

12-8-2025

Engagement Strategies to Increase Employee Retention and Productivity Within the Accommodation Industry

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Lathoya Felding

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

Engagement Strategies to Increase Employee Retention and Productivity Within the

Accommodation Industry

by

Lathoya Felding

MS, Southern New Hampshire University, 2005

BS, Southern New Hampshire University, 2003

Qualitative Pragmatic Inquiry Business Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

November 2025

Abstract

A lack of effective employee engagement strategies in the accommodations industry can undermine retention and productivity, imposing costs on organizations and harming morale. Grounded in Kahn's employee engagement theory, the purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to identify and explore the effective employee engagement strategies that accommodations leaders use to increase employee retention and productivity. Participants were six leaders of accommodation industry organizations in the southern United States. Data were collected through semistructured interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis. Five key themes were revealed: (a) implementing employee recognition programs, (b) providing career development and training opportunities, (c) providing effective communication and ongoing feedback, (d) promoting work-life balance and schedule flexibility, and (e) promoting consistency and accountability. Key recommendations include acknowledging employees' contributions, offering professional development opportunities, maintaining transparent and consistent communication, and fostering a culture of well-being and accountability. The implications for positive social change include the potential for accommodations industry leaders to adopt these strategies, thereby increasing employee engagement, which may support improved productivity, guest satisfaction, and workforce stability within the scope of the organizations studied.

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this to my father, Norris Albert Nembhard, who has shown me the true meaning of hard work and never giving up on your dreams. Dad, though you are no longer with me in this life, I feel your presence and your pride every step of the way. I know you are smiling down on me.

To my mother, Claudia; my brother, Norris Jr.; and my sister, Sofya, my unwavering support system, thank you for walking beside me through every challenge. You have cried, laughed, and encouraged me through each phase of this doctoral journey. I am eternally grateful. I can never repay you for all that you have given me over the last 14 years, but I hope this achievement makes you proud and shows the immense impact you have had on my son and me. Your faith in me gave me the strength to believe in myself. Because of your love and compassion, I reached my full potential and earned my Doctorate in Business Administration.

To my son, Kevaughn, you have been my greatest motivation and my constant source of strength. You stood by me at just 10 years old in ways many adults could not. Whether it was cooking for us when I was exhausted or playing quietly so I could focus, your maturity and support never went unnoticed. I could not have done this without you. I love you deeply and endlessly. I want to leave behind a legacy you can be proud of, one that proves that a single mother can achieve the extraordinary through dedication and resilience. You kept me grounded, focused, and inspired throughout this long journey. Thank you, my son, for being my light.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Ashley Riebel, my mentor and chair, for her unwavering guidance, encouragement, and support throughout this journey. Her insightful feedback, thoughtfulness, and steadfast belief in my work were instrumental in helping me reach this milestone. I am genuinely grateful for her time and dedication to my scholarly development.

I would also like to sincerely thank my classmate, Paula Guillory, whose consistent encouragement, thoughtful input, and positive spirit have motivated and supported me throughout my academic journey.

My family and friends, thank you for your endless support, patience, and encouragement during the many long days and late nights. Your belief in me has been a source of strength throughout this process.

I am sincerely grateful to all who contributed to this research, whether directly or indirectly. Your participation, insight, and support were essential in bringing this project to life.

Finally, I would like to thank God for granting me the strength, wisdom, and perseverance needed to complete this work.

This research project reflects the collective encouragement and support I have received, and I am profoundly grateful to everyone who has been part of this academic journey.

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Section 1: Project Foundation

Background of the Problem

The accommodation industry in Florida plays a vital role in the state's economy, generating substantial revenue, supporting numerous jobs, and driving overall economic growth. In 2024, Florida's tourism sector, including accommodations, saw a record-breaking 142.9 million visitors, with hotel occupancy increasing by 6.7% (Visit Florida Research, 2025). This surge in tourism stimulates widespread economic activity across the state, fueled by the direct and indirect contributions of the hospitality workforce.

Frontline employees are essential to the industry, providing crucial face-to-face interactions that enhance the visitors' experience. Despite its economic importance, the accommodation industry faces high employee turnover, with quit rates reaching 60% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025b). Additionally, unemployment in the sector rose in 2023 and 2024, reaching 30% as of March 2025 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025a). Juba (2024) stated that effective employee engagement strategies can increase employee productivity and retention. The general business problem is that some leaders in the accommodation industry do not know how to engage employees, resulting in decreased employee retention and productivity.

Business Problem Focus and Project Purpose

The specific business problem was that some business leaders in the accommodation industry lack effective employee engagement strategies to increase employee retention and productivity. Employee engagement is a critical factor influencing organizational outcomes; yet, many leaders face challenges in implementing strategies that yield tangible benefits for employee retention and productivity. The

purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to identify and explore effective employee engagement strategies that accommodation industry leaders use to increase employee retention and productivity. By identifying and exploring the lived experiences and insights of leaders who have successfully employed these effective strategies, I generated practical knowledge that uncovered best practices to fill this gap in practice within the sector.

The target population for my research project consisted of business leaders in the accommodation sector who have successfully used effective employee engagement strategies to increase employee retention and productivity. I employed purposeful sampling to ensure that participants possess relevant expertise and experience. The sample size included six business leaders in the accommodation industry. I recruited these participants through professional networking and LinkedIn.

I employed a qualitative methodology and a pragmatic inquiry design for my research project. Qualitative researchers investigate a phenomenon by exploring what it is, how it occurs, and why it exists, drawing on real-world perspectives and personal experiences through participant interviews (Bronnimann, 2022). A qualitative research methodology was suitable for my research project because it allowed me to gather detailed information from business leaders in the accommodation industry regarding effective employee engagement strategies used to enhance employee retention and improve productivity. A qualitative methodology enabled me to understand the employee engagement strategies employed, their implementation, and the factors contributing to their effectiveness. Bronnimann (2022) noted that qualitative research enables the investigation of phenomena by examining their nature, underlying processes, and

contextual relevance through in-depth interviews and real-world perspectives. A pragmatic inquiring research design emphasizes multiple worldviews supporting practical, well-rounded solutions to the research problem (Abouraia & Elgeddawy, 2024). For my research project, a pragmatic inquiry design informed evidence-based decision-making, leading to the formulation of practical solutions to the phenomenon under investigation.

I used various data sources for my research project. I conducted semistructured interviews about employee engagement, retention, and productivity to collect primary data. I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the data. I also used member checking to establish the credibility and trustworthiness of my research findings. I reached data saturation, indicating that I had a comprehensive understanding of the topic. To triangulate the data, I used publicly available industry publications. I used Kahn's (1990) employee engagement theory (EET) as a conceptual framework for my research project.

Project Research Question

What effective employee engagement strategies do accommodation industry leaders use to increase employee retention and productivity?

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

Brentnall and Higgins (2022) defined assumptions as the foundational beliefs or conceptual frameworks that highlight a research study's design, implementation, and interpretation. Brentnall and Higgins (2022) argued that these assumptions critically inform the researcher's perspective and significantly influence methodological choices

throughout the research process. In my research project, I made three assumptions. The first assumption was that participants would provide accurate and trustworthy responses during the data collection. The second assumption was that the data obtained from participant interviews would achieve saturation, that is, the point at which no new themes, patterns, or insights emerge. I assumed that the information collected would be sufficiently comprehensive to support robust analysis and meaningful conclusions within the context of my research project. Thirdly, I assumed that the selected data collection tool, the interviews I conducted using Zoom, were suitable and adequate for capturing business leaders' perceptions of employee engagement strategies within the accommodation industry.

Limitations

According to Clarke et al. (2024), many research projects are subject to certain limitations, potential gaps, constraints, or issues within a study that are beyond the researcher's control and may impact the interpretation or transferability of the findings. In my research project, I had four limitations. The first limitation of my research project was the potential for participants to withhold information or provide socially desirable responses during the interview to protect their organization's reputation. This form of response bias may have affected the credibility, validity, and reliability of my findings. To mitigate this limitation, I assured participants of confidentiality, and I conducted the interviews in a non-judgmental and neutral manner to encourage openness and honest disclosure. Secondly, my findings may be limited due to the small sample size of at least six leaders, which may not have represented the diverse employee engagement practices among all leaders across the broader accommodations industry. This limitation was

further intensified by the geographic focus on senior leaders in the southern United States, potentially restricting the applicability of the findings to other regions where the accommodations market is less demanding, with fewer business and transient travelers. Thirdly, while the qualitative nature of my research project offered depth and richness in understanding participants' experiences, a qualitative methodology may not have allowed broad statistical analyses that could strengthen my research project's conclusions. Lastly, the context-specificity of my project's findings could have been influenced by weather, politics, or economics, which may change over time and influence the accommodations industry and the long-term relevance of my research.

