

For example, Jiatong et al. (2022) and Canterino et al. (2022) found that transformational leadership enhances job performance and organizational commitment because leaders focus on providing employees with job resource value, job autonomy, and management support, improving employee engagement. Moreover, Jha et al. (2019) stated that leaders prioritizing employee development and psychological well-being inspire employee engagement by motivating them to reach their full potential, contributing to the organization's success. Leaders who provide their employees with a clear understanding of their specific role in fulfilling their company's long-term vision enable them to feel connected to something larger than themselves, which enriches the alignment between their interests and that of the organization (Nazir et al., 2021). Thus, when all organizational stakeholders work together towards the same goals and objectives, it becomes easier to implement strategies that can provide a competitive advantage and enhance organizational capabilities. According to Chanana and Sangeeta (2021), organizational leaders should consider methods to fulfill employees' needs to boost the most significant impact on the employees' performance, which directly marks the organization's performance.

### ***Managerial Implications***

Top management teams develop strategies, midlevel managers implement strategies, and employees follow strategies. To achieve alignment across O.L.E levers, business leaders should understand the outcomes of each so they can select the best mix approach to improve employee engagement. Saks (2022) suggested that organizational leaders could foster a culture of care by developing human resource strategies that

prioritize employee feedback, development, and work-life balance, enriching engagement. To boost performance and engagement, leaders could utilize employee levers to enhance mutual understanding among stakeholders and align the organizational and employees' goals (Allal-Chérif et al., 2022; Flinchbaugh et al., 2020). Strategy without action does not have a significant impact. Thus, employees are vital in helping leadership teams invoke change and take progressive steps toward improving employee engagement.

Management teams could include employees in decision-making to help achieve sustainable paths to increased employee engagement. As previously mentioned, engaged employees are 20% more productive and enhance organizational efficiency and sustainability, becoming powerful advocates and adding value to the team (Govender & Bussin, 2020). For example, Gustomo et al. (2019) revealed that managers could use direct storytelling as an effective intervention technique to increase employee engagement because storytelling improves employee motivation, perception of the company, and willingness to express themselves. Moreover, Li et al. (2022) discovered that employee voice strategies positively affect work engagement and organization-based self-esteem, which is an employee's self-perceived value in an organization and could impact an employee's job performance. To empower this employee value, midlevel managers could serve as a bridge between the executive leadership team and the workforce, helping to ensure that all views are heard and valued.

Valuing employees' contributions can inspire colleagues and boost productivity. Jiang and Shen (2020) indicated that employees value and appreciate information



relevant to what they care about, so leaders should encourage them to participate in identifying, analyzing, and communicating information contributing to organizational success. Managers who function as coaching might enhance employee motivation, skill development, and engagement while simultaneously meeting strategic goals (Lyons & Bandura, 2020a, 2020b, 2022, 2023). For example, Lyons and Bandura (2023) revealed that if managers take the time to gain employee feedback in specific areas and acknowledge their progress, they can inspire them to adopt proactive behaviors that increase work engagement and reduce a fixed mindset. Manager feedback could also enhance employee work output, individual development, attitudes toward learning, engagement, and growth, contributing to employee fulfillment and organizational sustainability.

Post-COVID-19, it is even more important that business leaders develop and tailor strategies to improve employee engagement while considering individual fulfillment goals. While balancing stability and change, managers can increase their understanding of what it means to be agile, care for their team, modify roles and responsibilities, share knowledge, and build trust to transition from plan-driven methods to specific employee engagement strategies successfully (Lindskog & Netz, 2021). Managers who use tailored communication to collaborate with internal and external stakeholders can influence disruptive ideas and governance (Allal-Chérif et al., 2022; Haumer et al., 2021). This approach can lead to innovative ideas and better decision-making, resulting in lasting and inclusive change processes prioritizing all employees' needs and fostering higher engagement levels. Employee engagement is not a universal

approach. Thus, it is imperative for business leaders to proactively pursue, embrace, and tailor a blend of engagement strategies that incorporate organizational, leadership, and employee levers based on the requirements of their organization.

### **Transition**

Section 1 included the study's foundation, the background of the problem, the problem and purpose statement, population sampling, the nature of the study, the research question, interview questions, and the conceptual framework. I provided operational definitions of terms, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, contributions to business practices, and the social change implications. Moreover, I highlighted the qualitative implications of effective strategies midlevel managers could use to increase employee engagement. In the literature review, I included five focus areas, including a discussion of the conceptual frameworks, alternative theories to employee engagement, relevancy of employee engagement, and three levers to drive employee engagement – O.L.E. Subtopics included the development, implementation, and execution of business strategies, managerial implications, and the importance of human resource management initiatives, innovation practices, transformational leadership, mindfulness techniques, proactive behavior, employee voice, growth mindset, and employee fulfillment.

Section 2 includes the purpose statement, my role as the researcher, participants' eligibility, research method, research design, population, sampling, and ethical research. Section 2 will also include data collection instruments, data collection techniques, data organization techniques, data analysis, reliability and validity, and the transition and summary. In section 3, I reacquainted the purpose of the study and summarize the

presentation of the findings, application to professional practice, the implication for social change, recommendations for action and further research and reviews, conclusion, and appendices.

## Section 2: The Project

Section 2 comprises the purpose statement, role of the researcher, participants, research method, research design, justification of the population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instrument, data collection technique, data organization techniques, data analysis, reliability, validity, and transition and summary.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry, interpretive descriptive study, was to identify and explore effective strategies that midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement. The targeted audience was midlevel managers in the public service industries. This population was appropriate for this study because managers must understand the value of keeping an engaged and competent public service workforce for agencies to fulfill their mission to the taxpayers (McCarthy et al., 2020). Among the implications for positive social change is the potential for managers to understand the significance of employee engagement to foster trust and achieve the organization's mission. Gradinaru et al. (2020) stated that engaged workers remain productive and committed to the organization's goals, thus positively contributing to society.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role as a researcher in this qualitative research was to collect primary data through interviews and related organizational documentation and artifacts, gain knowledge, analyze the data, and provide the results of a particular topic or individual (Morawska, 2018). Yin (2018) asserted that researchers should strive to achieve reliability, reduce biases, and improve research transferability and reliability. Researchers

should remain vigilant during the interview process to identify reflexivity as it occurs, enriching the analysis of oneself and others. Philosophers study epistemology to understand facts and explanations (Thomas et al., 2019). Researchers should view interviews as a method for gathering data because they can use interviews to gain experience and understanding.

