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Development of a Work-Conduct Training for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

Katharine J. Robersshaw
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Katharine Robershaw

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

Development of a Work-Conduct Training for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

by

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MA, Walden University, 2012

MA, University of North Texas, 2007

BS, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, 1999

Professional Administrative Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Public Administration

Walden University

February 2024

Abstract

At the nonprofit organization that was the site of this study, Agency A, formerly incarcerated employees' lack of appropriate professional work conduct was preventing them from maintaining successful employment. The purpose of the study was to develop a program to train Agency A's formerly incarcerated employees about appropriate professional work conduct. The practice-focused questions for this qualitative study were used to determine topics to be included in the training program, reasons for inappropriate work conduct, and interventions already in place to assist formerly incarcerated employees manage their behaviors. The study was guided by the paradigm for counterproductive behaviors and adult learning theory. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five members of Agency A leadership to determine the appropriate professional conduct behaviors that needed to be addressed through the training program. Based on the thematic analysis of the data collected from the interviews, the training program needed to include an orientation focused on three topics: inappropriate behaviors, assistance, and access to resources. The training program will assist formerly incarcerated employees in successfully maintaining employment with the organization which leads to potential implications for positive social change for employees, the organization, the employees' families, and the community.

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Dedication

I am dedicating this professional administrative study to two people who mean everything to me. My dad, Dr. Hugh James Fant, is no longer with us. He led by example and taught me that hard work and perseverance are key to achieving your goals. I know he would be so proud of the achievements I have made, and I wish he were here to see all that God has blessed me with. My mom, Wynnell Markham, is my rock and pushes me every day to be the best I can be. She too leads by example, and I continue to learn from her daily. There is no one who could love me as much as she does, and I appreciate her love and support more than I can ever express.

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Thank you to Dr. Linda Sundstrom for every bit of support provided to get me to the finish line. You kept me believing there was a light at the end of the tunnel. Thank you to my husband for supporting and encouraging me through this process. Thank you to my children, Dalton, Garrett, Presley, and Matthew, for being the motivation to achieve my goals. I hope I have set a good example for all of you.

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Section 1: Introduction

Introduction

The study was based on the development of a training program to improve professional work conduct of formerly incarcerated employees working in a nonprofit organization focused on serving individuals with disabilities and disadvantages through education, training, and employment, located in the Northeast Texas region, referred to as Agency A. This study provided information as to how the training program was developed as well as evidence-based practices researched to develop the training program that works to improve formerly incarcerated employees' professional work conduct. Improvements in the professional work conduct of formerly incarcerated employees benefit Agency A as well as the employees.

Agency A is a nonprofit organization focusing on improving the quality of life for people with disabilities or disadvantages through education, training, and placement in gainful employment. Employment of individuals recently out of prison and/or jail within Agency A is a large part of that focus. The problem faced by Agency A is that formerly incarcerated employees lack appropriate professional work conduct. The nature of this Doctor of Public Administration (DPA) administrative study was to determine the key drivers of inappropriate work conduct practiced by formerly incarcerated employees at Agency A and the effects of those behaviors on the employees' ability to maintain successful employment.

Potential positive social change implications of the project may reach not only the employees but also the employees' families, the organization, the communities where the

employees live, and other organizations employing formerly incarcerated individuals. Successful employment provides employees with wages and a purpose. Employees' families may be impacted positively with additional income not available in the household before. The organization has well-trained long-term employees. The community benefits from a community member working and paying taxes. Other organizations employing formerly incarcerated individuals may experience similar results as Agency A.

Agency A consists of a corporate office, production plants, an outlet store, and retail stores in towns across Northeast Texas. Agency A employs approximately 400 individuals. The four Agency A production facilities prepare between \$18 million to \$20 million in donated merchandise and new goods to be sent out to the retail stores each year. This amount of production allows the stores to earn approximately \$275,000 per week to fund Agency A's focus on employing individuals with disabilities and disadvantages.

Problem Statement

According to Marlow (2019), one of the most difficult challenges for formerly incarcerated individuals returning to the community is gaining legitimate employment. An April 2022 publication by The White House explains that more than 600,000 individuals are released from incarceration, and formerly incarcerated individuals have a much higher unemployment rate, 27%, than the overall unemployment rate in the United States. Ferguson (2022) presented the same statistics of 600,000 individuals being released from incarceration each year in the United States, with 6 out of every 10 without

a job from their release to 4 years after their release. Ferguson (2022) stated that approximately 82% of those released from incarceration will be rearrested within 10 years of their release. Studies have shown that employment, especially high-quality stable jobs, reduce recidivism rates (Ferguson, 2022). When an individual with a criminal record is employed, it benefits not only the individual but also society. Ferguson (2022) reported that 85% of human resources leaders and 81% of business leaders state that individuals with a criminal background perform the same or better than other employees. According to Ramakers et al. (2017), employment provides individuals with income and status making crime less necessary.

Management within Agency A has recognized that at least 90% of its formerly incarcerated employees lack appropriate professional work conduct (CEO, personal communication, October 6, 2020). Currently, formerly incarcerated individuals make up 20% of Agency A's workforce, and they exhibit work conduct that is inappropriate and unprofessional including but not limited to tardiness, absenteeism, and low productivity (accounting specialist, personal communication, July 2, 2021). Within the last 5 years, Agency A has experienced high turnover rates due, in part, to the lack of understanding of appropriate professional work conduct (accounting specialist, personal communication, July 2, 2021). This lack of understanding results in the eventual termination of employees because the inappropriate work conduct does not change. As explained by Agency A's chief executive officer (CEO), appropriate professional work conduct is defined by the organization as punctuality, dependability, thoroughness, competence, productiveness, and respectfulness.

According to the Agency A CEO, management places much importance on appropriate professional work conduct (CEO, personal communication, October 6, 2020). In conversation with Agency A's production and retail managers (2020), I understood that many Agency A employees have either not been shown or taught the basics of appropriate professional work conduct but have been witness to inappropriate work conduct or have not yet completely grasped past training about appropriate professional work conduct. The Agency A management team has stated that these issues seem to cause barriers to successful employment. Inappropriate work conduct is the leading cause of job loss for formerly incarcerated Agency A employees 80% of the time (accounting specialist, personal communication, July 2, 2021). The Agency A management team also stated that a lack of appropriate professional work conduct contributes to the inability of an employee to earn wage increases and promotions if they maintain employment.

By addressing Agency A employees' work conduct, the employees will gain skills needed to maintain successful employment and earn wage increases and promotions. This project may apply to similar organizations because they can determine if the training developed will assist them in reducing turnover and improving work success for their formerly incarcerated employees. If so, those organizations may utilize the training created in this study or develop one that is similar to fit their needs.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a program to train Agency A's formerly incarcerated employees on appropriate professional work conduct. During further discussions with Agency A's management (2020), I determined that the lack of

appropriate professional work conduct causes barriers to successful employment. To lessen the barriers caused by inappropriate work conduct, such as absenteeism, tardiness, and poor work performance, a training program was developed. The training program was presented to Agency A to address these work conduct behaviors and train Agency A's formerly incarcerated employees on appropriate professional work conduct.

Development and implementation of a training program for Agency A's formerly incarcerated employees assists those employees with learning and implementing appropriate professional work conduct on the job. The training program has been implemented for new employees and will include instruction on punctuality, attendance, workplace culture, and other soft skills. The program will also address how these skills and behaviors will affect employment outcomes positively or negatively depending on employees' choices and behaviors.

A training program to address inappropriate work conduct and educate the formerly incarcerated individuals employed by Agency A about appropriate professional work conduct was developed to improve the successful employment of formerly incarcerated individuals. The improvement of appropriate professional work conduct of the formerly incarcerated individuals employed by Agency A has also improved the high turnover rate within the organization.

Nature of the Administrative Study

The approach used in this study to organize and analyze the evidence is qualitative. The research questions answered in this qualitative study are as follows:

RQ1: What topics should be included in the training program to improve appropriate professional work conduct of formerly incarcerated employees to maintain successful employment?

RQ2: According to employee written reprimands, what are the reasons they give for the documented behaviors that may cause them to lose their jobs?

RQ3: What interventions are already in place at the organization to help the formerly incarcerated employees manage these behaviors?

To answer these research questions, a case study research design was used, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect needed information. For the planned research design, interviews were conducted with the vice president of human resources, the vice president of donated goods retail, the regional director, a plant manager, and a retail store manager to determine topics to be included in the training program. The nature of this study was to determine the key drivers of inappropriate work conduct practiced by Agency A formerly incarcerated employees and the effects of those behaviors on the employees' ability to maintain successful employment. Data were collected from appropriate representatives of Agency A. The information was reviewed to determine the components needed in the training program to improve the appropriate professional work conduct of formerly incarcerated employees at Agency A.