Business Project Ethics

I served as the primary researcher for my research project, directly managing all aspects of data collection and analysis. My responsibilities included selecting the research topic, recruiting eligible participants, conducting semistructured interviews, and analyzing the data. Semistructured interviews allowed me to balance a consistent framework across participants with the ability to probe deeper into interesting or relevant points that arose during the conversation, thereby gaining an in-depth understanding of a participant's practices and experiences while maintaining a focused direction. According to Hadlandsmyth et al. (2019), semistructured interviews include open-ended questions encouraging participants to express their thoughts freely. The interview questions I asked are listed in Appendix A. I also used an interview protocol to structure my conversations, ensuring that I covered all key topics and provided a consistent experience for all participants. Castillo-Montoya (2016) stated that interview protocols can provide

structure and alignment during interviews. My interview protocol is located in Appendix B.

In alignment with *The Belmont Report* (2003), developed by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, I adhered to the ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. I obtained approval to conduct my research project from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) under approval number 07-17-25-0286427. I followed Walden University's IRB guidelines for all procedures involving human participants.

I obtained informed consent from each participant. Informed consent involves providing participants with clear, comprehensive information regarding the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of my research project, as well as their rights as research participants. As Kudaibergenova (2024) emphasized, informed consent to establishing a sensitive and relevant ethical foundation for the population being studied. I addressed participants' questions or concerns to promote transparency and build trust. I emphasized their right to withdraw from the interviews at any point, without penalty, either verbally or in writing. I informed participants of the nature of the semistructured interview process, the confidential handling of their data, and the specific measures in place to protect their privacy. I secured data securely in accordance with university guidelines. I did not offer any monetary or material incentives in exchange for participation.

I prioritized the privacy and confidentiality of all participants in my research project. To protect their identities, I assigned pseudonyms (e.g., Participant A, Participant B, etc.) and ensured that no real names or personally identifiable information appear in

any transcripts, reports, or publications. I will securely store all data using encrypted, access-restricted systems to prevent unauthorized access. I will retain the data in secure storage, adhering to institutional guidelines and ethical research standards, to ensure the continued protection of participant confidentiality. After 5 years, I will delete all data.

Evidence-Based Integrative Review

In this integrative review, I analyze and synthesize scholarly research on effective employee engagement strategies employed by industry leaders to enhance employee retention and productivity. In this integrative review, I aim to demonstrate the existence of the problem while illustrating the breadth, depth, and scope of the research inquiry. Paré et al. (2024) stated that a literature review is essential to almost any research involving synthesizing knowledge across specific domains, topics, theories, or methodologies. A literature review also involves several activities, including searching, identifying, reading, summarizing, compiling, analyzing, interpreting, and referencing various works (Chigbu et al., 2023). Through the review, I aim to identify gaps in research and practice, an important step in identifying a business problem worthy of a research project.

The integrative review comprises a critical analysis and synthesis of sources and articles relevant to my project, which were found in various academic databases at the Walden University Library and Google Scholar. I used databases for the literature review, including Emerald, ProQuest, SAGE, Wiley, and Business Source Complete (EBSCO). I used keywords and phrases such as *employee engagement* OR *work engagement* OR *job engagement*, *employee productivity* OR *work efficiency* OR *job performance* OR *work outcomes*, *employee retention* OR *employee turnover* OR *intention to quit* OR *intention*

to leave OR attrition, accommodation industry, hotel industry OR hospitality industry, State of Florida, and Florida economy to find relevant articles from the databases.

My literature review encompasses an analysis and synthesis of existing literature on the conceptual framework, themes, and phenomena; comparisons and contrasts of different perspectives; and the relationship of this project to previous research and findings. The organization of my review is as follows. Firstly, in the Application to the Applied Business Problem, I highlight my specific business problem, the purpose of my research project, and the overarching research question. Secondly, in the Conceptual Framework section, I include a critical analysis and synthesis of the literature about the conceptual framework. Finally, I provide Business Problem Scholarship Evidence to highlight the currency of the issue and Business Topic Scholarship to discuss some potential topics related to the purpose statement.

Application to the Applied Business Problem

The specific business problem was that some business leaders in the accommodation industry lack effective employee engagement strategies to increase employee retention and productivity. The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to identify and explore effective employee engagement strategies that accommodation industry leaders use to increase employee retention and improve employee productivity. The research question was as follows: What effective employee engagement strategies do leaders in the accommodation industry use to increase employee retention and productivity?

Conceptual Framework: Employee Engagement Theory

Employee engagement has become a central focus in organizational research, with a particular emphasis on increasing employee retention and productivity. In this literature review, I outline the theoretical foundations of Kahn's (1990) EET, followed by a synthesis of empirical studies that highlight key antecedents, outcomes, and emerging research trends.

The conceptual framework that grounded my research project is EET, introduced by Kahn in 1990. Based on qualitative observations in a summer camp and an architecture firm, Kahn defined engagement as the ability of employees to physically, cognitively, and emotionally express their whole selves through their work roles. Kahn (1990) proposed three psychological conditions for engagement: meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Meaningfulness, safety, and availability support employees in bringing their authentic selves to the workplace and form the foundation of subsequent engagement research. Kahn conceptualized psychological meaningfulness as the perceived value of a work goal or purpose, evaluated against an individual's personal ideals and standards. Employees who find their work meaningful are more likely to engage fully, both cognitively and emotionally, as well as physically. Additionally, Kahn defined psychological safety as the ability to express and employ one's authentic self at work without fear of negative repercussions to self-image, status, or career. This condition reflects the belief that the work environment, particularly supervisors and colleagues, is supportive and nonjudgmental. Finally, psychological availability was described by Kahn as the extent to which an individual feels they possess the physical, emotional, and psychological resources required to engage fully in their role at a given

moment. Kahn posited that when employees are engaged across all three dimensions (physical, cognitive, and emotional), they are more likely to feel secure in their roles, recognize that their contributions are meaningful, and perceive strong support from leadership in their physical and psychological efforts.

Kahn's (1990) theory of employment engagement has evolved over the years. In 2007, Kahn expanded on the social dynamics of engagement, asserting that positive interpersonal relationships within the organization encourage authenticity, presence, and emotional availability. Canboy et al. (2023) defined engagement as the emotional connection employees feel toward their organization and its objectives, emphasizing its motivational and relational dimensions. Chiwawa (2022) identified several statistically significant predictors of engagement, including leadership quality, organizational climate, employee recognition, and communication effectiveness. These theorists have significantly influenced contemporary human resource practices by emphasizing psychological factors that enhance engagement.

Kahn's foundational work on employee engagement emphasizes the importance of psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability in predicting employee behavior. Kahn provided a framework that researchers, such as Huang et al. (2021), who cited Kahn's foundational work, used to predict counterproductive work behaviors in transformational, ethical, and participative leadership studies. Fletcher et al. (2025) framed their research using Kahn's (1990) theory of employee engagement, referencing Kahn's theory in their professional development approach to employee engagement for technicians in academic veterinary medicine. Whether studying counterproductive work behaviors or approaches to professional development, researchers effectively use Kahn's

concepts of psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability. When present, these three psychological conditions lead to greater employee engagement, while their absence can result in disengagement.

Kahn's (1990) EET has served as a key part of the conceptual framework of many studies. Lee and Chihyung (2015) used EET to examine the drivers of work engagement, core self-evaluations, and psychological climate among hotel employees. EET suggests that employees with a positive self-view (high CSE) and who perceive a supportive and high-functioning work environment (favorable psychological climate) are more likely to be engaged at work, especially in service-oriented industries such as hotels. Stephens (2020) examined effective leadership strategies in the hospitality industry to enhance millennial employee engagement. Through the lens of EET, Stephens found that leaders should adapt to the needs of millennials by offering mentorship, empowering them with autonomy, and aligning their work with organizational purpose. Researchers can use EET as a lens to provide a specific perspective; that when individuals feel safe, experience a sense of meaningfulness in their work, and have the availability to engage fully, they are more likely to be fully present and invested in their work.