When analyzing data, researchers should read the collected data carefully to gain a deeper understanding of the information collected while bundling the data into codes to form primary categories (Campbell et al., 2021). Researchers should clearly understand holistic themes, conclusions, and study analysis, using triangulation to identify and interpret themes (Campbell et al., 2021). Furthermore, Sechelski and Onwuegbuzie (2019) stated that researchers might analyze a dataset from multiple perspectives using various qualitative data analysis techniques when familiar with different qualitative data analysis techniques. As a researcher, I was responsible for identifying a pool of interested participants relevant to my research. I selected participants interested in the study and with knowledge and experience related to increasing employee engagement. No business or influential relationship existed between me and the participants. Accordingly, I kept the research question in mind, limited perceived bias, and collected and maintained data ethically to ensure confidentiality and trustworthiness and adhere to the Belmont Report.

The Belmont Report is a foundational document that outlines ethical principles for researchers to respect humans and practice beneficence and justice (Pritchard, 2021). I adhered to the protocol for consistency and uniformity, helped participants understand their rights, and waited for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before collecting

data. The ethical role of researchers is to consider the population and its ethical considerations to protect the value of doctoral research. Satalkar and Shaw (2019) indicated that researchers should care about the integrity, confidentiality, and reputation of participants and communities when conducting their research to maintain the study's intent and value. Further, researchers could create an interview protocol (see Appendix A) before the interview to anticipate issues that may arise during the interview and improve its reliability (Yin, 2018). I adhered to the protocol to reduce bias and avoid providing biased viewpoints, analyses, or conclusions. De Villiers et al. (2021) asserted that it is essential that researchers consider that different factors could influence the epistemic value of an interview, including the interviewer's biases, the rapport, and the willingness of the interviewee to disclose information.

### **Participants**

Researchers should identify potential participants most accessible to them and provide them with the required information (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). I selected participants that aligned with my research question and whose support was feasible. Yin (2018) indicated that researchers should choose organizations they can gain access to and with whom they have established a rapport, contributing to successful data collection. If researchers do not establish trust with participants early in the research process, gaining their confidence may take longer before proceeding to the next stage. Participants' eligibility depended on their skills and knowledge of employee engagement strategies. I selected midlevel managers with at least 10 years of supervisory experience and who

have successfully used employee engagement strategies. Using LinkedIn, I searched for managers within the public service industry to locate participants.

My first step after approval of the IRB was to contact each midlevel manager to establish a connection between myself, the researcher, and the interview participants. I contacted them to introduce myself (see Appendix B), explained the purpose of the study, and inquired if they were willing to participate without controlling or influencing their decision. Upon receipt, I scheduled a follow-up email to gain consent and provide further information about the study. During the data collection process, I treated the participants with respect and dignity while informing the participation of the privacy code to enhance trust and transparency. Clark et al. (2018) indicated that when researchers establish a subject privacy code, they could provide an effective and responsible way to share data and facilitate the development of research that demonstrates the value of data sharing. In addition, I remained flexible and considerate of the participant's time. Tiersma et al. (2022) indicated that researchers might be able to schedule reminders using automated electronic means, such as text messages, phone calls, or personal reminders, to meet the participants' needs. I stayed open to alternative methods during the data collection process to maintain credibility and enhance the accuracy of my study's findings.

### **Research Method and Design**

To ensure a meaningful study and generate valuable findings, researchers must choose the most suitable method and design carefully. According to Yin (2018), selecting the appropriate method and design is vital for gaining quality research and findings. I used a qualitative research method and pragmatic inquiry design to explore effective

management strategies to enhance employee engagement. I will justify selecting a specific research method and design in this section.

### **Research Method**

Researchers use one of three research methods – quantitative, qualitative, and mixed – to conduct their study (Scalcău, 2021). I conducted qualitative research to explore effective strategies midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement. Using qualitative research methods, researchers can examine complex and intricate phenomena, such as social interactions and individual experiences, by conducting interviews, observations, and other forms of open-ended data collection (Bleiker et al., 2019; Nassaji, 2020). While quantitative researchers attain generalizability by employing standardized methods for data collection and analysis to ensure that their findings are representative of a broader population, qualitative research takes an interpretive approach, often involving a smaller number of participants who may not be representative of the overall population (Bleiker et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2020; Nassaji, 2020).

Qualitative researchers strive to understand and explore rather than explain and manipulate variables or evaluate specific hypotheses. Bleiker et al. (2019), Creswell (2021), Hirose and Creswell (2022), and Nassaji (2020) indicated that mixed method researchers could integrate the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative approaches because they have distinct method orientations to collect data, inform findings, and analyze from different philosophical perspectives. Qualitative researchers extract themes and behavioral messages that complement the findings of quantitative



research methods, adding richness and depth to the understanding of a phenomenon. (Bleiker et al., 2019; Creswell, 2021; Hirose & Creswell, 2022). Given that this study did not involve testing hypotheses typically associated with quantitative research or the quantitative component of a mixed methods approach, a qualitative study was the most suitable method for identifying and exploring effective employee engagement strategies.

### **Research Design**

Qualitative research designs include (a) phenomenology, (b) case study, or (c) pragmatic inquiry (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020; Tomaszewski et al., 2020). Researchers employ a phenomenological design to investigate participants' lived experiences, aiming to gain a profound comprehension of the phenomenon from their perspectives and encounters with the research methodology (Arslan et al., 2022). A case study involves a comprehensive analysis of individuals, groups, or events to examine specific cases with distinctive characteristics, allowing the researcher to focus on and gain insights from those cases (Yin, 2018). Researchers can use pragmatic inquiry to focus on understanding and addressing concrete problems rather than engaging in abstract or theoretical discussions (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020, p. 2). Pragmatic inquiry was the most appropriate because it increased understanding, informed the research field, contributed to improved practices, and addressed specific problems or challenges in employee engagement.

Kelly and Cordeiro (2020) implied that a pragmatic inquiry involves examining multiple perspectives, exploring multiple possibilities, and encouraging an open mind to revise ideas considering newly revealed evidence or insights. Ramanadhan et al. (2021) asserted that a pragmatic inquiry, interpretive description, involves researchers

combining analytic strategies and methods to meet the needs of a given phenomenon and research purpose. Thus, applying the pragmatic inquiry approach was appropriate to explore midlevel managers' numerous effective strategies to increase employee engagement. I used an action pragmatic inquiry for my doctoral study to explore effective strategies to increase employee engagement. In research studies, pragmatic trials are research studies that evaluate interventions and treatments in realistic settings, considering numerous factors such as feasibility, acceptance, and cost-effectiveness (Patsopoulos, 2022). Action research is a pragmatic inquiry approach that addresses real-world problems and improves practical knowledge, leading to meaningful change and improvement in a specific context (Allemang et al., 2021). As Frost et al. (2020) indicated, I conducted this study through semi-structured interviews, which offered in-depth information, rich data on lived experiences and individual feedback that was applicable and provided a new understanding.