The lack of appropriate professional work conduct from formerly incarcerated employees causes barriers to successful employment. The paradigm for counterproductive behaviors provided the framework for the research, and adult learning theory provided the framework for the deliverable. The paradigm for counterproductive

behaviors and adult learning theory complemented one another in the development of an effective training program for formerly incarcerated employees.

Significance

The key stakeholders impacted by this study include the formerly incarcerated employees, the employees' families, the organization, and the community where the employees are working. Successful employment provides formerly incarcerated employees with wages and a purpose. The families of the employees are impacted positively with extra income they did not have before and a more stable lifestyle than they had when the employees were incarcerated. The organization is impacted by lower turnover rates, which decrease the cost of training and lead to more knowledgeable long-term employees. The local community is impacted because the employees are productive members of the community paying taxes and purchasing goods instead of being taken care of by the community like they were while incarcerated.

Exploring the work culture of Agency A revealed formerly incarcerated employees' current work conduct. Through training about appropriate professional work conduct, Agency A's formerly incarcerated employees are much more likely to maintain successful employment, earn wage increases and opportunities to be promoted. Formerly incarcerated employees are able to put appropriate professional work conduct into practice on the job, which can promote positive social change because they are more able to maintain successful employment and less likely to lose their jobs. Because of this, they do not place a burden on the community for resources that can be accessed by individuals who truly cannot work.

The results of this study have an impact on other nonprofit organizations by detailing the effects of a training program that introduces and promotes the practice of appropriate professional work conduct. The program demonstrates to other organizations the need to inform formerly incarcerated individuals about appropriate professional work conduct, so they have the tools needed to be successful on a job and maintain successful employment. By understanding how appropriate professional work conduct training can have a positive effect on employees and organizations, other organizations can implement their own training programs to lessen turnover and increase the potential for wage increases and promotions within their organization. This qualitative study is important to positive social change because it provides information about how to positively impact the lives of formerly incarcerated employees and positively impact organizations employing formerly incarcerated individuals.

Agency A has a problem with formerly incarcerated employees who exhibit inappropriate work conduct. This conduct prevents the employees from maintaining successful employment leading to wage increases and promotions. At its worst, inappropriate work conduct can lead to termination. Information has been gathered to determine whether a training program on appropriate professional work conduct could improve formerly incarcerated employee conduct and lead to more successful outcomes for the employees and the organization. The program helps to create positive social change and may lead to determinations of whether similar training in other organizations would improve successful work outcomes.

Summary

In this section, I described that formerly incarcerated employees at Agency A are exhibiting inappropriate professional work conduct which leads to unsuccessful employment outcomes. This administrative study was conducted to create an effective training program for formerly incarcerated employees to train them in appropriate professional work conduct. The training will be effective within this organization and may also be used to achieve more successful employment outcomes for formerly incarcerated employees in other similar organizations.

In the next section, concepts, models, and theories will be described and the connection will be made between the concepts, models, and theories and the research study. The study's relevance to public organizations will be provided. The background and context of Agency A will be explained and a description of the role of the DPA student researcher will be provided.

Section 2: Conceptual Framework and Relevant Literature

Introduction

Management within the organization, Agency A, has recognized that at least 90% of its formerly incarcerated employees lack appropriate professional work conduct (CEO, personal communication, October 6, 2020). The study is based on the development of a training program to improve professional work conduct of Agency A's formerly incarcerated employees leading to an improvement in their professional work conduct. This study provides information as to how the training program was developed as well as evidence-based practices researched and used to develop the training program for formerly incarcerated employees. Improvements in the professional work conduct of formerly incarcerated employees benefit Agency A as well as the employees.

The questions answered in this study were:

RQ1: What topics should be included in the training program to improve appropriate professional work conduct of formerly incarcerated employees to maintain successful employment?

RQ2: According to employee written reprimands, what are the reasons they give for the documented behaviors that may cause them to lose their jobs?

RQ3: What interventions are already in place at the organization to help the formerly incarcerated employees manage these behaviors?

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a program to train Agency A's formerly incarcerated employees on appropriate professional work conduct. During further discussions with Agency A management (personal communication, July 2, 2020),

it was determined that the lack of appropriate professional work conduct caused barriers to successful employment. To lessen the barriers caused by inappropriate work conduct, such as absenteeism, tardiness, and poor work performance, a training program was developed and presented to Agency A to address these work conduct behaviors with the formerly incarcerated employees.

A training program to educate formerly incarcerated individuals employed by Agency A about appropriate professional work conduct was developed to improve the successful employment of formerly incarcerated individuals. The improvement of appropriate professional work conduct of the formerly incarcerated individuals employed by Agency A also could improve the high turnover rate within the organization. In this section, I explain the concepts, models, and theories and how this study is relevant to public organizations. Organization background, context, and the role of the DPA student/researcher are discussed.

Concepts, Models, and Theories

In order to develop the training program for formerly incarcerated individuals, the paradigm for counterproductive behaviors provided the framework for the research, and adult learning theory provided the framework for the deliverable. The paradigm for counterproductive behaviors is a combination of theories and includes situational variables and individual differences that play into counterproductive workplace behavior (Martinko et al., 2002). Adult learning theory includes Knowles's six assumptions that explain why adults choose to learn and in what conditions they learn best. The literature search strategy used in this study was to develop the research questions and identify the

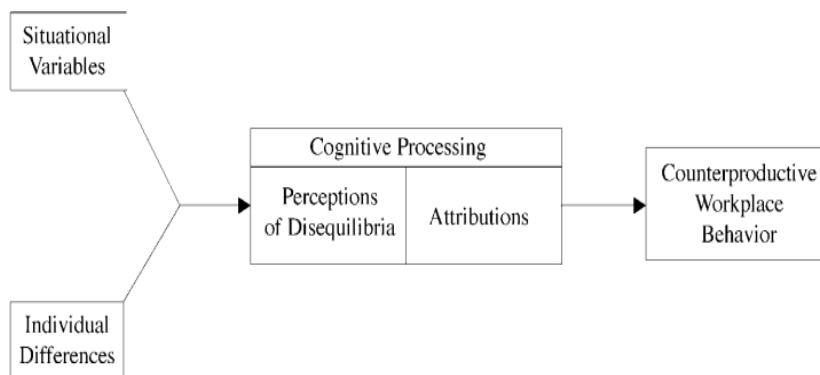
main keywords and phrases related to those questions. The Walden University online library was utilized to obtain literature to review in support of the research study.

Paradigm for Counterproductive Behaviors

According to Martinko et al. (2002), there are many theories about counterproductive work behavior. The theories are compared according to individual differences, situational variables, cognitive processing to include causal attributions and perceptions of disequilibria, and counterproductive behaviors.

Figure 1

Paradigm for Counterproductive Behaviors



Martinko et al. (2002) compared and combined 19 theories or approaches to detail the paradigm for counterproductive behaviors. Many of the counterproductive behavior theories are based on the same ideas and reflect the same processes (Martinko et al, 2002). Environmental and individual differences are both important in understanding counterproductive behavior.

Martinko et al. (2002) explained that many theories about counterproductive behavior incorporate the idea of information processing. This includes how people

evaluate the quality of their outcomes and how people's beliefs about the causes of their outcomes affect behavior. The theory also explains that people's perceptions of the quality of their outcomes come before their counterproductive behavior. For example, if an individual sees that their disappointing outcome was due to something they did or did not do, they are more likely to take the blame for that outcome. But, if an individual perceives that their disappointing outcome was caused by another person or another outside factor, they are more likely to exhibit counterproductive behavior.

According to Martinko et al. (2002), individual differences relate to counterproductive behavior. These differences include gender, locus of control, attribution style, core self-evaluations, integrity, negative affectivity, and the situation or the environment. According to Eagly and Steffan (1986), men are more likely to express aggression than women. Some individuals assign responsibility for outcomes to external sources while others assign responsibility internally. Storms and Spector (1987) explained that people with an external locus of control are more likely to exhibit counterproductive behaviors.

Seligman (1990) described the attribution styles as optimistic and pessimistic. Martinko and Gardner (1982) explained that the pessimistic attribution style may lead an individual to experience learned helplessness. Martinko et al. (2002) explained that integrity has a relation to productive and counterproductive behaviors. These counterproductive behaviors may include low productivity, absenteeism, stealing, violence, drug use, and disciplinary problems. Negative affectivity is described by Watson and Clark (1984) as how individuals experience emotions like anger, fear,

hostility, and anxiety. An individual with negative affectivity is more likely to view things as negative or threatening, thus exhibiting counterproductive behavior. Martinko (2002) described organizational environments that may lead to counterproductive behavior and those that are less likely to lead to counterproductive behavior. All these differences were taken into account when developing the training program in this study.