Thus, Kahn's (1990) EET served as the conceptual foundation for my research project. By focusing on the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability, I identified and explored effective employee engagement strategies that industry leaders use to increase employee retention and productivity. By examining the work environment through the lens of meaningfulness, I assumed that industry leaders in the accommodations sector believe their employees' work is valuable and contributes to something larger. The lens of safety assumes that employees feel comfortable expressing

their ideas and concerns without fear of reprisal, fostering psychological safety. Moreover, employees have the necessary resources and support (both physical and emotional) to engage thoroughly in their work, considering the lens of availability. The findings of my research project enable industry leaders to gain a deeper understanding of the psychological dynamics that drive employee engagement, allowing them to implement effective strategies to create a more supportive and engaging work environment.

Business Problem Scholarship Evidence

A lack of effective employee engagement strategies can significantly impact organizational performance. When business leaders fail to foster employee engagement, organizations often experience reduced productivity, decreased employee retention, diminished customer satisfaction, and ultimately, decreased profitability (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). Gallup's *State of the Global Workplace* (2025a) reported that only 21% of workers worldwide are engaged. Complete disengagement is associated with significant declines in motivation, reduced task focus, and decreased performance across several dimensions, including quality, productivity, safety, and customer service.

Engagement as a Talent Retention Tool

Investing in employee engagement has become a pivotal strategy for retaining top talent, as several recent studies illustrate its profound impact on commitment and turnover. Shahzad et al. (2024) demonstrated that strategic human resource practices, including targeted engagement initiatives, mentoring programs, and structured career development, significantly enhance job satisfaction and work engagement while reducing turnover intentions among high performers. By aligning human resource strategies with

an organization's long-term goals, organizational leaders can create a cohesive framework that develops talent and drives desired behaviors, ultimately contributing to performance targets. Similarly, a systematic review by Sinisterra et al. (2024) found that talent management practices, including career development, recognition, and performance feedback, act as job resources that support engagement, mediating the relationship between human resources (HR) practices and decreased intentions to leave. Additionally, Surma et al. (2021) emphasized that organizations with robust peer-to-peer recognition systems experience up to 31% lower voluntary turnover, as social rewards and inclusive cultures reinforce employees' sense of belonging and purpose. Collectively, these findings reinforce that employee engagement strategies such as blending career development, regular recognition, and supportive cultures enhance employee well-being and play a critical role in retaining top talent.

The Cost of Disengaged Employees

Disengaged employees may negatively impact a business's bottom line. A global Gallup study estimated that disengaged employees cost the global economy hundreds of billions annually, highlighting that lost productivity alone was approximately \$438 billion in 2024 (Gallup, 2025b). Low employee engagement is strongly linked to reduced retention, resulting in higher turnover rates. This, in turn, increases recruitment and training costs, contributing to overall organizational instability. A systematic review by Han (2022) found that organizational factors, such as low employee motivation and poor engagement, strongly predict turnover in the accommodation industry. Han demonstrated that turnover harms performance and incurs high costs. Employee turnover has a significant and multifaceted negative impact on performance and costs, including the

direct financial expenses of replacing employees and the indirect costs that are harder to quantify.

Beyond finances, employee disengagement harms customer satisfaction and service quality, a key concern in the accommodation industry where employee-customer interactions drive competitive advantage. Oo et al. (2025) studied luxury hotels in Bangkok and Yangon and found that employee engagement, complemented by service leadership and customer relationship management, significantly enhanced guest satisfaction. Interview data indicated that engaged employees delivered more personalized, attentive service, resulting in better satisfaction outcomes. Similarly, Pahi et al. (2022) conducted an empirical analysis of 235 frontline hotel employees in Malaysia, revealing that positive leadership styles, particularly transformational, ethical, and participative leadership, were consistently linked to higher levels of employee engagement. Pahi et al. also found that participative leadership is critical in enhancing employees' commitment to delivering high-quality service. By involving employees in decision-making, participative leadership fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, promoting higher levels of employee engagement and improving customer satisfaction.

Employee retention is a challenge for organizations, particularly in service-oriented industries such as the accommodation sector, where consistent, high-quality interactions between employees and customers are crucial. High turnover disrupts operational continuity, inflates recruitment and training expenditures, and erodes critical organizational knowledge (Han, 2022). Moreover, frequent staff departures can negatively affect employee morale, weaken team cohesion, and reduce productivity. These issues are particularly concerning in the accommodation industry, where customer

service quality is closely tied to employee stability and experience. The recurring cycle of hiring and onboarding new employees burdens human resource departments, compromising the development of a cohesive organizational culture and long-term service excellence. Effective employee engagement strategies promote employee retention, enhance organizational performance, and maintain a stable and motivated workforce.

High Engagement Reduces Turnover

High employee engagement is strongly associated with lower turnover intentions. Sinisterra et al. (2024) found that employee engagement increases employee retention rates by business leaders emphasizing the importance of designing and implementing practices to foster a healthy and engaged workforce, ultimately leading to lower turnover rates. McCarthy et al. (2020) found that higher engagement levels are significantly associated with lower turnover intentions. Ibrahim et al. (2023) found that employee engagement mediates the relationship between the work environment and turnover intention among Egyptian resort employees. Engaged employees are less likely to leave their jobs, while low employee engagement is associated with a higher likelihood of employees seeking other employment opportunities. These researchers affirm that low employee engagement directly and indirectly decreases employee retention, productivity, and associated costs. In accommodation environments, disengagement not only fuels employee attrition but also disrupts operations, undermines service quality, and elevates financial burdens related to hiring and training.

Business Topic Scholarship

Targeting the Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral Components of the Employee Connection

Employee engagement refers to employees' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral commitment towards their work and the organization. Employee engagement occurs when employees feel connected, motivated, and enthusiastic about their work and workplace. Engaged employees are more likely to be productive, committed, and willing to go the extra mile. Choudhary and Jain (2024) discussed employee engagement in terms of individuals' interaction with job demands and resources, identifying it as a motivational and cognitive-emotional construct. Kwon et al. (2024) defined employee engagement as investing physical, emotional, and cognitive energy in work, shaped by development opportunities and social dynamics. Employee engagement is a positive, fulfilling state of mind related to work, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Boccoli et al., 2023). Engaged employees are ideal; they are enthusiastic, dedicated, and fully absorbed in their roles.

Thus, employee engagement is crucial in the accommodation industry, where customer satisfaction has a significant impact on organizational success. In this service-driven sector, employees serve as the primary point of interaction between the organization and its guests, making their engagement particularly crucial. While engagement is important across all industries, the accommodation industry is uniquely dependent on a workforce that is focused, productive, and responsive to customer needs. An engaged team enhances service quality and directly influences an organization's ability to thrive. In this context, the presence of passionate, committed employees can

mean the difference between organizational success and underperformance. Xu et al. (2024) emphasized the crucial role of employee engagement in sustaining hotel performance. Engaged employees are more likely to provide excellent customer service, go above and beyond, and ultimately contribute to a positive guest experience.

Focusing on Strategic Human Resource Practices

Employee engagement strategies refer to the deliberate methods and initiatives that business leaders implement to cultivate a supportive and motivating work environment. These efforts enhance employee morale, drive motivation, and foster a more substantial organizational commitment. By fostering a deeper connection between employees and their roles, such strategies contribute to greater job satisfaction, increased productivity, and improved employee retention. Vovk and Vovk (2024) emphasized that sustainable personnel management practices in the accommodation industry significantly enhanced employee engagement and organizational performance. Yu et al. (2024) found that wellness programs in hospitality workplaces significantly enhance employee engagement, resulting in improved service quality and increased employee well-being. Leaders should consider being deliberate about employee engagement for several reasons, as employee engagement has a direct impact on their employees' well-being and the organization's overall success.

In the accommodation industry, effective employee engagement strategies are crucial for fostering a committed and productive workforce. Md et al. (2023) emphasized that targeted human resource practices, such as comprehensive training, employee recognition, and development programs, create essential psychological conditions (safety, availability, and meaningfulness) that mediate higher levels of employee engagement.

These practices enhance engagement and contribute to greater organizational commitment and reduced turnover. Similarly, Kautish et al. (2024) highlighted a strong link among hospitality managers between employee well-being, job satisfaction, and work engagement. Kautish et al. suggested that improving employees' well-being and satisfaction significantly enhances engagement, thereby elevating performance and retention within the accommodation industry. These studies highlight the importance of comprehensive human resources and well-being strategies in cultivating an engaged, motivated, and stable workforce.