Braun and Clarke (2019), Hennink et al. (2019), and Sechelski and Onwuegbuzie (2019) implied that researchers achieve data saturation when collecting additional data does not lead to new understandings, data reaches theoretical redundancy, or when participants do not significantly contribute to the emerging themes or concepts in the research. I conducted member checking and eight interviews to achieve data saturation while collecting data from documents until further data no longer yielded new or additional insights.

### **Population and Sampling**

The targeted population for this study was midlevel managers in the public service sector in the United States, specifically those with at least 10 years of supervisory experience. The chosen approach involved conducting semistructured interviews to gather insights from participants regarding their experiences in effectively implementing employee engagement strategies to enhance organizational success. Researchers implement convenience sampling and purposive sampling to obtain representative rich data from those they can build rapport with, are most accessible, and can strengthen the relevancy and quality of the study (Ames et al., 2019; Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). Mweshi and Sakyi (2020) implied that researchers could determine the sampling size in qualitative studies by specifying the level of exploration and participant availability to enable an exploration of central themes without adhering to a specific numerical threshold. However, based on the findings from Braun and Clarke (2019) and Hennink et al. (2019), I used pragmatic judgment to select a sample size that yielded rich data through the participants' understanding and perspectival diversity in employing effective employee engagement strategies.

Before crafting qualitative research, it is essential to comprehend and critically analyze data saturation. I conducted interviews with eight midlevel managers to increase the likelihood of obtaining relevant information from the collected data. Data saturation is when researchers do not identify new codes during the data collection and subsequent data analysis phase. Braun and Clarke (2019) and Mweshi and Sakyi (2020) suggested that the sample sizes necessary to achieve data saturation in thematic analysis could range

from six to 16 participants, depending on the distinctive aspects of the study. Adhering to the findings from Ames et al. (2019), Braun and Clarke, Hennink et al. (2019), and Mweshi and Sakyi's research, I applied rigor during data analysis so that I can identify emerging themes that were not solely focused on the number of participants, or the interviews conducted to achieve data saturation.

### **Ethical Research**

Every researcher should uphold ethical standards in their work by addressing critical issues that can undermine the integrity of the study. Thus, I reviewed the IRB application form before submitting my study to a research IRB to protect participants' rights and humanize future motivational interventions (Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1987). Informed consent is an evidence-based process that ensures participants have sufficient information and understanding that supports their ability to make an autonomous and informed decision about participation, promoting respect for individual autonomy and protecting the rights and welfare of research participants (Lindsley, 2019). Because of the changing environment, notably the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers used electronic platforms and traditional paper-based informed consent processes (Yusof et al., 2022). Yusof et al. (2022) asserted that when researchers use electronic platforms, they can not only uphold the ethical principle of respecting research participants but also give the added advantage of potentially lowering the risk of airborne infections, benefiting individuals, and avoiding harm.

Yusof et al. (2022) emphasized that researchers should inform participants about the research procedures, the potential risks and benefits, and their autonomy and right to

decline participation without facing any negative consequences. I took the necessary steps to provide the participants with clear information regarding withdrawing from the study at any time without penalty. I did not incentivize participants to remain in the study and participate because I actively sought participants interested in the topic and who could benefit from the findings. Różyńska (2022) emphasized that when a researcher does not offer compensation or a participant willingly contributes to research without seeking payment, a transactional agreement is unnecessary because the participants are motivated to engage in valuable research for societal progress.

Upon receiving the IRB approval, I included the Walden IRB approval number in the final doctoral manuscript and did not include participants' names or any other identifiable information. Similarly, before data collection, I emailed each potential eligible participant the informed consent document and asked them to respond by providing the statement "I consent" as evidence of their voluntary agreement to participate in the study. I will retain the data in a secure place for 5-years to safeguard the rights of participants. Moreover, as indicated by Yusof et al. (2022), I followed the protocols of the Belmont Report, which included respect for persons, goodwill, and justice to the human research participant throughout the research process to ensure the participants fully understood their part in the study. Lastly, I ensured the ethical protection of participants and provided them with a summary of the findings while safeguarding their confidentiality. According to Yin (2018), researchers have a critical responsibility to adhere to the utmost ethical standards to safeguard the well-being and rights of participants, contributing to the ethical integrity of the scientific community.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

I was the primary tool to collect and analyze data for this pragmatic inquiry using a semistructured interview to elicit successful management strategies to increase employee engagement. According to Yin (2018), the semistructured interview might be the most effective method for most researchers to obtain pertinent data on participants' experiences and probe their answers to clarify or add to their responses. I developed and followed an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to obtain detailed information for the study and adhere to ethical underpinnings. By following interview protocols, researchers can facilitate timely qualitative data collection through a well-defined and efficient data collection process, enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings (Candela, 2019). Furthermore, Dunwoodie et al. (2022) asserted that researchers could apply a semistructured interview protocol to establish an interpretive relationship with participants during the interview process and throughout various stages of the research.

To enhance the reliability and validity of the semistructured interview, I conducted member checking. Member checking is a method to apply evidence-based strategies to improve the trustworthiness of the interview findings (Candela, 2019). Following Yin's (2018) recommendation, I adopted an inductive approach, derived insights about a phenomenon from the data. Using an inductive approach allowed me to assign different codes to the data, exploring aspects that I might not have captured within a single item but were relevant for examination within the context of a case study. Lastly, I closed the interview remarks by expressing my gratitude and appreciation for the participant's contributions to the study.

### **Data Collection Technique**

I selected a data collection technique for this pragmatic inquiry to explore effective strategies midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement. Busetto et al. (2020) and Kelly and Cordeiro (2020) implied that researchers could conduct focus groups, interviews, and document studies as techniques to collect data in qualitative research. Qualitative methods share the same data collection techniques, according to Tomaszewski et al. (2020); however, to maintain rigor and align the research study with the qualitative approach, researchers should know what type of data should be collected and how to analyze the data. I conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to collect details from eight study participants. According to Yin (2018), the semistructured interview was the most effective method for researchers to obtain pertinent data on participants' experiences and probe their answers to clarify responses.