Adult Learning Theory

The concept that supports this qualitative study is adult learning theory, or andragogy, made popular by Knowles. Adult learning theory works well for training within businesses. According to Chan (2010), Knowles's adult learning theory consists of six assumptions: (a) self-directedness, (b) use of experience in learning, (c) readiness to learn, (d) orientation of learning, (e) internal motivation, and (f) need to know. Chan (2010) explained that adult learners are self-directed and tend to draw on their own experiences in their learning. When adults believe they need to know information, they are more ready to learn. Adults want to learn what they need now rather than what they may need later. Adult learners are more internally motivated than they are by external factors. Adult learners want to know the why of learning to determine the value of the learning. Because adult learners have these qualities, teachers should not teach adults but rather facilitate adult learning.

According to Loeng (2020), self-directed learning is an important part of adult learning. Loeng explained that Allen Tough and Malcolm Knowles were doctoral students of Cyril Houle. Houle was connected to self-directed learning through Tough and Knowles. Loeng indicated that self-directed learning should be viewed as more than

a definition of the concept. Loeng (2020) presented the idea that self-directed learning should be a collaborative process between the adult learners and the teacher in which the learner has the opportunity to determine what is worth learning and has input on the goals of that learning. Loeng further explained that self-directed learning is not just focused on an individual learner. Learning is a collaborative effort in which knowledge and experience can be shared. Self-directed learning should be the opposite of what Knowles called *teacher-directed learning* (Loeng, 2020). Knowles believed that people who take initiative in learning will learn more and learn better than those who are passively taught. Formerly incarcerated employees who are motivated to perform well on the job will benefit from participating in their own learning process and collaborating with others.

Helyer (2015) discussed the critical role of reflection in work-based learning. Reflecting on knowledge and experience that workers already have can help them to learn what is needed for their current job. According to Helyer (2015), this type of learning is most effective when done in collaboration with others. When learning with others, there is an opportunity to share ideas, network with others, and receive input from each other. Helyer (2015) stated, “critical reflection encourages work-based students to change practice within the workplace,” which may enhance their work performance as well as the performance of the organization. Learning from experience in life is an important factor in the process of improving. Formerly incarcerated employees willing to openly share their experience and reflect on what was learned from the experience will have the ability to apply that learning in a training program about appropriate professional work conduct.

Tonseth (2015) discussed that, many times, adults' readiness to learn stems from some sort of transition going on in their lives, such as job changes, marriages, children, and retirement. Based on this information, re-entry into society and the world of work after being incarcerated could be another example of a transition in life. If a formerly incarcerated employee is motivated not to return to prison, then re-entry would be a transition that motivates them to learn the ways they can perform well on a job. These individuals will want to learn about appropriate professional work conduct to successfully maintain employment, earn wage increases, and have the ability to earn promotions.

Gom (2009) defined motivation as an influence that drives a person to achieve something in their life. Gom (2009) explained that many adult learners are internally motivated to learn subjects that are immediately relevant to their work or personal life. Adult learners want to be given real-world problems they can work to solve, and through working on real-world problems, learning takes place. Not only is this learning more applicable to immediate use but also supports internal motivation.

According to Lukianova (2016), adult learners must have specific needs for learning and the learning must have value to them. If formerly incarcerated employees understand the need to learn about appropriate professional work conduct and how it can improve their success on the job, the learning will have value to them. Lieb (1991) explained that instructors teaching adults need to understand how adults learn best. Lieb (1991) summarized the characteristics of adult learners as presented by Knowles and reiterated that adult learners are autonomous and self-directed. Adults come with life

experience and knowledge and are goal- and relevancy-oriented. Adults are practical and want to learn what is useful for them and need to be shown respect for what they bring to the classroom; they need to be allowed to express their knowledge and opinions during learning (Lieb, 1991).

Falasca (2011) identified potential barriers to adult learners and techniques and strategies that can be used to overcome those barriers. Falasca listed Knowles's characteristics of adult learners. Falasca (2011) presented two main barriers to adult learning: external and internal. External barriers are described as beyond a learner's control. Internal barriers are described as reflective of personal attitudes; an example given by Falasca (2011) is "thinking one is too old to learn." Strategies suggested to overcome barriers to learning include involving learners in the planning process, involving learners in determining their learning needs, encouraging learners to develop their own learning objectives, and helping learners to carry out their learning plans.

The training program developed for Agency A involved formerly incarcerated adult learners willing to take on a more self-directed learning approach in which they learn from experience. These adult learners need to be ready to grow and develop in relation to practical skills that help better solve problems and work better by improving appropriate professional work behavior (O'Neill, 2020). Using Knowles's adult learning theory to guide the development of the program in this study allows the formerly incarcerated employees to be part of an environment in which they are involved actively in the learning process and supported in applying their knowledge and learning on the job. The training program will take into consideration that there will be individuals with

learning disabilities that may include difficulties with problem solving, reading and comprehension, attention, and memory (see Takemoto, 2016). The training program needs to be developed with individuals with disabilities in mind to increase the benefits of training for all formerly incarcerated employees (see Koo, 2015). The program was developed to include accommodations to assist with these difficulties such as reading aloud to the participants and explaining the meaning of information that is not understood, problem solving together as a group, frequent breaks, reminders to stay focused, and activities to allow practice in a real-world setting.

Formerly incarcerated employees of Agency A were incarcerated before becoming employed at the organization. Recidivism is defined by Ramakers et al. (2017) as repeating crimes or repeat offender. Re-entry is defined by Visser et al. (2011) as transitioning from jail or prison back into the community.

Relevance to Public Organizations

Doleac (2018) explained the importance of employment for individuals re-entering the community after being incarcerated. According to the research of Doleac (2018), transitional jobs do not have an impact on reducing the rates of recidivism, but stronger, low-wage employment or higher paying high need employment such as construction may reduce recidivism. Fahey et al. (2006) suggested structured employment opportunities to give the formerly incarcerated positive work experience and to strengthen training in the hard and soft skills of formerly incarcerated individuals.

As explained by the National Institute of Corrections (2021), employment readiness is needed for incarcerated individuals before being released from prison.

Employment readiness includes skills to obtain employment as well as skills to maintain employment. Agency A's workforce consists of 20% formerly incarcerated individuals, and they have exhibited work conduct that is inappropriate and unprofessional including but not limited to tardiness, absenteeism, and low productivity. Agency A experienced high turnover rates for five years due, in part, to the lack of understanding of appropriate professional work conduct. This lack of understanding resulted in the eventual termination of employees because the inappropriate work conduct did not change.

Management within the organization recognized that many of its formerly incarcerated employees lacked appropriate professional work conduct. As explained by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO, personal communication, October 6, 2020), appropriate professional work conduct is defined by the organization as punctuality, dependability, thoroughness, competence, productiveness, and respectfulness. According to Agency A's CEO, management places much importance on appropriate professional work conduct (CEO, personal communication, October 6, 2020). In conversation with Agency A's production and retail managers (2020), it is understood that Agency A's formerly incarcerated employees have either not been shown or taught the basics of appropriate professional work conduct but have been witness to inappropriate work conduct or have not yet completely grasped past training about appropriate professional work conduct. Agency A's management team stated that these issues have caused barriers to successful employment. Many times, inappropriate work conduct was the leading cause of job loss for formerly incarcerated Agency A employees.

The National Institute of Corrections (2021) described a training program for incarcerated individuals that focuses on work readiness skills through practice in a setting that emulates a real-world work setting. These programs are beneficial for training prisoners before release, but they may need further training on skills to retain employment. The goal of this research study was to develop a training program to be put into place at the Agency A organization. Through training about appropriate professional work conduct, Agency A's formerly incarcerated employees are much more likely to maintain successful employment, earn wage increases, and earn opportunities to be promoted. Formerly incarcerated employees able to put appropriate professional work conduct into practice on the job promote positive social change because they are more able to maintain successful employment and are less likely to lose their job. Because of this, they do not place a burden on the community for resources that can be accessed by individuals who truly cannot work.

The American Enterprise Institute (2018) explained that prison-based education relates to less misconduct in the prison system and increases post-prison employment by 13%. The current research study established the effectiveness of soft skills training on the job to improve appropriate work conduct. Thoresen (2017) discussed the theories that change in the world are complex and generate tension. She states that education is supposed to prepare individuals by giving them the capability to adapt and respond to complex changes.

Formerly incarcerated employees of Agency A needed further training to learn that there is an expectation for employees to exhibit appropriate professional work

behaviors in order to retain employment and be a successful member of the organization. Roberts et al. (2017) described how transformative learning brings together experience, reflection, and dialogue to promote individual change. Transformational learning involves interaction and communication. Noland and Richards (2014) explained that transformational learning leads to positive learning and motivation.