Building a Supportive Work Environment to Encourage Long-Term Commitment

Employee retention refers to an organization's ability to keep employees from leaving for other jobs. Employee retention is a key human resource function focused on strategies and practices that encourage employees to remain with the organization in the long term. High retention rates generally indicate a healthy work environment and effective business practices. Tavares and Oliveira (2022) defined employee retention as an organization's ability to keep valued employees by implementing strategies that promote job satisfaction and reduce voluntary turnover. Employee retention refers to an organization's deliberate effort to cultivate a supportive work environment that meets the diverse needs of its workforce, thereby encouraging long-term commitment. Ghani et al. (2022) emphasized that effective retention in the accommodation industry requires tailored strategies that address organizational objectives and individual employee concerns.

Employee engagement and retention are interdependent factors that are crucial to an organization's success. Employees who are highly engaged, demonstrating

enthusiasm, dedication, and a strong connection to their work, are more likely to remain with their organization. In contrast, low levels of engagement often indicate a higher risk of turnover, as disengaged employees may feel undervalued and begin to explore opportunities outside the organization. Work engagement is strongly and inversely related to turnover intention (Zhu et al., 2023). Enhanced engagement, driven by employee and supervisory cultural intelligence, lowers intention to stay (Presbitero et al., 2025). Zhou et al. (2024) found that adequate organizational socialization, including onboarding, collaborative work environments, and clear career development plans, enhanced person-environment fit, improving employee retention among Generation Z hotel employees. Zhou et al. also noted that career commitment further strengthens this relationship. Dogru et al. (2023) confirmed that the hospitality industry experiences higher turnover rates than the broader economy, influenced by macroeconomic fluctuations and specific job demands. Dogru et al. highlighted the significant cost implications and the industry's heightened sensitivity to turnover, underscoring the need for focused retention strategies. Without retention strategies, accommodations leaders may experience negative impacts on profitability and service quality.

A Strategic Approach to Employee Productivity

Employee productivity measures how effectively and efficiently employees perform their tasks and support the achievement of organizational objectives. Employee productivity reflects the output generated relative to the input of time, effort, and resources, playing a vital role in driving business success, profitability, innovation, and overall employee satisfaction. Employee productivity refers to the degree to which employees can complete their work accurately and efficiently within a given timeframe,

contributing to the organization's overall performance and success. Employee productivity encompasses the quantity and quality of work produced, reflecting how well employees utilize available resources to meet business objectives. Singh and Chaudhary (2022) defined employee productivity as the extent to which employees complete tasks effectively and efficiently within a given timeframe, emphasizing both the quantity and quality of work, as well as the utilization of resources to meet organizational goals. Individual abilities, work environment, organizational support, and motivation all influence productivity, which is crucial for business success and a competitive advantage. Employee productivity has a direct impact on profitability, efficiency, and overall performance. In the accommodations industry, productive employees contribute to faster, friendlier service, increased guest satisfaction, and organizational profitability.

Employee engagement and productivity are closely interconnected, as engaged employees tend to exhibit greater efficiency and productivity. Engagement represents an employee's emotional investment and dedication to their role and the organization, whereas productivity assesses the effectiveness and volume of their work. Organizations can enhance both by cultivating a supportive workplace culture, promoting transparent communication, offering opportunities for professional growth and development, and recognizing employee contributions. In a robust meta-analysis of 174 studies, Corbeanu and Iliescu (2023) found a strong, statistically significant relationship between work engagement (comprising vigor, dedication, and absorption) and employee productivity, with a pooled correlation of $r = .37$ ($N = 166$ samples). A longitudinal analysis by Kampkötter et al. (2023) among German employers found that structured performance management practices significantly increased work engagement, the first step toward

enhanced productivity. Liu et al. (2022) provided strong evidence from the accommodation industry, demonstrating that employee engagement strategies, such as empowering leadership, fair reward systems, and a collaborative culture, significantly enhance employee productivity and organizational innovation, contributing to overall business success. For employees to perform tasks effectively and achieve organizational goals, leaders should implement transparent performance management processes that include setting measurable, aligned goals, providing ongoing feedback and resources, fostering a positive and collaborative culture, and establishing accountability through effective reward systems. This systematic approach ensures that individual efforts contribute to the larger strategic objectives, increasing employee engagement, retention, productivity, and overall business success.

Summary

In this integrative review, I critically examined current academic literature on employee engagement and its pivotal role in the accommodation industry. I began by introducing the conceptual framework for my research project, EET by Kahn (1990), who defined engagement as the extent to which employees can physically, cognitively, and emotionally express their whole selves through their work roles. I stated that Kahn proposed three psychological conditions for engagement: meaningfulness, safety, and availability (Kahn, 1990). I also demonstrated that employee engagement is a concern in the workplace, as only 21% of workers worldwide are engaged (Gallup, 2025a). A lack of employee engagement is especially concerning, as disengaged employees are more likely to seek opportunities elsewhere (Schaufeli, 2017), thereby introducing additional costs to the organization. On the contrary, engaged employees positively impact

organizational performance through increased profitability, productivity, reduced absenteeism, improved retention, and enhanced customer satisfaction (Gede & Huluka, 2024). In the accommodations industry, employee engagement enhances guest satisfaction (Oo et al., 2025), leading to a more profitable organization. When employees are invested and motivated, their positive attitude leads to enhanced customer experiences, which in turn fosters loyalty and drives revenue growth. This connection is particularly critical in service-based industries, such as the accommodations sector, where employees are often the face of the brand. Clearly, there is a need for my research project to engage employees to increase employee retention and productivity. In Section 2, I will further discuss the nature of my project, including specifics related to my study population, data collection methods, and analysis techniques.

Section 2: Primary and Secondary Industry Data Analysis

Nature of the Project

In Section 2, I outline the nature of my project, including details related to the population of my research project, the data collection methods, and the analysis techniques. The specific business problem was that some business leaders in the accommodation industry lack effective employee engagement strategies to increase employee retention and productivity. The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to identify and explore effective employee engagement strategies that accommodation industry leaders use to increase employee retention and productivity. The research question was as follows: What effective employee engagement strategies do leaders in the accommodation industry use to increase employee retention and productivity?

Method and Design

Using a qualitative pragmatic inquiry, I combined the in-depth understanding of qualitative methods with the practical, action-oriented focus of pragmatism. A qualitative methodology involved gathering and evaluating non-numerical data to understand ideas, viewpoints, and experiences. A qualitative methodology enables researchers to generate rich, actionable understandings of human experiences, which are essential for addressing real-world challenges across various professional domains (Tracy, 2020). A qualitative methodology helped identify and explore the effective strategies that accommodation leaders use to engage employees, increasing employee retention and improving productivity. Interviewing participants allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of their individual experiences with engagement strategies, which, in turn, helped me assess their

perceived efficacy. I gained a deeper understanding of how accommodations leaders implement effective engagement strategies in real-world situations. A pragmatic inquiry design offers perspectives on logic, truth, and experience. Pragmatic inquiry design is valuable for generating contextually grounded recommendations responsive to the complexities of practice environments (Greenhalgh & Papoutsi, 2018). I identified and explored practical strategies to effectively engage employees by focusing on what functions best in practice. By focusing on practical strategies, I ensured that my research was tailored to the circumstances and challenges that accommodation leaders face. This relevance aided my comprehension of the dynamics of engagement strategies in many accommodation industry settings.

Reliability

Reliability is essential for research quality. Reliability refers to the consistency of data collection methods, and validity ensures the accuracy and authenticity of the collected data, thereby ensuring that the researcher truly captures the phenomenon (Olmsted, 2024). I used data saturation, member-checking, and triangulation to ensure reliability. Data saturation is the point in qualitative research at which no new information, themes, or insights are observed, indicating that the phenomenon under study has been sufficiently explored (Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024). In my research project, I conducted interviews with participants until I heard the same ideas expressed repeatedly by different individuals. At that point, I felt confident that I had reached data saturation. I allowed participants to review and reflect on the findings through member checking, enabling them to affirm the accuracy of the interpretations and contribute additional insights. Member checking fosters transparency and minimizes researcher bias,

contributing to the overall integrity of the research (Fusch et al., 2022). Lastly, I triangulated my findings. Triangulation is a recognized strategy in qualitative inquiry for enhancing interpretive rigor and minimizing potential researcher bias (Singh et al., 2021). Triangulation enriches qualitative interpretations and solidifies the credibility of the findings by validating them through converging lines of evidence (Morgan, 2024). By incorporating multiple data sources, I ensured a more nuanced and credible representation of effective engagement strategies to increase employee retention and productivity. I enhanced the trustworthiness, rigor, validation, accuracy, and consistency of my findings through data saturation, member checking, and triangulation.