Focus groups provide rich data as participants share their experiences, opinions, and perceptions in a group setting, allowing participants to feel comfortable and safe when discussing topics without bias (Lauri, 2019). However, focus group data collection might make group thinking easier, which can impact the study's validity and reliability. Barker and Pistrang (2021) and Dunwoodie et al. (2022) asserted that researchers must safeguard the participants when focusing on sensitive topics or dealing with a disadvantaged group, directly or indirectly. Semistructured interviews involve an interactive exchange between the researcher and the participant through follow-up questions, probes, and comments (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). As a result, semistructured interviews emerged as a highly effective and practical method for

collecting qualitative research data, ensuring the rigor and validity of the study.

Individual, face-to-face, in-depth, telephone, and videos are semistructured interviews (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). I conducted video interviews for my semistructured interview to consider the participants that might work remotely since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Face-to-face interviews provide researchers with the benefit of assessing nonverbal cues to gauge additional information. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) proclaimed that when researchers consider nonverbal cues and engage in active listening while conducting interviews, they can be more attentive, empathetic, and non-judgmental, fostering open and meaningful conversations. During the interview process, researchers should prepare to adjust their actions to account for the unpredictable factors associated with human subjects, such as addressing difficult participants, which is one widespread problem with interviewing. DeJonckheere and Vaughn and Tomaszewski et al. (2020) stated that researchers should set expectations and boundaries to prevent the discussion from devolving into sensitive topics while ensuring participants can freely share information.

Moreover, researchers could consider video interviews as another beneficial method of conducting semistructured interviews due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Archibald et al. (2019), participants are willing to conduct video interviews due to remote work, busy schedules, and distracted working environments. However, video technology can present challenges such as dropped calls, poor audio or video quality, and limitations in capturing nonverbal cues due to unreliable and delayed



connectivity (Archibald et al., 2019). I had minor computer connection issues, but I was able to make a seamless transition by using the video platform on my phone versus the computer. After receiving IRB approval, I conducted interviews, as this study does not require a pilot study. To enhance the reliability and validity of the semistructured interview, I adhered to the interview protocol (see Appendix A) and member checking that reduced providing biased viewpoints, analyses, or conclusions. Candela (2019) asserted that member checking is when researchers apply evidence-based strategies to improve the trustworthiness of the interview findings.

### **Data Organization Techniques**

Proper data organization is crucial for researchers to maintain research quality and produce coherent and meaningful information while adhering to ethical guidelines. I assigned categories for my data based on the common big themes from the interview process. Then, I used a password-protected server and encrypted emails to store data securely and share files with institutional chair members. Researchers can assign appropriate labels and categories to the data to systematically arrange and classify the information, making it easier to identify patterns and themes and ensure data is stored or transmitted among study investigators within the same institution (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021; Hayashi et al., 2021). Gernant et al. (2020) implied that researchers could use web-based file transfer programs (FTPs), such as FileLocker, to provide an extra level of security beyond traditional data-sharing methods as it allows researchers to audit user activity. I will retain the data in a secure place for 5 years to safeguard the rights of participants, then destroy them after 5 years.

### **Data Analysis**

I used content analysis for the information from the textual data collected from the participant interviews to analyze, recognize, evaluate, organize, and describe themes from multiple perspectives and methods. Sechelski and Onwuegbuzie (2019) indicated that the researcher should focus on the research question in the data analysis phase. Because I identified and explored effective strategies that midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement, inductive thematic analysis and method triangulation was the appropriate data analysis processes for this study. Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019) and O’Kane et al. (2019) implied that inductive thematic analysis is not limited to a single methodological stance, allowing researchers to employ diverse methods and philosophies, explore prognostications, and reflect on patterns based on their research context and goals. I used method triangulation to provide data evidence from document reviews to supplement data collected from the participant interviews. Alam (2020) implied that researchers could combine different methods to provide a more comprehensive and robust understanding of the research topic, enhance the findings’ validity, and increase confidence in the overall conclusions.

In data analysis, I started by reading each interview transcript before developing the initial list codes to become familiar with the data. I also took notes on a Microsoft Word document to identify overarching themes and broad categories aligned with the research question. Campbell et al. (2021) implied that researchers should clearly understand holistic themes, conclusions, and study analysis, using triangulation to identify and interpret themes. After developing my initial list of codes, I imported the

transcripts into a computer-aided software program called NVivo 14 (CAQDAS) to start the analysis phase, which entails re-reading the transcripts, reassigning codes, categorizing the transcripts, and identifying patterns and themes within the groups (Dhakal, 2022). Campbell et al. (2021) and Dhakal (2022) indicated that it is common for researchers to revisit the data and identify themes during this analysis phase to discover themes to organize the story into a reliable and valid narrative. I then assigned codes to the data within NVivo to identify and analyze themes to interpret collected data derived from substantive research information (Yin, 2018). As my primary source of data codification, NVivo offered a range of features that enhanced the analysis and synthesis of qualitative data. Its drag-and-drop capabilities, mind mapping, concept maps, and project maps provide researchers with visual tools to identify patterns, explore relationships, and gain a deeper understanding of the data (Dhakal, 2022). Dhakal, Dunwoodie et al. (2022), and O’Kane et al. (2019) implied that NVivo could help researchers reduce bias and provide more credible research findings as long as researchers do not over-rely on software. I continued to immerse myself in the data to assess its quality, obtained the information I needed to answer my research question and focused on the key themes that correlated with the study’s literature and conceptual framework.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are essential features in qualitative research. By addressing reliability and validity in qualitative research, researchers can enhance the rigor and trustworthiness of their findings, contributing to the overall credibility of qualitative research as a valuable approach for generating knowledge and insights (Yin,

2018). While quantitative researchers use statistical measures to assess reliability and validity, qualitative researchers emphasize the research process, including data collection methods, analysis techniques, and the researcher's reflexivity of their biases and assumptions (Busetto et al., 2020).

### **Reliability**

Reliability is essential to research because it ensures that the findings are not due to random variation but reflect consistent patterns or relationships. Busetto et al. (2020) and Hayashi et al. (2019) implied that researchers could achieve reliability through interrater reliability, which involves multiple researchers independently coding or analyzing the data and then comparing their findings, strengthening the reliability of the study. Dependability in qualitative research refers to how a study's procedures, methods, and findings can be replicated or repeated in similar conditions or contexts (Stenfors et al., 2020). Researchers can achieve dependability when another researcher can conduct the same study and generate similar findings, enhancing the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings. I used member checking to achieve reliability and dependability.