According to De La Haye et al. (2023), policies to reduce employment barriers faced by formerly incarcerated individuals are becoming more common, but the formerly incarcerated are still facing difficulties with employment. Link and Phelan (2001) explain that members of society distinguish, and label people based on their differences. One of those differences is having been incarcerated. Criminal stereotypes as explained by Baur et al. (2018) cause formerly incarcerated individuals to be thought of as dangerous, dishonest, lazy, and selfish. According to De La Haye et al. (2023), formerly incarcerated individuals are more likely to be employed in certain industries such as administrative support, waste management, food services and hospitality, manufacturing, construction and retail because of the criminal record stigma. Once a formerly incarcerated employee is hired, there is, many times, discrimination in the form of poor training, less opportunity for career advancement, poor treatment from peers, and a lack of willingness from others to help (Baur et al., 2018). De La Haye et al. (2023) pointed out that wage increases for formerly incarcerated individuals are not earned as quickly as they are by other employees. If the formerly incarcerated individuals are not working for an understanding organization, they seem to have a more difficult time retaining employment than other employees in some instances because of conditions placed upon them by the legal system

such as too many appointments with parole officers or too many court dates requiring their presence.

Agency A does employ formerly incarcerated individuals and work with them to ensure they are able to keep appointments and take care of the requirements of their parole and probation. For formerly incarcerated employees of Agency A to successfully maintain employment, they need further training to learn that there is an expectation for employees to exhibit appropriate professional work behaviors in order to retain employment and be a successful member of the organization.

Organization Background and Context

Agency A needs to better assist formerly incarcerated individuals to maintain employment to decrease recidivism by understanding the specific behaviors that cause the formerly incarcerated to get terminated and find effective ways to teach the information to successfully create the desired behaviors and practices to retain employment.

Agency A is a nonprofit organization with a mission to serve individuals with disabilities and disadvantages through education, training, and employment (Agency A, 2021). Employment of individuals recently out of prison and/or jail within the Agency A organization is a large part of that mission. Agency A consists of a corporate office, production plants, an Outlet store, and retail stores in towns across Northeast Texas. (Agency A, 2021).

Agency A employs approximately 400 individuals. The four Agency A production facilities prepare between \$18 million to \$20 million in donated merchandise

and new goods to be sent out to the retail stores each year. This amount of production allows the stores to earn approximately \$275 thousand per week to fund Agency A's mission of employing individuals with disabilities and disadvantages. Agency A's workforce consists of 20% formerly incarcerated employees, and they exhibit work conduct that is inappropriate and unprofessional including but not limited to tardiness, absenteeism, and low productivity. Agency A had high turnover rates for five years due, in part, to the lack of understanding of appropriate professional work conduct.

At Agency A supported employment is defined as placing individuals with disabilities and disadvantages in a competitive job, and provide training and support directly related to successful employment outcomes (Employment Services, n.d.). Job coaching is defined as providing additional training and support to assist individuals with learning and performing their job tasks successfully (Job Coaching, n.d.).

As stated by De La Haye et al. (2023), "Reviewing and addressing factors that impact formerly incarcerated individuals within the United States remains important. Six hundred thousand individuals who were previously incarcerated at the federal or state level are discharged and reenter communities across the nation."

Because of changes made in sentencing policies over several decades, there are more individuals being sent to prison for longer periods of time (Haney, 2015). According to Haney (2015), this led to prison overcrowding which in turn led to treatment and situations that left individuals worse off than before being incarcerated as they were released back into their communities. Haney (2015) goes on to explain that this

issue has led to a decreased ability for released individuals to successfully reintegrate into society after release from incarceration.

Role of the DPA Student/Researcher

For full disclosure as a researcher, I am a part of the leadership team at Agency A and will use the training program created by this study for use with existing and new formerly incarcerated employees. I conducted the semi-structured interviews with executive leadership and managers that were able to provide insight into employees' work conduct. During my tenure at the organization, I personally observed the types of inappropriate work conduct exhibited by the formerly incarcerated employees at Agency A. I do not supervise any of the individuals that were interviewed, but I guarded against biases and preconceived ideas during the bracketing phase of the research. My biases were addressed by only utilizing the answers given in the semi-structured interviews and not including my own opinions.

Summary

Agency A has a history of utilizing negative consequences to handle employees' inappropriate work conduct. Under new leadership, it is time for Agency A to invest in the employees through training, mentoring, and positive reinforcement. A training program was created using Adult Learning Theory and Experiential Learning Theory to address the training needs of the formerly incarcerated employees. Positive social change was promoted when formerly incarcerated employees put appropriate professional work conduct into practice on the job and were able to maintain successful employment. In section three, the data collection process and analysis are described.

Section 3: Data Collection Process and Analysis

Introduction

Currently, formerly incarcerated individuals make up 20% of Agency A's workforce and they exhibit work conduct that is inappropriate and unprofessional, including tardiness, absenteeism, and low productivity (accounting specialist, personal communication, July 2, 2021). Within the last 5 years, Agency A has experienced high turnover rates due, in part, to a lack of understanding of appropriate professional work conduct among employees. This lack of understanding results in the eventual termination of employees because the inappropriate work conduct does not change.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a program to train Agency A's formerly incarcerated employees on appropriate professional work conduct. A training program to address inappropriate work conduct and educate formerly incarcerated individuals employed about appropriate professional work conduct was developed to improve the successful employment of these formerly incarcerated individuals. The improvement of appropriate professional work conduct among formerly incarcerated individuals employed by Agency A may also improve the high turnover rate within the organization. Agency A is a nonprofit organization with a mission to serve individuals with disabilities and disadvantages through education, training, and employment. Employment of individuals recently out of prison and/or jail within the organization is a large part of that mission.

In Section 3, I address the practice-focused questions, sources of evidence, and analysis and synthesis of the research.

Practice-Focused Questions

In this study, I focused on developing a training program to assist formerly incarcerated employees at Agency A to develop appropriate professional conduct to maintain successful employment. Management within the organization recognized that at least 90% of its formerly incarcerated employees lack appropriate professional work conduct. As explained by the CEO, appropriate professional work conduct is defined by the organization as punctuality, dependability, thoroughness, competence, productiveness, and respectfulness.

There is a gap in knowledge as to whether a training program developed with the needs of formerly incarcerated employees can successfully train the individuals to learn and display appropriate professional work conduct to maintain successful employment. The research questions to be answered by this qualitative study were:

RQ1: What topics should be included in the training program to improve appropriate professional work conduct of formerly incarcerated employees to maintain successful employment?

RQ2: According to employee written reprimands, what are the reasons they give for the documented behaviors that may cause them to lose their jobs?

RQ3: What interventions are already in place at the organization to help the formerly incarcerated employees manage these behaviors?

Based on research done by Martinko et al. (2002), there are many theories that attempt to explain counterproductive workplace behaviors and their nature, causes, and effects in

the workplace. The research questions were developed taking into account the nature, causes, and effects of these counterproductive work behaviors.

An interview approach aligned with the research questions because it could be used to gain an understanding of inappropriate conduct exhibited by the formerly incarcerated employees within the organization and the inappropriate work behaviors deemed most important to be addressed in the training program. Appropriate professional work conduct is defined by the organization as punctuality, dependability, thoroughness, competence, productiveness, and respectfulness. Incarceration is defined for this study as time in prison. Jobs are defined as positions within Agency A in which an individual performs work tasks and earns a wage in return.

Sources of Evidence

The evidence for this study came from Agency A. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the vice president of human resources, vice president of donated goods retail, regional directors, retail store managers, and plant managers. The data collected through these interviews were used to determine the appropriate professional conduct behaviors that needed to be addressed through the training program. This evidence relates to the development of a training program that was the purpose of the study. The information gained through the semi-structured interviews allowed me to develop an effective training program.

Evidence Generated for the Administrative Study

Data from interviews were gathered to determine the previously incarcerated employees' current level of understanding about appropriate professional work conduct to determine the specific training needed by the organization.

Participants

I was given a roster of possible volunteer participants for the interviews by the CEO of Agency A. I invited the individuals on that roster to participate by presenting them individually with the flyer (Appendix D) and describing the research study. During that invitation, I explained to them that their participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time during the process. The interview process was confidential. No other person saw or heard the interviews being conducted. The participants and I were in a private room the organization made available for me to use for the interviews. Participants were not referred to by name or any other known identifier. The participants were only referred to by number.

Semi-structured interviews with the vice president of human resources, vice president of donated goods retail, regional director, retail store manager, and plant manager were completed to determine the appropriate professional conduct behaviors that needed to be addressed through the training program. Of the 20% of formerly incarcerated employees working at Agency A, 10% work in an area that includes three towns with four retail stores, a production plant, and an outlet store (accounting specialist, personal communication, July 2, 2021). The Agency A vice president of human resources, vice president of donated goods retail, regional directors, retail store

managers, and plant managers identified inappropriate work behavior that needed to be addressed through the training program. The five participants were chosen due to their geographical locations within the organization. I explained the research study and asked if they were willing to participate. Each participant agreed and was aware they could withdraw their participation at any time. The relevance of these participants to the practice-focused questions was their knowledge of the formerly incarcerated employees' inappropriate work conduct.