Population, Sampling, and Participants

I interviewed six leaders within the accommodations industry who successfully used effective employee engagement strategies to increase employee retention and improve employees' productivity. I selected these participants from various accommodation settings across the southeastern United States. To be eligible for participation, leaders were required to have at least 3 years of experience in the accommodation industry, have at least three direct reports, and have successfully used effective employee engagement strategies to increase employee retention and productivity.

I gained access to participants through professional networking and LinkedIn. I identified potential participants by searching for experts in the subject matter on LinkedIn and within my professional network. Leveraging professional networks and social media platforms for recruitment, along with a formal interview protocol, has improved credibility and consistency in qualitative research (Griffiths et al., 2025). Griffiths et al.

highlighted that LinkedIn can effectively connect researchers with knowledgeable participants, primarily within professional sectors. I assessed each candidate to ensure their qualifications met the criteria for my research project before scheduling interviews. Once vetted, I coordinated interview times with selected experts. Once potential participants responded, I initiated a professional dialogue that outlined the purpose of my research project and established mutual understanding and respect for confidentiality and research ethics, in line with recommendations by Yin (2024) on qualitative research rapport-building strategies.

I employed purposeful sampling for my research project to select participants who were business leaders in the accommodation industry and had successfully implemented effective employee engagement strategies to enhance employee retention and productivity. Purposeful sampling, particularly criterion sampling, ensures that participants meet specific requirements central to the research questions (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposeful sampling is highly effective when seeking detailed insights from individuals with unique perspectives on a defined phenomenon.

Drawing on my background in human resources and employee engagement, I established credibility and rapport with the participants. I emphasized my shared professional interest in improving employee engagement, retention, and productivity within the accommodation sector. This common ground created a comfortable space for open dialogue. My approach was supported by the findings of Thomas and Sohn (2023), who argued that trust and reflexivity are essential for authentic engagement in qualitative interviews. Trust allowed me to build rapport and encouraged participants to share their genuine experiences, while reflexivity helped me to understand how my own biases may

have influenced the interview process. By being transparent and self-aware, I created a safer, more open environment that encouraged participants to share authentic and meaningful insights.

I interviewed six leaders employed in the accommodations industry. While I reached data saturation after five interviews, I conducted a sixth interview to confirm that no new information emerged. Guest et al. (2025) affirmed that, in qualitative research, a small number of participants can still yield rich and meaningful data when saturation is achieved. I felt confident that I had reached data saturation when no new themes, codes, or significant ideas emerged during participant interviews. As Rahimi and Khatooni (2024) explained, data saturation occurs when the information is redundant, and further data collection no longer contributes to a deeper understanding. Employing data saturation ensured the trustworthiness of my research project and strengthened the validity of the findings.

Data Collection Activities

I assumed the primary data collection instrument and analyst role in my research project. I gathered qualitative data through semistructured interviews, using an interview protocol to ensure uniformity throughout the process. My interview protocol consisted of six open-ended questions, a standardized script, and structured prompts to guide follow-up inquiries. While the format ensured consistency in how each interview was conducted, an interview protocol allows enough flexibility to capture unexpected insights and explore emerging themes in greater depth (Shoozan & Mohamad, 2024). A flexible interview protocol allowed me to build rapport with participants, gain deeper insights into their experiences, and tailor follow-up questions to unexpected responses. I applied the

interview protocol consistently across participants to ensure uniformity, while allowing the semistructured format to remain flexible, enabling exploration of novel themes or experiences when participants introduced unique perspectives.

To conduct the interviews, I used Zoom and audio-recorded them to capture the conversation and analyze the data. In addition to conducting semistructured interviews as the primary data source, I gathered secondary data from publicly available information to triangulate findings and deepen contextual understanding. Methodologically triangulating data sources enhances the credibility, validity, and depth of qualitative findings (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024; Shoozan & Mohamad, 2024). I minimized potential biases and strengthened interpretive reliability by systematically integrating interviews and document-based evidence. Meydan and Akkas (2024) added that triangulating interview data with organizational artifacts strengthens the trustworthiness and depth of qualitative studies, particularly in applied business research.

Data Organization and Analysis Techniques

I employed thematic analysis as a systematic and exploratory method for identifying and making sense of patterns across the dataset. Naeem et al. (2023) described thematic analysis as a flexible and widely applicable technique, aligning it with multiple qualitative research designs, which reinforces its suitability for examining employee engagement strategies. I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis to analyze my data, which includes six phases. In Phase One, I familiarized myself with the data by immersing myself in it, reading and re-reading the data, and taking notes. I generated initial codes in phase two by systematically identifying and labeling significant data features relevant to the research questions. I searched for themes in phase three by

organizing the codes into potential themes and gathering all related data extracts. In phase four, I reviewed the themes by checking them against the coded extracts and the entire dataset to ensure they accurately represented the data. I defined and named the themes in phase five by refining each theme's scope and focus, ensuring clarity and distinctiveness. Finally, I produced the report in phase six by selecting compelling data extracts, conducting a final analysis, and linking the findings to the research questions and existing literature.

Following my thematic analysis, I focused on the key themes and correlated them with the literature and conceptual framework. I applied the themes that emerged from my data to the existing body of literature and Kahn's (1990) employee engagement theory. To establish the significance of my research, I examined how the identified themes align with, support, or contradict existing research findings. I determined how the themes align with the structure of Kahn's employee engagement theory to demonstrate their applicability and provide a deeper understanding of the relationships between meaningfulness, safety, and availability. I also included new studies published after I wrote my proposal to ensure that I conducted a comprehensive, evidence-based search to identify relevant publications that scholars have written recently. I analyzed these new studies to determine their findings and how they relate to the previously identified themes and Kahn's employee engagement theory. This process strengthened my thematic analysis and provided a robust and integrative understanding of my research topic. This thorough and systematic process enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of my research within the broader landscape of existing knowledge, demonstrate the unique

contribution of the research and its implications, and identify gaps in the literature and practice.

I employed data saturation, member-checking, transcript review, and triangulation to enhance the reliability and validity of my data collection and analysis process. Once I achieved data saturation, I was confident that I had captured the full range of ideas and patterns within the data. I also used data saturation to ensure that the themes I identified were well-developed and supported by multiple instances in the data. I used member checking to validate the themes identified through thematic analysis, ensuring the accuracy and credibility of the findings. Transcript review allowed me to identify, analyze, and report recurring patterns or themes within the data. Triangulation enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings by using multiple sources to examine the same phenomenon, cross-verifying them to identify consistent patterns, and thereby strengthening the overall credibility of the findings.

Summary

In Section 2, I described the qualitative methodology and pragmatic inquiry design I used for my research project. I also described how I ensured data reliability using data saturation, member checking, and triangulation. I described the population I used for the project and the eligibility criteria for choosing project participants. I discussed strategies for gaining access and developing relationships with the selected participants. I also justified the sampling method, the number of participants, and the approach taken to achieve data saturation. To describe the data collection activities, I identified that I was the instrument used to collect the data, and that the supplemental instruments are included in the appendices. Finally, I described my data organization and analysis process. I stated

that I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process, which includes a logical and sequential approach. I identified how I focused on the key themes and correlated them with the literature and Kahn's (1990) employee engagement theory. I identified how I enhanced the reliability and validity of the data collection process through saturation, member checking, transcript review, and triangulation. In Section 3, I will detail my findings, translate them into business contributions, and provide actionable recommendations for professional practice. I will also provide opportunities for positive social change and offer suggestions for future researchers who may wish to build upon my findings.

Section 3: Data and Professional Practice

Project Results

In Section 3, I detail my findings, translate them into business contributions, and provide actionable recommendations for professional practice. I provide opportunities for positive social change and offer suggestions for future researchers who may wish to build upon my findings. The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to identify and explore effective employee engagement strategies that accommodation industry leaders use to increase employee retention and improve employee productivity. The overarching research question was: What effective employee engagement strategies do leaders in the accommodation industry use to increase employee retention and productivity? Based on the data and my analysis, I uncovered five themes: implementing recognition programs, providing career development and training opportunities, fostering effective communication and ongoing feedback, promoting work-life balance and schedule flexibility, and encouraging consistency and accountability.