Member checking is when researchers use an approach that used evidence-based techniques to enhance the reliability and credibility of interview findings, improving the trustworthiness of the findings (Candela, 2019). I performed member checks after obtaining data from interviews so that participants can examine the interpretation of the dialogue during the interview. Busetto et al. (2020) asserted that member checking, or respondent validation, involves sharing the research findings or interpretations with the

participants and inviting their input, corrections, or additional insights to ensure the alignment between their perspectives and the researchers' analysis. Moreover, I reviewed the transcripts of the chosen participants and analyzed their responses to identify frequently used words and emerging themes. Alam (2020) implied that researchers could use transcripts to take the findings with the raw material, apply coding techniques, and create a systematic framework for analysis, enabling them to identify recurring words, expressions, or themes.

### **Validity**

Validity in qualitative research refers to the extent to which the findings accurately represent the research phenomenon. Hayashi et al. (2019) implied that researchers should constantly seek validity throughout the research, not just when evaluating the results. By considering and addressing credibility, transferability, and confirmability, qualitative researchers can enhance the validity of their study, ensuring that the findings are trustworthy, meaningful, and relevant to both the research participants and the broader scholarly community (Stenfors et al., 2020). Moreover, Sürücü and Maslakçi (2020) implied that researchers could achieve validity when their study accurately measures the intended concepts through appropriate research design, data collection methods, and statistical analysis techniques. I used multiple sources to assist me in answering my research question and reaching data saturation. Hayashi et al. indicated that data saturation signifies credibility, indicating that researchers have collected comprehensive data to capture all pertinent aspects required to address the research question.

Researchers achieve credibility when the research findings are credible and reliable, inspiring confidence in the research's validity and trustworthiness (Stenfors et al., 2020). I enhanced credibility by member checking, triangulation, and interview protocol, ensuring I addressed the findings from the participants' perspective.

Researchers achieve confirmability by linking to the findings (Stenfors et al., 2020). I enhanced confirmability by probing during interviews, follow-up member-checking interviews, and method triangulation, ensuring other researchers can confirm the results.

Researchers can achieve transferability when other researchers can apply their study's findings to another setting, context, or group, and the study's findings offer a clear, rich, and detailed description (Hayashi et al., 2019). I enabled others to determine the transferability of the findings by meticulously adhering to the research design's data collection and analysis techniques, using interview protocols, and reaching data saturation.

### **Transition and Summary**

In Section 2, I detailed how I conducted this qualitative pragmatic inquiry research study to explore effective strategies midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement. I shared how I recruited and interviewed participants through convenience sampling, purposive sampling, and semistructured interviews. I stated how I selected managers interested in the study with knowledge and experience related to increasing employee engagement, then gathered and evaluated my findings through semistructured interviews and organizational documents. Moreover, I provided information on adhering to ethical standards and following data analysis, interviews, and member checking to

achieve data saturation. I provided information on leveraging member checking to ensure my findings' reliability and validity.

In Section 3, I reacquainted the purpose of the study and summarized the presentation of the findings, application to professional practice, the implication for social change, recommendations for action and further research and reviews, conclusion, and appendices.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry, interpretive descriptive study, was to identify and explore effective strategies that midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement. Following the interview protocol (see Appendix A), I conducted eight Zoom video semistructured interviews using seven open-ended questions. I assigned each participant with participant numeric codes 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, and 08 during the interview process, and the interview times ranged from 10 minutes to 57 minutes. Following the interview, I conducted member checking with each participant so that they could review the synthesis and confirm the accuracy of the dialogue during the interview. I used an inductive thematic approach to derive insights about effective employee engagement strategies and assigned different codes to the data relevant to the study context. O’Kane et al. (2019) implied that researchers can use various methods and reflect on patterns to perform inductive thematic analysis based on their research context and goals.

After collecting data, I organized, categorized, cross-referenced, and analyzed the data to document the findings and present the study results. More importantly, I used the qualitative analysis software NVivo 14 to organize the collected data into meaningful themes. There were three emerging themes: a) understanding workforce insights, b) fostering employee communication and feedback, and c) providing employee recognition. The emerging themes corresponded to the composite conceptual framework of Alderfer’s (1969) ERG theory, Kahn’s (1990) engagement theory, and the existing



literature on effective employee engagement strategies. After analyzing the findings, I discovered that effective employee engagement strategies can create a participative work environment where leaders and employees practice active communication, understand diverse perspectives, and foster personal connections. The population included eight midlevel managers with at least 10 years of supervisory experience who have successfully used employee engagement strategies. The participants confirmed that employee engagement strategies could help business leaders promote corporate change and achieve organizational goals, consistent with my literature review's research findings. This section contains information on the study's research findings, application to professional practice, social change implications, and my recommendations for action and further research, reflections, and conclusion.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The intent of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to answer the main research question: What effective strategies do midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement? I re-read the interview transcripts before taking notes and developing my initial code book to become familiar with the data. As mentioned, Campbell et al. (2021) implied that researchers should clearly understand holistic themes, conclusions, and study analysis to identify and interpret themes. After developing my initial code book, I completed the analysis phase by importing the transcripts into a computer-aided software program called NVivo 14 (CAQDAS), which entailed importing the transcripts, reassigning codes, categorizing the transcripts, and identifying patterns and themes within the similar contextual groups. Campbell et al. and Dhakal (2022) suggested that

researchers revisit data to identify themes during analysis for a reliable narrative. I used NVivo's drag-and-drop capabilities to create visualizations such as word clouds, tree maps, and sunburst diagrams. This enabled me to identify patterns, explore relationships, and better understand the data (Dhakal, 2022). Among the three emerging themes, there were seven minor themes: a) understanding employee needs, b) fostering empowerment, c) employing workforce optimization, d) one-on-one feedback, e) communication tools, f) communication skills, and g) written recognition totaling 169 references to the code book.

### **Theme 1: Understanding Workforce Insights**

The first emerging theme was leaders understanding workforce insights with three minor themes: a) understanding employee needs, b) fostering empowerment, and c) employing workforce optimization. The literature review and the integrated conceptual frameworks of Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory and Kahn's (1990) engagement theory supported this theme. As mentioned, Kahn and Alderfer suggested that managers can improve employee engagement by creating a safe environment that fosters free expression and supports the development of employees' existence, relatedness, and growth needs. For instance, Participant 05 implied that employee engagement was "the level of investment you get from that person in terms of your organization and mission." They emphasized that employee engagement is about recognizing employees from the beginning and meeting them where they are to increase their engagement. Participant 06 stated, "You must understand what they are going through, and once you understand people, you get anything out of folks." Participant 08 agreed that managers could

remember personal details when communicating with employees about their interests to get to know employees.