Procedures

Semi-structured interviews with the vice president of human resources, vice president of donated goods retail, regional manager, retail store manager, and plant manager were conducted. Collection of primary data was completed within 1 month. As explained by Adeoye and Olenik (2021), "semi-structured interviews are the preferred data collection method when the researcher's goal is to better understand the participant's unique perspective rather than a generalized understanding of the phenomenon." The steps to conducting, analyzing, and reporting semi-structured interview data are described by Adeoye and Olenik (2021) as making sure semi-structured interviews are appropriate for the study; determining whether to use probability, random sampling, or non-probability sampling; reporting the data collection design to IRB; conducting and transcribing interviews; coding the data; and drawing conclusions.

The current vice president of human resources, vice president of donated goods retail, regional manager, plant manager, and retail store manager committed to participating in the interview process. In the case that a current retail store manager

terminated employment with Agency A, a flyer (see Appendix D) was created to recruit replacement managers. The interviews were used to gather information about what information and experiences needed to be incorporated into the training program. The interviews took place in-person at the main facility in the Texoma area. The room utilized for conducting the interviews was private. Interview data were recorded using an audio recorder and transcribed later by me, so the information was available throughout the research process. I transcribed the interviews by listening to them, pausing the recording, writing down the information, and then listening again until all the information was transcribed.

Before each interview, I provided the informed consent form to the participant, and the participant read the form. Before the participant signed the informed consent form, I answered any questions they had about consent. I interviewed one of the retail managers first. The interview questions (see Appendix B) were asked in numerical order, starting with question number one. The question, “What are the three most documented reasons for the formerly incarcerated employees at Agency A to lose their jobs?” was asked because, according to Martinko et al. (2002), counterproductive work behavior needs to be defined. The questions “If a formerly incarcerated employee has no transportation will Agency A provide transportation? If so, in what ways does Agency A do this?” and “How does Agency A assist formerly incarcerated employees with accessing community resources?” were asked because after release, formerly incarcerated employees rely heavily on assistance from others for necessities such as cash, clothing, housing, emotional support, financial assistance, and transportation (Visher et al., 2011).

As the retail manager answered each question, I recorded the answers using an audio recorder and transcribed the answers for documentation at a later date. If clarification was needed on any of the answers given by the retail manager, I asked for clarification. I interviewed the vice president of donated goods retail, the regional director, the plant manager, and the vice president of human resources. Participants were interviewed based on their availability. The question, “Do you as a manager ever overlook any inappropriate work behavior from a formerly incarcerated employee? If so, what type of inappropriate behavior would you overlook? Why?” was asked to address the issues discussed by Martinko et al. (2002) of formerly incarcerated employees assigning blame on external things, having a negative self-image, and effects of situations and/or the environment. The questions, “What are the appropriate work behaviors you expect from your employees?” and “Describe to me any interventions provided by Agency A to assist formerly incarcerated employees with modifying inappropriate work behaviors.” were asked because according to Martinko et al. (2002) counterproductive work behavior needs to be defined. The remaining two questions, “As a manager, how do you address transportation issues for formerly incarcerated employees?” and “As a manager, do you assist with accessing community services for formerly incarcerated employees? If so, how do you do this?” were asked to address the issues discussed by Martinko et al. (2002) of formerly incarcerated employees assigning blame on external things, having a negative self-image, and effects of situations and/or the environment.

As the questions were answered, I recorded the answers using an audio recorder and transcribed the answers for documentation at a later date. If clarification was needed

on any of the answers given by the participants, I asked for clarification. The information was kept in a locked filing cabinet to which I had the only key. If there had not been a sufficient amount of data for the research project, I would have increased the area to other outlying plants and retail stores in the territory of Agency A.

Instrumentation

Because this type of training is not common and there is no literature describing training programs for formerly incarcerated employees while they are employed, the interview questions were developed based on internet information describing why it is so difficult for formerly incarcerated employees to obtain employment. The internet information came from an article, “Challenges That Formerly Incarcerated People Have when Job Hunting.”

Strategies for Recruitment

I only had access to data provided through the answers to the interview questions. Because any data shared by the organization was not associated with an individual’s name, there was no ethical dilemma. The client organization allowed participants to complete the interviews, but the participants were aware they had the choice to withdrawal that participation if they chose to do so. Good working relationships already existed with the participants and there was no reason to assume the relationships would not remain good throughout the process.

Consent and Privacy

The organization’s leadership members that chose to be a part of the research study by participating in informational interviews were given a confidentiality statement

which let them know that their name would not be used in the research. No data information was associated with the name of any of the formerly incarcerated employees. The data was reported in general numbers and percentages for the group as a whole. After the study, write-up of results for the Professional Administrative Study, and grading have been completed, all data will be destroyed.

Client Organization Approval

See appendix A.

Walden IRB Approval

There will be no formerly incarcerated employees included in the research study. The study was based solely on data provided by the vice president of human resources, vice president of donated goods retail, a regional director, a plant manager, and a retail manager. Agency A granted permission for the research study to take place within their facilities. IRB approvals were obtained for this study before any research activities took place.

Analysis and Synthesis

Interview answers were recorded on an audio recorder and later transcribed in a written format by me so that the information could be reviewed as needed during the write-up of the research study. I transcribed the interviews by listening to them, pausing the recording, writing down the information, and then listening again until all of the information was written. In order to ensure I guarded against personal bias in my analysis, and was working within the research boundaries, I took a moment to review the purpose of the study. I reflected on the research questions and reminded myself what was

expected of me as a qualitative data analyst. I then listed all my views, thoughts, beliefs and biases about employment for formerly incarcerated individuals. After exploring my own potential bias, I created a mental state that was free from my perspectives, preconceptions and expectations. At the completion of this process, I began reviewing the transcription/notes. Interview data, based on the knowledge of the vice president of human resources, vice president of donated goods retail, a regional director, a plant manager, and a retail store manager about employees' inappropriate work conduct and training needs of the organization, were utilized to determine the topics to be included in the training program. The identified training needs were then incorporated into the training in a format consistent with the Paradigm for Counterproductive Behaviors and Adult Learning Theory.

Analysis Systems

Interview answers were in written format. There were no names of formerly incarcerated employees on any of the data shared by the participants.

Analysis Procedures (coding)

A thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the data because it is a way to analyze large data sets by breaking them down into broad themes. The written transcripts from the semi-structured interviews were used to gather the information needed to complete an inductive approach thematic analysis. According to Caulfield (2019), an inductive approach allows the data to determine the themes that will be used based on what the researcher finds. Because I was interested in the participant's stated answers to the interview questions, a semantic approach was used.

The first step of the thematic analysis was to become familiar with the data. To do this, I read through the written transcripts of all of the semi-structured interviews, making initial notes where needed. Next, the data was coded. To code the data, highlighters were used to highlight any text in the written interview transcripts that stood out as being relevant to the codes that were developed. All phrases and sentences that matched the codes were also highlighted. Each code's information was highlighted in a different color. After going through all of the text, the data was moved into groups. Each group was identified by a code. This showed what the main points were within the data. After the codes were developed, I looked them over and came up with themes. Codes that needed to be grouped together under each theme were grouped together. Codes that were not relevant were discarded. The next step in the process was to review the themes making sure they accurately represented the data. Once I determined the correct themes, they were named and defined so that the data was better understood. The analysis of the data was written up to explain the findings.

Ensuring that the interview answers were documented accurately lessened the possibility of having missed or incorrect data. Any outliers will be discussed in the results section of the research paper. Any outliers can be used in the training program but will not be a main topic in the training program.

Credibility

Credibility in the qualitative study is determined by the peer reviews from individuals in the same field of study. Peer reviews ensure quality standards and provide credibility.

Transferability

Transferability of the research can be shown through the ability of other similar organizations to apply the research to their formerly incarcerated employee populations and obtaining comparable results. Another organization's selection of formerly incarcerated employees should benefit from the training program in the same way that the formerly incarcerated employees of Agency A benefit from the training program.

Dependability

Data triangulation will be used to show dependability. The leadership of Agency A will be interviewed about their perspective on the training program developed for the formerly incarcerated employees in the organization.

Confirmability

Reflexivity will be used to determine the confirmability of the research. I will examine my own belief systems, judgements, and practices that may affect the research so that there is no unintentional influence on the outcome of the research.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to obtain information to develop a successful training program to improve the professional work conduct of formerly incarcerated employees at Agency A. Interviews with key leaders in the organization were used to collect the information. In section four, the findings and implications of the research study will be discussed. Recommendations will be made, and the strengths and limitations of the study will be determined.

Section 4: Results and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a program to train Agency A's formerly incarcerated employees on appropriate professional work conduct. During further discussions with Agency A's management (2020), it was determined that the lack of appropriate professional work conduct causes barriers to successful employment. To lessen the barriers caused by inappropriate work conduct, such as absenteeism, tardiness, and poor work performance, a training program was developed and presented to Agency A to address these work conduct behaviors. The program will train Agency A's formerly incarcerated employees on appropriate professional work conduct.