Theme 1: Implementing Employee Recognition Programs

Participants emphasized that one strategy is implementing employee recognition programs. All six participants agreed that acknowledging minor and major accomplishments is crucial in motivating employees, strengthening retention, and boosting overall productivity. Formal recognition is a common approach. Participant E hosts quarterly celebrations for service milestones with breakfasts and small tokens of appreciation. Participant B implements structured weekly and monthly recognition programs, and Participant F uses a “Star of the Month” award to highlight outstanding employees. Participants also stated that peer-to-peer recognition is a practical approach.

Participant C described using informal gestures, such as shout-outs during meetings and peer recognition boards, which helped build camaraderie and a positive work environment. When their budgets are limited, participants stated that they rely on non-monetary methods, such as verbal recognition, flexible scheduling, and open communication, to maintain engagement. Participant C recommended starting with small, inexpensive initiatives such as shout-outs to build momentum before expanding to larger programs. Participant B also noted the value of symbolic recognition, such as thank-you cards or verbal acknowledgments during daily huddles, which has a meaningful impact on employee morale. Overall, recognition, whether formal, informal, or symbolic, can create a sense of belonging and reinforce employees' understanding that their contributions are valued. To enhance the credibility and validity of these findings, I used triangulation by reviewing publicly available information, which supported and aligned with participants' descriptions of engagement practices.

Participants' consistent use of employee recognition programs confirms existing research identifying recognition as a powerful intrinsic motivator and a key job resource that drives engagement, retention, and productivity. Recognition fulfills Kahn's (1990) condition of psychological meaningfulness, where employees feel valued for their efforts, fostering emotional investment in their roles. Theme 1 aligns with Chiwawa (2022), who stated that recognition is a motivational resource that buffers work demands and enhances performance. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's (2023) evidence review on non-financial recognition concluded that symbolic recognition, such as verbal praise, thank-you notes, or peer acknowledgments, can be more effective in boosting engagement than monetary rewards. My findings also support self-determination theory

(Deci & Ryan, 2000), suggesting that authentic recognition strengthens employees' sense of competence and relatedness, two critical components of intrinsic motivation. By highlighting formal and informal recognition practices, my findings extend practitioner knowledge by illustrating how leaders can apply Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory principles without significant financial cost. Acknowledging contributions enhances feelings of accomplishment and skill (competence), while also fostering a sense of belonging and connection to the organization (relatedness). This strengthens employees' motivation to perform well for the sake of the activity itself, rather than solely for external rewards.

Leaders in the accommodation industry can enhance employee engagement, retention, and performance by focusing on employee recognition. Research shows that implementing structured, yet personalized recognition programs motivates employees, boosts morale, and reduces turnover. For example, Yu et al. (2024) found that recognition programs directly lowered stress and increased job satisfaction in accommodation settings. By fostering a sense of value, purpose, and community, recognition programs act as a psychological buffer against job demands and burnout. Therefore, leaders should adopt formal recognition (e.g., service awards, monthly acknowledgments) and informal gestures (such as thank-you notes or public praise) to reinforce employee value and commitment.

Theme 2: Providing Career Development and Training Opportunities

Another theme was the importance of career development and training opportunities in promoting employee retention. Participants emphasized that employees are more likely to stay with organizations when they see clear paths for growth and

advancement. Participant A discussed aligning human capital strategy with succession planning to groom junior employees for leadership roles. Mentorship and coaching also played a key role, with Participant D highlighting the importance of feedback-driven guidance in preparing employees for future job opportunities. Cross-training was another widely used approach. Participants C and F noted that cross-training improves operational flexibility while signaling employees that leaders value their skills. Participant E further explained that internal candidates not selected for promotions received constructive feedback to support ongoing development. Participants agreed that training and development help retain employees and enhance productivity by equipping employees to contribute at higher levels. The importance of providing career development and training opportunities reinforces prior findings that developmental opportunities heighten engagement and retention by providing a sense of progress and personal growth. This aligns with Kahn's (1990) dimension of availability, which theorizes that employees are more engaged when they possess the physical, emotional, and psychological resources to perform effectively. Prior empirical research confirms that professional development contributes to long-term commitment and productivity (Han, 2022). My findings extend this literature by showing that feedback following non-selection for promotions, as practiced by Participant E, sustains engagement even when advancement is temporarily unattainable, demonstrating how constructive communication preserves psychological safety.

For leaders in the accommodation industry, the practical implication is clear: investing in employee growth directly leads to better performance and lower turnover. Leaders should develop structured training programs that encompass both technical and

soft skills, including customer service, leadership, and conflict resolution. Creating clear career paths and communicating advancement opportunities can motivate employees to excel. Participants also recommend that leaders adopt a mentorship and coaching approach. Research shows that mentoring and coaching boost confidence, psychological empowerment, and engagement (Zhang & Li, 2024). Additionally, cross-training opportunities help employees understand multiple operational areas, which improves flexibility and teamwork while reinforcing their value to the organization. Managers should recognize and reward employees who complete training programs to foster a culture of learning and achievement. When employees feel supported in their professional growth, they experience a greater sense of belonging and purpose, which are key factors for engagement and retention in the accommodation industry. To verify these findings, I found that Decker (2024), as cited by the Society of Human Resource Management (2025), believes that career development is crucial for engagement and retention. According to Decker and the Society for Human Resource Management, a lack of development and career advancement opportunities is a leading cause of employee turnover. Providing continuous training and clear career paths increases loyalty, motivation, and the likelihood that employees will stay with an organization.

Theme 3: Providing Effective Communication and Ongoing Feedback

Effective communication and ongoing feedback were also recognized as crucial elements of engagement. Participants agreed that transparent communication bridges the gap between management and employees, fostering trust and a sense of connection. Participant E uses employee surveys, drop boxes, and open discussions to gather honest feedback, while Participant D employs forums and surveys to promote two-way

communication. Several participants mentioned qualitative tools, such as exit interviews, surveys, and focus groups, to gain deeper insights into employee sentiment. Participant E highlighted the importance of combining formal reviews with informal gestures, such as handwritten notes of appreciation. Some participants noted that newsletters and updates also play key roles in keeping employees informed. Participant E shared that newsletters celebrating milestones, personal events, and organizational updates help promote inclusion. Accessibility was another recurring theme. Participant F values one-on-one meetings and an open-door policy, while Participant B uses daily team huddles to maintain transparency. Additionally, Participants B, E, and F encourage employee involvement by letting employees co-create engagement activities, which increases buy-in and reduces resistance. My research findings suggest that employees are more likely to be engaged, stay in their roles, and perform productively when they feel heard and informed.

Effective communication and ongoing feedback were found to be foundational for engagement. This theme confirms Chiwawa's (2022) findings, which link transparent communication and participatory dialogue to higher levels of trust and commitment. Effective, ongoing feedback also aligns with Mazzetti and Schaufeli (2022), who found that feedback and communication are key mechanisms linking leadership to team engagement and performance. Masood (2024) emphasized that in high-turnover industries, consistent communication and effective feedback loops are crucial for retaining skilled employees, particularly in sectors with demanding work environments. Carter (2024) emphasized that open communication and real-time feedback enhance morale, increasing employee satisfaction and output. Transparent and continuous

communication fosters engagement and motivation, improving employee performance and productivity. My findings further align with Khan's (1990) theory, which posits that communication is a relational resource that reduces uncertainty and stress, providing a sense of safety.

Effective communication and feedback systems foster trust, alignment, and ongoing improvement. Lee et al. (2024) demonstrated that frequent and transparent communication between managers and employees in hospitality firms enhances engagement and reduces service failures. McClain and Nelson (2024) showed that 80% of employees who have received meaningful feedback in the past week are fully engaged. This open dialogue ensures that employees understand why they are performing tasks, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability, which leads to higher-quality service and improved guest experiences. Leaders should maintain open channels through regular briefings, surveys, and one-on-one meetings to ensure employees feel heard and informed. Providing consistent corrective and positive feedback builds confidence and reinforces Kahn's (1990) psychological safety condition, in which employees feel secure about sharing ideas or concerns.

Theme 4: Promoting Work-Life Balance and Schedule Flexibility

Promoting work-life balance and flexible schedules also emerged as a key strategy for engagement, particularly in the accommodation industry, where employees may have demanding schedules. Participant D discussed how flexible scheduling reduces burnout and absenteeism, while Participant F emphasized that accommodating requests, such as cross-shift swaps, helps employees feel respected while maintaining productivity. Participant E added that hosting family-oriented events, such as picnics and barbecues,

helps reinforce the balance between professional and personal life, fostering a sense of inclusion and well-being. These practices demonstrate that employee engagement extends beyond the workplace, acknowledging employees' personal lives and responsibilities to foster a loyal and motivated workforce.