Cheung et al. (2021) suggested that managers could improve organizational success by understanding their employees' needs in distinct cultural and situational contexts. For instance, feedback from Participants 05 and 06 indicated that employee engagement strategies include building relationships and connections with employees to keep them interested by giving them what they need. When managers show care toward their employees' personal needs, it helps build trust between the employees and the leaders, ultimately fostering a positive work environment. Hu (2023), Jiatong et al. (2022), Saks (2022), and Shin et al. (2022) indicated that employees might be willing to provide feedback, inspire others, and commit to the long-term organizational strategy when they feel that they have a voice, have a purpose and that their leaders care.

Underpinned by further literature, Kahn (1990) and Panda et al. (2021) suggested that employees develop positive feelings about their self-efficacy when they find meaning in their jobs, resulting in increased physical and mental engagement. Participants 01 and 07 agreed and indicated that the value of giving employees a sense of ownership over their tasks is to have them break down larger projects into smaller tasks and discuss with their supervisors how they will achieve them. Integrating with Alderfer's (1969) need for growth and Kahn's vision of meaningfulness, employees could develop a strong sense of competence that empowers them to handle routine tasks easily while driving growth and development within the organization. This encourages the employees to take responsibility for their work and helps build trust within the

workforce. Participant 07 stated if you “build trust, you build camaraderie, you build ownership, and increase communication.” Participant 04 agreed by stating, “They got to believe that you trust them.”

Kossyva et al. (2023) indicated that employees seek knowledge to advance their careers and contribute to organizational success, which is aligned with the rudimentary principles of Alderfer’s (1969) need for growth and Kahn’s (1990) principle for meaningfulness. For instance, Participant 01 implied that complacency could occur when employees stay in the same position too long without growth opportunities. Furthermore, Participant 04 expressed that managers without effective employee engagement strategies could start by providing employees autonomy and responsibility to build trust. Managers can successfully transition from plan-driven methods to specific employee engagement strategies by balancing stability and change, modifying roles and responsibilities, and building trust (Lindskog & Netz, 2021). Thus, managers should prioritize employee competence in routine tasks and provide opportunities for employee growth and learning to foster the full potential of their workforce.

Manager involvement is vital to increase employee engagement. Because of their proximity to employees, mid-level managers could serve as the connective tissue between top management teams and employees to increase employee engagement (Davis, 2022). Participant 06 stated that one of the main employee challenges is getting buy-in for new leader engagement strategies and visions. They implied that people dislike change and getting them on board can be difficult. However, Participant 08 indicated that managers should emphasize “we” and “us” rather than “I” to build buy-in and commitment to the

team. Although not an indication to prevent challenges, managers could seek workplace optimization through employee buy-in. For instance, Participant 04 implied keeping employees engaged involves the leader actively listening and ensuring the employee feels their opinion is valued, even if the leader does not always agree. Participant 03 stated, “Once we get those ideas and those suggestions and viewpoints, it’s putting it into action,” and Participant 01 stated, “We always have to be open to our employees, so they are willing to engage.” Managers who understand employees’ needs can make them feel valued, leading to greater organizational achievements (Cheung et al., 2021).

Underpinned by Kahn’s (1990) and Alderfer’s (1969) foundational tenets and these findings, managers can employ leadership levers to drive employee engagement by enriching employee motivation, meaningfulness, and empowerment.

## **Theme 2: Fostering Employee Communication and Feedback**

The second emerging theme was fostering employee communication and feedback with three minor themes: a) one-on-one feedback, b) communication skills, and c) communication tools. The literature review and the integrated conceptual frameworks of Alderfer’s (1969) ERG theory and Kahn’s (1990) engagement theory supported this theme. Weigt-Rohrbeck and Linneberg (2019) implied that management teams should prioritize creating a safe and inclusive environment that fosters open communication and empowers employees to voice their thoughts, leading to improved stakeholder feedback. Managers who improve communication might also achieve employee buy-in and engagement. For instance, Participant 04 indicated that managers could provide direct feedback to employees on their strengths and contributions during one-on-one meetings.

Furthermore, Participants 01 and 02 asserted that paying attention to nonverbal cues, focusing on team and individual level communication, such as having conversations to explain rationales, getting feedback, understanding employees' strengths and goals, and being open to employees' new ideas are ways to communicate foster employee engagement effectively.

Kahn's (1990) tenet of psychological safety entailed that employees must express themselves without fear of facing negative consequences that may harm their self-image, social status, or career. The participant findings are aligned with the conceptual framework. Participant 05 recommended new managers focus on developing skills like active listening, having difficult conversations, and constantly refining communication to understand employees. Participant 07 stated that leaders "have to find a way to get their message through." Moreover, Participant 06 indicated that managers could communicate their expectations, vision, and what is going on through regular collective and individual employee conversations. As mentioned in the literature review, Nazir et al. (2021) asserted that when leaders provide their employees with a clear understanding of their specific role in fulfilling their company's long-term vision, it helps employees feel connected to something larger than themselves.

Feedback is a lateral and top-down approach. All participants agreed that feedback is the responsibility of both leaders and employees and fosters and supports, which aligned with the literature review of this study. For instance, Allal-Chérif et al. (2022) asserted that shared understanding between stakeholders aligns organizational and employee goals toward increased performance and engagement, which is crucial for

organizations to thrive in a dynamic business environment. The communication methods managers use to increase employee engagement might vary by leader, organization, and type of industry. Managers can develop effective communication strategies by understanding their employees' needs and the organization's culture.

Haumer et al. (2021) indicated that managers could use tailored communication strategies to influence disruptive ideas and governance. As mentioned, Participant 06 indicated that managers could communicate their expectations, vision, and what is going on through regular collective and individual employee conversations. Participant 01 suggested that communication can define these roles. Midlevel managers could assist top-down leaders with finding communication tools that best meet organizational goals and resonate with employees. In other findings, Einwiller et al. (2021) indicated that midlevel managers play a crucial role in actively facilitating communication channels, using digital methods to ensure effective feedback with their widely distributed teams.

For instance, Participant 02 implied that managers could communicate at the employee and manager levels to meet this intent. Participant 03 shared they communicated engagement strategies through the tools they already had in place, such as the one-on-one discussions during quarterly evaluations, an HR communication board television, and using Survey Monkey to get employee feedback. Moreover, participants 06 and 08 communicated their use of engagement strategies through frequent meetings with different cohorts of employees. They mentioned holding weekly meetings with directors and quarterly meetings with supervisors and deputies to share the same information. Supporting the conceptual framework and literature, managers should learn

how to identify areas to promote positive relationships to address Alderfer's (1969) growth needs, such as tailored communication. Mid-level managers and leaders should rigorously determine effective communication strategies that fit their organization, enhancing informed decision-making and change management.