The guiding questions for this study are as follows:

RQ1: What topics should be included in the training program to improve appropriate professional work conduct of formerly incarcerated employees to maintain successful employment?

RQ2: According to employee written reprimands, what are the reasons they give for the documented behaviors that may cause them to lose their jobs?

RQ3: What interventions are already in place at the organization to help the formerly incarcerated employees manage these behaviors?

During this research study, there were organizational changes in the form of changing personnel at Agency A. The participants of the study did change because of personnel changes, but they were all presented with the flyer and asked if they were willing to participate. Each participant agreed and was aware they could withdraw their

participation at any time. The relevance of these participants to the practice-focused questions was their knowledge of the formerly incarcerated employees' inappropriate work conduct.

Within this section, findings and implications of the data will be reported. The interpretation of the findings, implications, and recommendations will be discussed. The deliverable and recommendations will be presented along with evidence of trustworthiness and strengths and limitations of the study.

Findings

There were five participants in the study, each answering some or all of the following interview questions:

Q1: What are the three most documented reasons for the formerly incarcerated employees at Agency A to lose their jobs?

Q2: If a formerly incarcerated employee has no transportation will Agency A provide transportation? If so, in what ways does Agency A do this?

Q3: Is there any public transportation in the area that Agency A will assist the formerly incarcerated employees with?

Q4: How does Agency A assist formerly incarcerated employees with accessing community resources?

Q5: Do you as a manager ever not document any minor inappropriate work behavior from a formerly incarcerated employee? If so, what type of inappropriate behavior would you not document? Why?

Q6: If a minor inappropriate behavior is not documented, is anything done to address the behavior? If so, give an example.

Q7: What are the appropriate work behaviors you expect from your employees?

Q8: Describe to me any interventions provided by Agency A to assist formerly incarcerated employees with modifying inappropriate work behaviors.

Q9: As a manager, how do you address transportation issues for formerly incarcerated employees?

Q10: As a manager, do you assist with accessing community services for formerly incarcerated employees? If so, how do you do this?

Participant 1

Participant 1 was a 65-year-old Native American woman and the manager of one of the local retail stores. She has worked for the organization since she was 17 years old. I asked her, “What are the three most documented reasons for the formerly incarcerated employees at Agency A to lose their jobs?” Participant 1 stated that the three most documented reasons are absenteeism, stealing on the job, and failure to follow company policies and procedures. I asked, “If a formerly incarcerated employee has no transportation will Agency A provide transportation? If so, in what ways does Agency A do this?” Participant 1 stated that Agency A may provide transportation to the employee or assist with transportation plans and the employee would be referred to Mission Services.

I asked, “How does Agency A assist formerly incarcerated employees with accessing community resources?” Participant 1 stated that they are referred to Mission

Services. I asked, “Do you as a manager ever not document any minor inappropriate work behavior from a formerly incarcerated employee? If so, what type of inappropriate behavior would you not document? Why?” Participant 1 stated that she would typically not document an employee slacking off and not staying on task because it can almost always be resolved with a conversation and providing some coaching. I asked, “If a minor inappropriate behavior is not documented, is anything done to address the behavior?” Participant 1 stated that there are times when a Mission Services job coach would be requested to come assist by providing job coaching. I asked, “What are the appropriate work behaviors you expect from your employees?” Participant 1 stated that she expects them to arrive on time and work scheduled hours, stay on task, be motivated, have a positive attitude, follow company policies and procedures, and be professional.

Participant 2

Participant 2 was a 32-year-old African American man and the vice president of donated goods retail. He has worked for the organization for 2 years but has worked at other organizations throughout the network located in different states. I asked, “What are the three most documented reasons for the formerly incarcerated employees at Agency A to lose their jobs?” Participant 2 stated that the three most documented reasons are tardiness, lack of productivity, and excessive time taken on breaks and lunches. I asked, “If a formerly incarcerated employee has no transportation will Agency A provide transportation? If so, in what way does Agency A do this?” Participant 2 stated that the employee is connected with Mission Services. He went on to state that they sometimes help employees set up rides with the public transportation provider and sometimes they

can provide employees with money through the employee assistance program to pay for car repairs or down payments. I asked, “How does Agency A assist formerly incarcerated employees with accessing community resources?” Participant 2 stated that they work with Mission Services. I asked, “Do you as a manager ever not document any minor inappropriate work behavior from a formerly incarcerated employee? If so, what type of inappropriate behavior would you not document? Why?” Participant 2 stated, “Yes, tardiness, lack of productivity, excessive time taken on breaks and lunches. I have found that it goes further with the employee to have a simple conversation about it.” I asked, “If a minor inappropriate behavior is not documented, is anything done to address the behavior? If so, give an example.” Participant 2 stated, “Conversation.” I asked, “What are the appropriate work behaviors you expect from your employees?” Participant 2 stated that he expects them to be at work and be productive. I asked, “Describe to me any interventions provided by Agency A to assist formerly incarcerated employees with modifying inappropriate work behaviors.” Participant 2 stated, “Set them up with Mission Services to receive job coaching for reentry assistance.”

Participant 3

Participant three is a 28-year-old African American female and works as a Regional Director. She has worked for the organization for one year and six months. She moved from another organization in the network located in Georgia. I asked, “Do you as a manager ever not document any minor inappropriate behavior from a formerly incarcerated employee? If so, what type of inappropriate behavior would you not document?”

Why?” Participant three said, “No, I always document even when I have a conversation with an employee about ways to correct their behavior.” I asked, “If a minor inappropriate behavior is not documented, is anything done to address the behavior? If so, give an example.” Participant three answered, “I document everything, but if there was a behavior not documented there would definitely be a conversation needed. I asked, “What are the appropriate work behaviors you expect from your employees?” Participant three stated, “Follow chain of command, stay true to core values and guiding principles.” I asked, “Describe to me any interventions provided by Agency A to assist formerly incarcerated employees with modifying inappropriate work behaviors.” Participant three answered, “Direct to Mission Services for job coaching.” I asked, “As a manager how do you address transportation issues for formerly incarcerated employees?” Participant three stated, “Connect them to Mission Services to get assistance setting up services through the public transportation provider.” I asked, “As a manager, do you assist with accessing community services for formerly incarcerated employees? If so, how do you do this?” Participant three answered, “No, I send to the Mission Services Department.”

Participant 4

Participant four is a 47-year-old Caucasian female and works as a Plant Manager. She has worked for the organization for three years. I asked, “Do you as a manager ever not document any minor inappropriate work behavior from a formerly incarcerated employee? If so, what type of inappropriate behavior would you not document? Why?” Participant four stated that she would still document but have a conversation to properly guide them to the right behavior. I asked, “If a minor inappropriate behavior is not

documented, is anything done to address the behavior? If so, give an example.”

Participant four answered, “I always document, but if not, have a conversation.” I asked, “What are the appropriate work behaviors you expect from your employees?” Participant four stated, “Be punctual, communicate, keep hands and feet to yourself, no rude comments, and be pleasant.” I asked, “Describe to me any interventions provided by Agency A to assist formerly incarcerated employees with modifying inappropriate work behaviors.” Participant four stated that she reaches out to Mission Services for a job coach or monitor.” I asked, “As a manager, how do you address transportation issues for formerly incarcerated employees?” Participant four said, “Mission Services. Depends on what they need like a gas card or something else.” I asked, “As a manager, do you assist with accessing community services for formerly incarcerated employees? If so, how do you do this?” Participant four answered, “Reach out to Mission Services.”

Participant 5

Participant five is a 66-year-old Caucasian male and works as the vice president of human resources. He has worked for the organization for two years and four months. I asked, “What are the three most documented reasons for formerly incarcerated employees at Agency A to lose their jobs?” Participant five answered, “Disrespect and violation of core value of respect, attendance. I can’t think of a third at the moment. Can we circle back to it? It’s not even theft. Our formerly incarcerated employees are not even the ones we have a theft problem with. I need to think about it. Respect is so all encompassing.” I stated, “Yes, we can come back to it.” I asked, “If a formerly incarcerated employee has no transportation will Agency A provide transportation?”

If so, in what ways does Agency A do this? Participant five answered, "To an extent. If it is convenient to provide transportation, we will until the employee is self-sustaining. But it is not permanent by any means whatsoever." I asked, "Is there any public transportation in the area that Agency A will assist the formerly incarcerated employees with?"