The emphasis on work-life balance and flexibility validates findings from engagement literature. It closely aligns with Kahn's (1990) employee engagement theory, which emphasizes the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability. When leaders enable employees to balance their professional and personal lives, they foster the emotional and cognitive energy that employees need to engage fully at work. Marecki (2024) found that effective work-life balance practices contribute to higher morale, lower absenteeism, and improved productivity outcomes, aligning with Kahn's concept of psychological meaningfulness. Employees who perceive that the organization values their well-being and personal lives are likelier to demonstrate greater engagement, commitment, and sustained performance. Similarly, Noronha (2025) found that employees with healthy work-life integration exhibit higher engagement and job satisfaction, resulting in measurable improvements in performance and retention. These findings collectively suggest that work-life balance initiatives do more than reduce stress; they create an environment of trust and respect where employees feel empowered to perform at their best. Organizations enhance productivity and strengthen emotional commitment and organizational loyalty by supporting personal needs. Ultimately, cultivating a culture that prioritizes flexibility and balance is not just an ethical choice but a strategic one, as it sustains engagement, improves performance, and positions

organizations to attract and retain top talent in an increasingly competitive, employee-centered labor market.

The demanding nature of accommodation work makes work-life balance and scheduling flexibility essential. Constant customer service, irregular hours, and high-pressure environments can lead to burnout if not adequately managed. Jung and Yoon (2021) found that workplace flexibility in the hospitality industry has a positive influence on employee engagement, satisfaction, and commitment, highlighting its crucial role in enhancing organizational performance. Implementing flexibility in a round-the-clock industry presents unique challenges. However, these can be managed with the right approach, such as allowing for part-time or temporary roles, and cross-training employees to handle different tasks. This approach benefits both employees and employers by enhancing morale, reducing burnout, and increasing workforce retention, while providing businesses with the agility to meet fluctuating demands and adapt to operational changes. Flexible scheduling can reduce fatigue and burnout, boosting employees' psychological readiness and allowing them to invest more energy, creativity, and focus on delivering excellent guest service.

Theme 5: Promoting Consistency and Accountability

Ultimately, I found that promoting consistency and accountability are crucial for sustaining engagement efforts. Participants shared various approaches to ensure alignment and measurable impact. Securing leadership buy-in was a crucial step in the process. Participants A and E persuade leaders by presenting data and employee feedback to demonstrate the value of engagement initiatives. Participant D develops standardized toolkits and training to ensure consistent department management practices. Many

participants also emphasized the importance of quantitative measures, such as tracking turnover, absenteeism, productivity, and guest satisfaction scores. Participant B reported a 20% increase in retention after implementing new engagement initiatives, while Participant C observed a direct link between retention and improved guest satisfaction. Furthermore, Participants A and E incorporate engagement-related questions into performance reviews to hold managers accountable for fostering positive employee experiences. My research findings indicate that integrating quantitative data and qualitative feedback yields a more comprehensive understanding of program effectiveness, thereby supporting continuous organizational improvement.

Consistency and accountability highlight the importance of structural reinforcement mechanisms in sustaining engagement initiatives. Participants' use of data tracking, leadership buy-in, and performance evaluations reflects Saks's (2019) employee engagement model, which emphasizes organizational accountability as a key predictor of lasting engagement outcomes. Quantitative measurement of turnover and satisfaction also supports Mazzetti and Schaufeli's (2022) call for ongoing evaluation of engagement programs as dynamic resource systems rather than static interventions. Recent empirical and conceptual work reinforces the notion that structural consistency and accountability mechanisms are crucial for maintaining employee engagement, thereby contributing to retention and productivity. These principles align with Kahn's (1990) framework, strengthening psychological safety and availability. Consistent recognition, clear expectations, and managerial accountability reduce ambiguity and defensiveness, enhancing safety. Accountability structures ensure employees understand what is expected, making their emotional and physical investments more stable and predictable

(availability). Thus, these structural mechanisms transform engagement from sporadic gestures into enduring conditions, supporting Kahn's view that engagement flourishes when the organizational environment fosters meaningful, safe, and accessible participation.

Finally, consistency and accountability ensure that engagement practices are sustained rather than short-lived. Fatima and Elbanna (2023) found that hospitality organizations that integrate structured accountability systems such as performance management frameworks, balanced scorecards, and regular progress evaluations achieve improved employee retention and higher guest satisfaction. These systems promote transparency and consistency, ensuring engagement and performance principles are embedded in daily operations. Leaders should therefore incorporate accountability mechanisms into organizational policies and ensure that supervisors apply them uniformly to sustain engagement and long-term organizational success. Leaders should therefore embed engagement principles into operational policies, ensuring every supervisor applies them uniformly. By doing so, leaders create a predictable, fair, and motivating work environment that fulfills Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability.

Business Contributions and Recommendations for Professional Practice

For business and organization leaders in the accommodation sector, they combine themes of implementing employee recognition programs, providing career development and training opportunities, providing effective communication and ongoing feedback, providing work-life balance and schedule flexibility, and promoting consistency and

accountability to offer a strategic roadmap for using effective employee engagement strategies to improve employee retention and increase employee productivity.

Recognition should be strategically used by leaders not only to reward past achievements but also to inspire ongoing growth and development. Jo and Shin (2025) conducted a large-scale, multi-group analysis, showing that recognition has a significantly positive influence on employee engagement and downstream outcomes, such as job satisfaction and reduced burnout. This finding suggests consistent, meaningful recognition helps build a healthier, more motivated workforce by reinforcing desirable behaviors and validating employee efforts. Leaders can implement structured recognition strategies such as award ceremonies, team shout-outs during meetings, and personalized acknowledgments for professional milestones. By celebrating accomplishments and continuous development, leaders foster a culture that values learning and engagement, ultimately driving long-term organizational success.

Transparent communication and feedback loops amplify the value of employee training by fostering clarity, trust, and collaboration. Men and Tkalac Verčič (2023) demonstrated that internal communication satisfaction correlates with commitment and job performance, suggesting that coupling feedback with training deepens engagement. This implies that when managers establish open channels for dialogue, employees feel more supported and motivated to apply new skills effectively. Leaders can strengthen this process by setting clear learning expectations, offering formative feedback throughout training, and regularly soliciting employees' input on their educational needs. Through transparent communication and continuous feedback, organizations create a shared

growth culture that enhances individual performance and overall organizational effectiveness.

Accommodation work often demands schedule flexibility. Because of this, leaders should integrate training windows into shift design. Organizations that incorporate brief training sessions into flexible shift schedules tend to see improvements in both employee engagement and performance (Alenezi et al., 2024). Providing micro-learning modules that employees can complete between shifts further supports work-life balance and strengthens their psychological availability, as described by Kahn (1990).

To ensure these systems endure, leaders should ensure consistency and accountability. Uddin et al. (2024) documented that accommodation organizations with human resource management practices that align training with performance metrics, recognition, and quality standards experienced lower turnover and more stable patterns of guest satisfaction. Employees saw a clear connection between training and organizational outcomes, reinforcing accountability and meaning. Ultimately, continuing education and training become a means to tie all themes together: training improves competence (a psychological driver), recognition rewards growth, communication helps clarify expectations, flexibility makes development feasible, and accountability locks in follow-through. For leaders, this means shifting training from optional to vital, embedding it into workflows, connecting it to recognition, and measuring its returns in retention, productivity, and guest metrics.

Implications for Social Change

The findings from my research project carry positive implications for social change, both within the accommodation industry and broader service-oriented sectors.

When business leaders implement engagement-driven practices, such as employee recognition programs, career development and training opportunities, effective communication, ongoing feedback, work-life balance, schedule flexibility, and consistency and accountability, they establish a strategic plan to improve employee engagement, retention, and productivity. These initiatives strengthen organizational effectiveness and contribute to broader social well-being.