### **Theme 3: Providing Employee Recognition**

The third emerging theme was providing employee recognition with one minor theme, written recognition. The literature review, new literature, and the integrated conceptual frameworks of Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory and Kahn's (1990) engagement theory supported this theme. There was consensus from all eight of the participants that employee recognition was a way to improve employee engagement. Recognition, which fosters job satisfaction, is employed differently depending on the leader, desired outcome, or employee needs and motivation (Baqir et al., 2020). As mentioned in the literature review, managers could expand on the ERG theory and findings from Upathissa (2022) to understand that motivation factors such as recognition and growth opportunities positively affect employee performance. Like managers using tailored communication strategies to influence disruptive ideas and governance, as Haumer et al. (2021) suggested, they can also learn how to identify areas to promote positive relationships to address rewards and recognition programs.

Midlevel managers should recognize employees' changing and unique needs to create an engaged and motivated workforce. Recognizing employees can help enhance productivity, job satisfaction, and overall success for the employees and the organization. Participants 03 and 04 highlighted that managers could provide employees verbal and



written recognition and monetary awards, time off, or gift cards for individual and group contributions. Moreover, Participant 06 indicated that while public praise is good, providing financial recognition produces the best results. They noted that money makes things move faster, especially now during a recession when everything costs more: “Employees need to be able to feed their families, so if you’re praising them publicly but not providing financial rewards, it may not be as effective” (Participant 06).

Baqir et al. (2020) asserted that managers’ support is critical to influencing employee engagement and maintaining satisfaction. To achieve a high level of engagement, it is imperative to establish individual connections with employees and communicate effectively to determine what would resonate with them, thereby identifying the best form of recognition. Participant 06 noted that cultural awareness training is important, as organizations must be sensitive to diversity and inclusion beyond just “black and white.” Participant 06’s findings align with Cheung et al.’s (2021) suggestion that managers who understand employees’ needs in different situations and cultures create a trusting environment, leading to organizational success. Building a culture of optimization that Hultman (2020) suggested could further contribute to the 21% increase in profitability and productivity that engaged employees contribute to the workforce.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The objective of this study was to identify and explore effective strategies that midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement. The finding included strategies to help managers explore and identify alternative strategies, processes, and methods for

increasing employee engagement. The findings are relevant to potentially current and future business practices, and midlevel business managers might benefit from the results of this study to enhance organization productivity and success. It was conclusive that all participants' responses aligned with Alderfer's (1969) and Kahn's (1990) findings regarding employee needs for interpersonal relationships, recognition, growth opportunities, and individual fulfillment in the workplace. The findings derived from the interview responses also extended new literature on effective strategies that midlevel managers use to increase employee engagement.

Toth et al. (2023) asserted that employee engagement is the key to unlocking successful work performance. Thus, business leaders could use various employee engagement strategies to foster inclusivity and drive workplace productivity, teamwork, and growth mentality. Strategies might range from organizational levers, such as HR initiatives and innovation practices, to leadership levers, such as empowering employees, and to employee levers, such as employee voice (feedback). If business leaders focus on personal resources and recognize the diversity of individual workers, they can foster employee performance and ultimately increase organizational success (Toth et al., 2023). Leaders must prioritize employee feedback and buy-in, as neglecting these crucial factors can decrease engagement, productivity, and revenue.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The implications for positive social change include the management team's potential and willingness to find the best approach to increase employee engagement while influencing employee self-worth, employee development, and contributing to

social responsibility. According to Pimenta et al. (2023), organizations include individuals from the greater society, so business leaders and managers are responsible for achieving financial objectives and managing social factors, including environmental impact, work-life balance, societal welfare, socially responsible management, and decent work conditions. Gradinaru et al. (2020) suggested that engaged employees are more productive, self-motivated, and dedicated to the organization's goals, which can lead to employees contributing to society as community leaders. Thus, top management teams must empower midlevel managers to actively encourage employee feedback loops that align with the organizational mission and the comprehensive business and human resource (HR) strategy. They can do this by considering organization levers such as HR initiatives and innovation practices to enrich positive social change.

Pimenta et al. (2023) implied that senior resource human resource management (SR-HRM) focuses on implementing HRM policies and practices to ensure employee-oriented corporate social responsibility (CSR), encouraging optimal work performance and fulfilling employees' overall expectations. For instance, leaders could recognize employees for their positive actions at work and their contributions to society outside of work. Furthermore, Shafaei and Nejati (2023) found that green human resource management (GHRM) practices, such as environmental training, eco-friendly policies, and sustainable recruitment, could foster innovative employee behavior. Fostering innovative employee behaviors could promote the employees' need for growth and responsiveness toward social and environmental issues.

Improving the level of engagement of employees can lead to an increase in the consistent service provided to members of the community. Through consistent work, an engaged employee can positively change their socioeconomic status, thereby making a tangible contribution to the growth and development of nearby communities and agencies. Midlevel managers and business leaders might use the results from this study to explore and identify alternative strategies, processes, and methods for increasing employee engagement and indirectly benefiting society by helping businesses operate more efficiently. When employees are actively engaged in their work, they undoubtedly experience a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment, positively impacting their performance in other areas of their lives.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The results of this study could help midlevel managers and business leaders identify and explore effective strategies to increase employee engagement. Managers and leaders who implement the study findings could positively affect employee meaningfulness, feedback, and contribution in the workplace. They can use the findings of this study to discover alternative ways to take helpful action and methods tailored to their specific organization. Leaders and midlevel managers should find ways to increase employee engagement so I provided three recommendations that managers and leaders might consider when implementing strategies to improve employee engagement, which could lead to increased profitability and productivity.

Implementation of the following steps might increase employee engagement in the workplace. The first recommendation is for managers to organize informal events

centered around employees and their families, such as social gatherings and team-building activities. These events could enable leaders to build personal relationships with their employees and families, promoting a positive work culture and higher employee satisfaction. The second recommendation is for managers to implement a communication feedback loop so that employers gain insights and recommendations from their employees. Jiang and Shen (2020) and Oreg and Berson (2019) asserted that leaders should implement periodic employee feedback sessions to establish transparency, collaborate with employees to develop shared solutions, and meaningfully interact with employees to understand them better. The third recommendation is for managers to recognize their employees verbally and in writing through actions such as giving awards, time off, or gift cards. Integrating employee engagement and recognition could help foster a positive work environment where all parties support each other because they understand each other's backgrounds and individual needs.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

I provided an understanding of employee engagement strategies that midlevel managers used; however, the limited scope of the findings indicated more research on this topic is still necessary. I identified three primary limitations in this qualitative pragmatic inquiry: a) limited participants from only the public service industry, b) the study's design, and c) selected population. Limiting participants to only the public service industry could reduce transferability to other industries or sectors. Future studies could include managers from various industries or a single organizational case study to go deeper and establish a common approach. Another limitation of this study was the

pragmatic inquiry design. I interviewed eight midlevel managers from one industry but multiple organizations. The limited number of participants and broad industry focus restricted the scope of knowledge and hindered the collection of comprehensive data that dives a little deeper into one organization or geographic area.