Participant five stated, "Yes, but it is a referral. We don't do the legwork to set it up for them. The employee has to establish the connection with the public transportation provider." I asked, "How does Agency A assist formerly incarcerated employees with accessing community resources?" Participant five answered, "Through the Mission Department and through the Human Resources Department, too depending upon the need. Because let's say someone comes and they want a job. We have to make a determination on whether they are work ready. Does he have two forms of ID? Does he have transportation? Does he have a place to live? Does he have a place to shower? If the identification is the roadblock, we certainly know how to tell them where to go and how to go about it. If it is a lack of clothing for the job, we can provide that to them through the retail stores. But if there are other needs then they would be referred to Missions."

Participant five added, "I'd like to add that 90% or more of the employees we hire here have criminal records. The problems they have on the job rarely have anything to do with their crime. They need to make sure they are work ready as I stated before. They also need to know how to be respectful to others, how to control their temper, have good communication skills, and the importance of good attendance. I did think of a third reason that they may lose their job, drug abuse (failing a random drug test)."

Findings and Implications

A thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the data because it is a way to analyze large data sets by breaking them down into broad themes. The written transcripts from the semi-structured interviews were used to gather the information needed to complete an inductive approach thematic analysis. Because I am interested in the participant's stated answers to the interview questions, a semantic approach was used.

The first step of the thematic analysis was to become familiar with the data. To do this, I read through the written transcripts of all of the semi-structured interviews, making initial notes where needed. Next, the data was coded. To code the data, highlighters were used to highlight any text in the written interview transcripts that stood out as being relevant to the codes that were developed. All phrases and sentences that matched the codes were also highlighted. Each code's information was highlighted in a different color. After going through all of the text, the data was moved into groups. Each group was identified by a code. This shows what the main points are within the data. After the codes were developed, I looked them over and came up with themes. The themes were inappropriate behavior, assistance, and Mission Services. The next step in the process was to review the themes making sure they accurately represented the data. Once I determined the correct themes, they were named and defined so that the data was better understood. The analysis of the data was written up to explain the findings. Under the theme inappropriate behaviors, the inappropriate behaviors discussed in the interviews were listed. Under the theme assistance, the types of assistance available to employees by the organization were listed. Under the theme Mission Services, the services provided by

the Mission Services Department were listed. Based on this information, I developed the orientation training. The topics of the orientation training include inappropriate behavior, assistance, and Mission Services. The orientation training covers the behaviors considered inappropriate as shown by the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, the reason that the behaviors are considered inappropriate, how the inappropriate behaviors can affect employment, and how to correct the inappropriate behaviors on the job. Under the topic of assistance, the orientation training covers assistance offered by the organization to assist formerly incarcerated employees to remain successful on the job. The assistance offered by the organization includes job coaching, transportation and/or transportation plans, and accessing community resources. Under the third topic, Mission Services, the orientation training program covers the services provided by the Mission Services department and how to request assistance from the Mission Services department. Services offered include job coaching, employee assistance program, transportation services, housing resources, food bank, and connection to community resources.

Ensuring that the interview answers were documented accurately lessened the possibility of having missed or incorrect data. Outliers included documentation of behaviors and appropriate behaviors. Outliers were used in the training program but are not a main topic in the training program.

Interpretation of the Findings

The three topics determined by the thematic analysis were based on the similarity in answers during the interviews.

Q1: What are the three most documented reasons for formerly incarcerated employees at Agency A to lose their jobs? Absenteeism and tardiness were answers given by three participants. One participant stated that stealing is a reason a formerly incarcerated employee may lose his/her job. Failure to follow policy and procedure was an answer given by three participants in different forms. One participant stated that answer directly. One participant answered that there is excessive time being taken on lunch and breaks which is a policy violation. Another participant spoke about violation of the core value of respect and theft was talked about by two participants. These are also policy violations. One participant spoke about a lack of productivity being a reason that a formerly incarcerated employee may lose their job. Question one addresses the need to define counterproductive work behaviors as presented by Martinko et al. (2002).

Q2: If a formerly incarcerated employee has no transportation will Agency A provide transportation? If so, in what ways does Agency A do this? Three participants answered that Agency A will assist with transportation or assist with transportation planning. Two of the three participants that were asked this question stated that the employee would be referred to Mission Services for assistance. This question relates to the issue presented by Visher et al. (2011) that after release formerly incarcerated employees rely heavily on assistance from others for things such as cash, clothing, housing, emotional support, financial assistance, and transportation.

Q3: Is there any public transportation in the area that Agency A will assist the formerly incarcerated employee with? The answer was that there is public transportation,

and the employees can be assisted with setting it up. This question also addresses the issue of released individuals relying heavily on others for the things they need.

Q4: How does Agency A assist formerly incarcerated employees with accessing community resources? Of the three participants asked this question, three commented that the employees would be referred to Mission Services. One participant stated that human resources may be called on to assist. This question addresses the need of released individuals to rely on others for the things they need.

Q5: Do you as a manager ever not document any minor inappropriate work behavior from a formerly incarcerated employee? If so, what type of inappropriate behavior would you not document? Why? Two participants stated that they would not document behaviors such as slacking off, not staying on task, tardiness, lack of productivity, and excessive time taken on breaks and lunches because they find that a conversation about the behavior and how to correct it is sometimes better. Two participants said that they always document, but also engage in a conversation with the employee. This question addresses the issue as presented by Martinko et al. (2002) of formerly incarcerated employees assigning blame on external things, having a negative self-image, and effects of situations and the environments.

Q6: If a minor inappropriate behavior is not documented, is anything done to address the behavior? If so, give an example. One participant answered that a Mission Services job coach might be called in to assist the employee. Three participants stated that they would have a conversation with the employee. This question also addresses the issue as presented by Martinko et al. (2002) of formerly incarcerated employees

assigning blame on external things, having a negative self-image, and effects of situations and the environments.

Q7: What are the appropriate work behaviors you expect from your employees?

The answers given by the participants included such things as being on time or punctual, working scheduled hours, being motivated, positive, and professional, following policies and procedures, being productive, following the chain of command, staying true to core values and guiding principles, and good communication. This question addresses the need to define counterproductive work behaviors as presented by Martinko et al. (2002).

Q8: Describe to me any interventions provided by Agency A to assist formerly incarcerated employees with modifying inappropriate work behaviors. All participants answered that they would reach out to Mission Services to request a job coach to assist the employee.

Q9: As a manager, how do you address transportation issues for formerly incarcerated employees? The answer from participants was to connect the employees with Mission Services for assistance. This question addresses the need for released individuals to rely on others to meet their needs.

Q10: As a manager do you assist with accessing community services for formerly incarcerated employees? If so, how do you do this? The participants stated that they would set the employees up with Mission Services for assistance. This question also addresses the need for released individuals to rely on others to meet their needs.

Based on the findings, the organization needs orientation training. I have presented Agency A with the deliverable of an orientation training that includes an

orientation in which the formerly incarcerated employees learn information about three topics, inappropriate behaviors, assistance, and Mission Services. The orientation training will present the core values of the organization as well as the mission of the organization. Because of the findings of the research study, the orientation training will cover the behaviors considered inappropriate, the reason that the behaviors are considered inappropriate, how the inappropriate behaviors can affect employment, and how to correct the inappropriate behaviors on the job. The orientation training will also cover the topics of assistance provided by the organization and information about the Mission Services department.

Implications

The positive social change will impact not only the formerly incarcerated employees, but also the organization, the employees' family, and the community where the employees are living and working. The orientation training will assist in the formerly incarcerated employees' ability to successfully maintain employment with the organization. This impacts the formerly incarcerated employees by providing them wages in order to meet their needs. In turn, it positively impacts their family because it takes pressure off of other members of the family to provide for the family because now they have an additional income. It positively impacts the organization because turnover decreases and the organization is not constantly having to hire and train new employees. The community is positively impacted because the individual is contributing to society and paying taxes.

Recommendations

The student researcher has recommended an orientation training for formerly incarcerated employees to the organization to assist the formerly incarcerated employees with defining inappropriate work behaviors, learning the appropriate work behaviors expected from the organization, assistance given by the organization, assistance offered by Mission Services, and how to receive assistance from Mission Services. The first part of the orientation training covers why the information is important and how the information will assist the formerly incarcerated employees to successfully maintain employment with the organization. Within this section, the organizational mission and vision will be discussed, and core values of the organization will be defined. There will be a portion of training that focuses on appropriate and inappropriate work behaviors. Topics included are behaviors that are considered inappropriate in the workplace and why they are considered inappropriate, how those inappropriate behaviors can affect successful employment, how inappropriate behaviors can be corrected, and appropriate workplace behaviors expected by the organization. There will be a section of training focused on assistance provided by the organization. The topics included in this section are job coaching, transportation/transportation planning, and accessing community resources. The next section of training will focus on Mission Services. The topics included in this section are what services are offered by the Mission Services department, the employee assistance program, the food bank, and how to go about requesting assistance from the Mission Services department. In aligning the orientation training with the Adult Learning Theory, there is not a teacher standing in the front of a room with the

formerly incarcerated employees gathered around listening to a lecture. The orientation is facilitated by a member of the organization's Learning and Development team and the formerly incarcerated employees are active in sharing reasons why the training is important for them, sharing knowledge and experiences about the topics of training, and sharing ideas about improving work behaviors in a way that makes sense to them. They are given ownership over their learning. Any materials that are required to be read are read as a group to accommodate those that may have learning disabilities without them having to identify themselves as having a learning disability. If there are individuals with vision and/or hearing impairments, accommodation are made for those individuals as well including larger print materials and sign language interpreters.