Intentional human resource practices can significantly enhance workplace culture and employee well-being within an industry often characterized by high turnover and limited career advancement opportunities. Shifana and Sathyamoorthi (2025) found that fair recognition and continuous feedback help employees feel valued and respected, reinforcing psychological well-being and reducing workplace stress. An ongoing dialogue helps employees align with goals, fosters a growth mindset, and builds stronger relationships with managers. Similarly, Alenezi et al. (2024) demonstrated that implementing flexible scheduling and work-life balance initiatives enhances employees' mental health and family stability while reducing burnout-related absenteeism. When organizational leaders prioritize recognition, feedback, and flexibility, they enhance individual job satisfaction and contribute to the broader sustainability of their organization and society. Embedding these supportive practices into daily operations can transform the hospitality industry into one that promotes equity, stability, and long-term employee engagement.

Furthermore, continuing education and training programs generate long-term social benefits by creating pathways for skill development and economic mobility, particularly for lower-wage and entry-level workers. Representatives of the International

Labour Organization (2025) emphasized that equitable access to career development opportunities in hospitality strengthens social inclusion and enhances economic stability for underrepresented groups. As employees gain new competencies and confidence, they contribute to organizational success and community resilience by improving their socioeconomic standing. From a societal perspective, organizations that invest in their workforce contribute to a culture of dignity, fairness, and lifelong learning principles that drive positive social transformation.

Ultimately, consistent accountability mechanisms within organizations ensure that engagement practices are applied fairly and transparently, thereby reducing inequities and enhancing trust between management and employees. When leaders institutionalize fair communication, recognition, and growth systems, they help redefine employment standards across the accommodation industry, setting a precedent for socially responsible business conduct (Guttentag et al., 2023). Overall, the findings of my research project suggest that businesses that prioritize engagement-driven practices not only enhance productivity but also play a meaningful role in advancing social justice, economic equality, and community well-being.

Recommendations for Future Study

The findings from my research project provide a strong foundation for future investigations that can deepen both academic understanding and practical business applications of employee engagement within the accommodation industry. A key recommendation is the pursuit of longitudinal and causal studies to better identify how strategies such as recognition programs, career development initiatives, effective communication, feedback systems, and flexible scheduling directly influence long-term

engagement, retention, and productivity outcomes. Kim et al. (2023) noted that longitudinal research offers valuable insight into how engagement practices evolve and sustain their impact over time, making it essential for capturing dynamic workplace realities. Additionally, Martinez and Serrano (2024) emphasized that contextual factors such as leadership style, labor market conditions, and employee demographics can significantly shape engagement outcomes. Building on these perspectives, future researchers should examine how organizational characteristics, including size, culture, and resource availability, moderate the success of engagement practices to ensure that engagement strategies remain adaptable, inclusive, and impactful across diverse accommodation settings.

Another area of future quantitative research could focus on the interactions among engagement drivers as variables, such as how recognition enhances the effects of training or how communication quality moderates the influence of schedule flexibility on performance. Chen et al. (2024) recommend modeling interaction effects to better understand these synergies. Expanding research to multiple global regions would also enhance the generalizability of findings, as cultural and economic contexts can influence how engagement initiatives are perceived and implemented (Jackson et al., 2024). Moreover, future researchers should employ mixed-methods approaches, combining qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys, to capture employee perspectives at multiple organizational levels. A mixed methods approach would help uncover differences in how engagement strategies are experienced by frontline versus managerial employees.

Ultimately, future researchers should strengthen the connection between employee engagement and key organizational performance metrics, including revenue per available room, guest satisfaction ratings, and cost efficiency. By quantifying the financial return on engagement investments, researchers can provide stronger business cases for implementing comprehensive engagement strategies (Singh & Kumari, 2023). These research extensions would deepen theoretical insight into engagement and equip leaders with data-driven tools to create sustainable and inclusive workplace cultures in the hospitality sector.

Conclusion

In my qualitative pragmatic inquiry, I identified and explored the effective strategies that accommodation leaders use to engage employees, aiming to increase employee retention and productivity. My research project involved semistructured interviews with six participants followed by thematic analysis. I identified five major themes: implementing employee recognition programs, providing career development and training opportunities, ensuring effective communication and ongoing feedback, promoting work-life balance and schedule flexibility, and fostering consistency and accountability. The findings from my research confirm and extend the understanding of how these engagement strategies serve as critical drivers of employee engagement and productivity in the accommodation industry. The qualitative narratives of leaders align closely with recent empirical evidence. For instance, fairly administered recognition, linked to performance outcomes, significantly predicts higher engagement and lower turnover intentions among service employees (Jo & Shin, 2025). Similarly, strong internal communication and feedback systems are among the most potent predictors of

employee commitment and discretionary effort (Men & Tkalac Verčič, 2023). Moreover, flexible work arrangements and work–life balance have been shown to mediate the relationship between engagement and productivity, particularly in accommodation and other service-oriented sectors (Alenezi et al., 2024). Finally, multi-level longitudinal research demonstrates that consistent leadership practices such as accountability systems, standardized feedback, and engagement toolkits mediate leadership behavior to team effectiveness and long-term organizational stability (Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022). These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of employee engagement, demonstrating that leaders who employ these strategies enhance individual motivation and foster organizational environments characterized by fairness, trust, and collaboration. The integration of recognition, communication, and flexibility contributes to psychological safety and a sense of belonging, which in turn drives performance and reduces turnover. My research highlights that effective engagement strategies in the accommodation industry are not isolated interventions, but rather interdependent practices that reinforce one another. By adopting a holistic approach that prioritizes recognition, communication, flexibility, and accountability, leaders can build resilient organizations where employees are motivated, loyal, and empowered to deliver exceptional service, laying the groundwork for future advancements in sustainable engagement models within the accommodation sector.

These insights from my research project emphasize that accommodation leaders should view engagement as a complementary human resources initiative and a strategic foundation for operational excellence. Leaders are encouraged to implement recognition practices (formal, peer, and symbolic), establish two-way communication channels,

promote genuine flexibility within operational limits, and integrate engagement practices into accountability frameworks. Regularly measuring turnover, guest satisfaction, and productivity indicators can validate the return on investment of engagement initiatives and guide continuous improvement. For scholars, my research findings contribute to the empirical validation of engagement theory in high-demand service contexts, providing nuanced insights into budgetary constraints, shift work realities, and the practical coordination of multifaceted engagement programs.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your role in creating effective strategies to engage employees to increase employee retention and productivity?
2. What effective strategies have you implemented to engage employees to increase employee retention and improve employee productivity?
3. What challenges did you face in implementing these strategies?
4. What steps did you take to mitigate the impact of these challenges?
5. How do you measure the effectiveness of the strategies you implemented?
6. What other information, not already discussed, would you like to share?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Action	Script
<p>Introduce the interview and set the stage—often over a meal or coffee.</p>	<p>“Hello, thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study. I appreciate the criticality you attach to the expected findings, and I hope to add to the literature that develops strategies to increase employee retention and improve employee productivity. I have been working on a degree for a Doctor of Business Administration for the past few years. In this study, I am exploring the strategies accommodations industry leaders use to engage employees.”</p> <p>“A few weeks ago, you agreed to sign an informed consent form. Do you have any questions for me or any matter that requires my attention? This interview is confidential, and your identity and that of your organization shall remain confidential and represented by codes.”</p> <p>“I will collect data using semistructured interview questions. The idea is to allow you to explain any strategies, events, and memories that answer the interview questions. During your narration, I may prompt you for further explanation and details.”</p> <p>“I will need to record your responses so that I do not miss anything.”</p> <p>“Note that you may rescind your decision to participate in the research anytime.”</p>
<p>Ask Interview Questions to get in-depth responses. Listen for nonverbal cues. Paraphrase as needed.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “What effective strategies have you implemented to engage employees to increase employee retention and productivity?” 2. “What challenges did you face in implementing these strategies?” 3. “What steps did you take to mitigate the impact of these challenges?” 4. “How do you measure the effectiveness of the strategies you implemented?” 5. “What other information, not already discussed, would you like to share?”
<p>Schedule transcript review either by phone or email.</p>	<p>“In a few days, I will need your assistance in authenticating my understanding of your responses to the interview questions as part of the research process. You may adjust the script or add to your initial responses if needed. I will send the transcript by email, and we can discuss it by phone if you agree.”</p>
<p>Introduce a member checking review and set the stage.</p>	<p>“Thank you for agreeing to meet me today to finalize what I heard from you during the interview and the meaning I have provided for each response.”</p>
<p>Wrap up the interview by thanking participants.</p>	<p>“Your contribution to this doctoral research has been most impressive, and I thank you very much for helping me to achieve the doctoral degree. I hope you will find the research findings beneficial to your organization and professional development.”</p>