The third limitation of this study was the single-used population – midlevel managers. Future researchers could include insights from other participants such as top-level managers and employees. They could expand on providing a holistic understanding of what strategies work to increase employee engagement from all three levels of internal organizational stakeholders' support – top-level management, managerial level, and employee. As one approach, researchers' and future researchers could explore the connection between leadership styles and employee effectiveness indicators, such as employee voice and mindfulness techniques, to develop a more comprehensive approach to job design that promotes engagement and productivity. Moreover, researchers could consider an exploratory case study to understand employee engagement, productivity, and positive social change in regional areas by interviewing public service leaders, observing onsite, and reviewing relevant documentation.

Other research possibilities emerged while conducting this study. I discovered it was difficult for the midlevel managers to provide specific training steps to improve employee engagement. Future researchers could explore specific training strategies that leaders use to improve employee engagement, offering step-by-step methods for new managers or refreshing techniques for leadership advancement. Midlevel managers shared strategies for engaging employees in face-to-face interactions versus hybrid

workforces. To account for post-pandemic impacts, future researchers could explore strategies managers use in a remote and hybrid workforce to increase employee engagement, including onboarding requirements and processes. Lastly, midlevel managers did not share what they needed from top-level management to improve employee engagement. Future researchers could expand on this study to indicate what midlevel managers need from top-level managers to foster employee engagement and overall business productivity.

### **Reflections**

My experience within the DBA doctoral study process has increased my confidence to become an expert practitioner and business change agent. I selected this research topic because of my inherent desire and purpose to inspire others to achieve their goals and become their best versions at work and personal life. Through my extensive military professional experience spanning ten different organizations, I believe that leaders should prioritize the employee's voice along with the organizational mission to achieve success. Thus, due to my personal biases and preconceived ideas, I was careful and mindful to not hinder the reliability of the study's findings. During the interview process, I was mindful to not let my enthusiasm or tone about a particular method or approach influence my participants' responses or follow-up questions. It was important for me to remain impartial and unbiased, so as not to subconsciously sway the opinions of the participants.

After completing the study, I realized that my interview questions were well thought out and helped reduce any perceived bias and keep the conversations on track.

My interview process was successful and I maintained an unwavering focus on the topic at hand and strictly adhered to proper interview protocol. By doing so, I ensured that the conversation remained productive and that I gleaned the insights that would contribute to the study's findings. By reducing any perceived bias in my study and being mindful of my reactions, I enhanced the credibility and validity of my research. Credible research could empower future researchers to build on my research and advance the field even further.

### **Conclusion**

There are various approaches to tackling a business issue, and each approach might yield numerous results. The take-home message of this study is that establishing corporate feedback loops could ensure that organizational leaders develop employee engagement strategies; midlevel managers implement; and employees execute; leading to successful and improved business outcomes. I explored and identified different possibilities from eight participants and found they used diverse solutions most suitable for their organization, industry, and situational context. Employees are vital organizational stakeholders (Pimenta et al., 2023). Kidron, 2022 indicated that influential leaders require a deep understanding of their organization's role to drive and inform strategic decision-making while keeping stakeholders informed and valuing transparency.

After applying rigor through data analysis, three key themes emerged: understanding workforce insights, fostering employee communication and feedback, and providing employee recognition. This study can serve as additive research and understanding for midlevel managers and business leaders to explore and identify



effective strategies that promote inclusivity and drive productivity, teamwork, and growth mentality. Additionally, the findings on increasing employee engagement align with Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory and Kahn's (1990) engagement theory. Increasing employee engagement is beneficial and relevant for any organization, but it is important to note that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Business leaders should acknowledge, access, and adjust their strategy to the unique characteristics of their organization so they can create an all-encompassing, productive, and engaged workforce.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview # \_\_\_\_\_. Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_. Time of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_.

Interviewee name / Code: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Interview:** Exploring effective strategies to increase employee engagement

A. The interview session will begin with salutations, personal introductions, and an overview of the research topic.

B. I will thank participants for volunteering to participate in the study.

C. Participants will have another opportunity to read the consent form and ask any questions before signing the consent form.

D. I will give participants a copy of the consent form for their records.

E. I will ensure to turn on the primary and alternate audio recorders and note the interview's date, time, method, and location.

F. I will code participants' identifiable information; I will use "Participant 01 through 08" for sequential interpretation of the interviews.

G. I will document on the audio recorder that the participants sign a copy of the consent form, and the interview will begin.

H. The interview will last 30-60 minutes for responses to the seven interview questions, including any additional follow-up questions.

I. When the interview is complete, I will remind participants that I will coordinate a future date to verify and gain their feedback about the accuracy of the synthesized interpretations.



J. At the end of the interview, I will thank the research participant for taking the time to participate in the study.

**Interview questions below:**

1. How do you define employee engagement?
2. What strategies do you use to increase employee engagement?
3. What specific engagement strategies produce the best results for your organization?
4. How do you communicate engagement strategies throughout the organization?
5. What challenges did you face when implementing engagement strategies?
6. What additional information concerning effective employee engagement strategies could you share that you have not already addressed?
7. What recommendations could you share with managers who do not have an employee engagement strategy?

## Appendix B: Study Invitation

There is a new study about employee engagement strategies that could help business leaders better understand how to identify and explore strategies to increase employee engagement. For this study, you are invited to describe successful strategies to improve employee engagement.

### **About the study:**

- One 30-60 minute phone interview that will be audio recorded (no video recording)
- You would receive a \$20 Visa Virtual gift card as a thank you.
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you.

### **Volunteers must meet these requirements:**

- Business leader
- Has been successful in improving employee engagement.
- Has 10+ years of supervisory (midlevel manager) experience.

This interview is part of the doctoral study for Lasherdo Harris, a DBA student at Walden University. Interviews will take place during [October/November 2023 timeframe].

Please reach out to [xxx.xxx@waldenu.edu](mailto:xxx.xxx@waldenu.edu) to let the researcher know of your interest. You are welcome to forward it to others who might be interested.