It is recommended that Agency A implement the orientation training. It is also recommended that, once the formerly incarcerated employees complete the orientation and start to work in their position with the organization, they be reminded about the topics of the orientation training as needed in order to successfully maintain employment.

Deliverables and Recommendations

As informed by the results, the recommended solution that will potentially address the problem of formerly incarcerated employees exhibiting inappropriate work behavior leading to unsuccessful employment outcomes as identified by Agency A is the development of an orientation training program to be used with formerly incarcerated employees hired to work or currently at Agency A. The results showed that formerly incarcerated employees are lacking knowledge in the areas of defining and recognizing inappropriate work behaviors, recognizing the appropriate work behaviors expected from

Agency A, knowing about how Agency A can assist them with meeting their needs, and knowing about how Mission Services can assist them with their needs. The Adult Learning Theory was used to develop the training program because adults need a different learning environment than children. Because of this, the training program is set up to be facilitated by a learning and development staff member with learner-led discussions and activities for learning.

Strengths and Limitations of the Project

Credibility was enhanced in this research study through the transparency of the research methods being used, verification of the findings with participants, and the accurate coding of the data. Transferability is made apparent through the description of how the research can be utilized by other Agency A organizations across the country as well as with other organizations that employ formerly incarcerated individuals. Dependability is achieved through interviews with different stakeholders within the organization. Confirmability is achieved through the use of participant answers as they were given during the interview process.

The limitations to trustworthiness were that the participants had a few different ideas about expectations from the formerly incarcerated employees which caused some additions to inappropriate work behaviors other than those behaviors reported by all participants. Because the research is about inappropriate work conduct, these behaviors were included in the training program. The limitations of the study are that the study may be hard to replicate unless another organization has the same structure, the same resources, and the same ability to implement the orientation training. Other Agency A

organizations across the country do have very similar structures to Agency A so the study should be easy to replicate in those organizations.

Summary

Through interviews with participants, I was able to gather information about the organization and the formerly incarcerated individuals the organization employs. The information gleaned from the interview answers of the participants led me to present an orientation training that covers topics shown to be important in the successful employment of formerly incarcerated employees. Section five details the process for dissemination of the study results and the deliverable produced for the organization.

Section 5: Dissemination Plan and Conclusion

Dissemination Plan

The plan to disseminate the results of the study to the client organization is in an email format as well as a discussion with the CEO of the organization.

PAS Deliverable Described

The deliverable is an orientation training in which the formerly incarcerated employees learn the core values of the organization as well as the mission of the organization. Because of the findings of the research study, the orientation training will also cover the behaviors considered inappropriate, the reason the behaviors are inappropriate, how the inappropriate behaviors can affect employment, and how to correct the inappropriate behaviors on the job. The orientation training will also cover the topics of assistance provided by the organization and information about accessing those services.

The orientation training program is applicable to Agency A organizations across the United States as they all assist individuals with disabilities and disadvantages to obtain and maintain successful employment. All Agency A organizations employ formerly incarcerated individuals in their facilities. On a larger scale, any employer who employs formerly incarcerated individuals may benefit from the orientation training as a way to assist the individuals with achieving successful employment outcomes.

The potential impact for positive social change includes formerly incarcerated employees, the organization, the employees' family, and the community where the formerly incarcerated employee lives and works. The orientation training will assist in

the formerly incarcerated employees' ability to successfully maintain employment with the organization. This impacts the formerly incarcerated employees by providing them with wages to meet their needs. In turn, it positively impacts their family because it may take pressure off other members of the family to provide for the family because now they have an additional income. It positively impacts the organization because turnover may decrease, and the organization may not constantly have to hire and train new employees. The community may be positively impacted because the individual is contributing to society and paying taxes. This all aligns to the social determinants of health. If the formerly incarcerated employees maintain successful employment, they have an income. They are not dependent upon unemployment and other government benefits. They are able to better afford food, housing, and basic amenities. Those who choose to enroll in medical, dental, and vision insurance are better able to afford health services.

Summary and Conclusions

This qualitative study produced valuable information about the trouble formerly incarcerated employees experience on the job as employees of Agency A. The orientation training program that was created will assist formerly incarcerated employees to maintain successful employment benefiting themselves, their families, the organization, and the community. It is important to assist formerly incarcerated employees to gain the training, skills, and knowledge needed so they are better able to work successfully.

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Appendix A: Scope of Work for PAS

1. Client Information	
Name of Client Organization Agency A	Name of Student/Researcher
Name of Client Contact Person CEO	Email of Client Contact Person
Client Contact's Mailing Address	
2. Project Description	
<p>The study is based on the development of a training program to improve professional work conduct of Agency A formerly incarcerated employees leading to an improvement in their professional work conduct. This study will provide information as to how the training program is developed as well as evidence-based practices researched to develop a training program that will work for formerly incarcerated employees. Improvements in professional work conduct of formerly incarcerated employees will benefit Agency A as well as the employees.</p>	
3. Tasks to be completed by Researcher	
<p>The student researcher will complete interviews with the Vice President of Human Resources and the Plant Manager.</p>	
4. Assistance (including data) to be provided by Client Organization	
<p>Agency A will provide a place to conduct interviews, access to the individuals being interviewed, and a summary of data (interview question answers) needed for the research project.</p>	

5. Deliverables for the Client Orientation
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The deliverable provided to Agency A will be a training program.
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Terms of confidentiality and compliance:

In all reports (including drafts shared with peers and faculty members), the student is required to maintain confidentiality by removing names and key pieces of information that might disclose an Institution's/individual's identity or inappropriately The student will publish the study in Proquest as a doctoral capstone (with site and participant identifiers withheld). The study is based upon the academic research completed by the student as well as the data provided by the Client Organization and/or collected by the student as outlined in the above agreement. If the data collected include

The student will not use these data for any purpose other than the project outlined in this agreement. The doctoral student is responsible for understanding and complying with all The Code of Conduct in the current Walden University Student Handbook and the ethical requirements for IRB compliance will also govern the research completed by the student. Students are required to uphold professional principals in fulfilling their roles as

6. Project Approval & Signature	
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<i>Signature of Client Contact Person</i>	<i>Date</i>
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1/3/22

<i>Title of Client Contact Person</i> <i>President/CEO</i>	
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Appendix B: Interview Questions for Vice President of Human Resources

Introduction: I am conducting research about appropriate work conduct of formerly incarcerated employees in order to develop a training program to improve the work conduct of the employees. I, as the researcher will be the only person with access to the interview. There are no right, or wrong answers and all information will be kept confidential. When not in use, the information will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and all information will be shredded at the conclusion of the research project. You may stop the interview at any time. Are you okay with the interview being tape-recorded? Do you have any questions or comments before we start the interview?

1. What are the three most documented reasons for the formerly incarcerated employees at Agency A to lose their jobs?
2. If a formerly incarcerated employee has no transportation will Agency A provide transportation? If so, in what ways does Agency A do this?
3. How does Agency A assist formerly incarcerated employees with accessing community resources?

Appendix C: Interview Questions for Plant and Retail Managers

Introduction: I am conducting research about appropriate work conduct of formerly incarcerated employees in order to develop a training program to improve the work conduct of the employees. I, as the researcher will be the only person with access to the interview. There are no right, or wrong answers and all information will be kept confidential. When not in use, the information will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and all information will be shredded at the conclusion of the research project. You may stop the interview at any time. Are you okay with the interview being tape-recorded? Do you have any questions or comments before we start the interview?

1. Do you as a manager ever overlook an inappropriate work behavior from a formerly incarcerated employee? If so, what type of an inappropriate behavior would you overlook? Why?

2. What are the appropriate work behaviors you expect from your employees?

3. Describe to me any interventions provided by Agency A to assist formerly incarcerated employees with modifying inappropriate work behaviors.

4. As a manager, how do you address transportation issues for formerly incarcerated employees?

5. As a manager, do you assist with accessing community services for formerly incarcerated employees? If so, how do you do this?

MANAGERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY.

**A Program for Training Agency A Employees
on Appropriate Professional Work Conduct**
Manager Participation in Interviews about Work
Conduct of Employees

We are conducting research to develop a training program to improve employees' appropriate professional work conduct.

**Participating Managers must currently
supervise formerly incarcerated
individuals.**

Participate in an in-person interview with
the student researcher.

Please contact XXX at xxx-xxx-xxxx for further information and
agreement for participation.