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Employee Engagement and Organizational Profitability

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2016

Abstract

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by

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MBA, Texas A&M University, 2012

BS, Kaplan University, 2011

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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Abstract

Disengaged employees typically cost U.S. corporations $350 billion annually. The

purpose of this case study was to explore strategies that some communication business

leaders used to engage their employees that resulted in increased profits. The target

population consisted of 4 communication business leaders located in Jackson, Mississippi

who possessed at least 1 year of successful employee engagement experience. The self-

determination theory served as the study's conceptual framework. Semistructured

interviews were conducted and the participating company's archived documents were

gathered. Patterns were identified through a rigorous process of data familiarization, data

coding, and theme development and revision. Interpretations from the data were

subjected to member-checking to ensure trustworthiness of the findings. Based on the

methodological triangulation of the data collected, prominent themes emerged from

thematically analyzing the data: rewards and recognition, empowering employees, and

building a bond between leaders and employees. The implications for positive social

change include the potential to improve employee engagement. Enhanced employee

engagement could create social innovation and foster goodwill among employees,

customers, and community members.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to God, my children, my sister, my parents, and my fiancé.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The survival of corporate industries is dependent on maximizing profits from existing capabilities, while recognizing and adjusting to the fact that what may work today, may not necessarily work in the future (Kortmann, Gelhard, Zimmermann, & Piller, 2014). To make or maintain their companies' profitability, leaders of companies must work hard to engage employees (Kortmann et al., 2014). However, leaders may sometimes struggle to adapt their organization in response to change if they limit their focus to existing products and processes (Hill & Birkinshaw, 2012). Understanding how to manage the balance between employee relations, adopting innovation, and maximizing short-term profits is critical to business leaders ensuring a viable future for their corporations (Hill & Birkinshaw, 2012).

Background of the Problem

The use of advanced technologies, skilled labor, best practices, and education has helped to increase the efficiencies in many major organizations and firms. However, disengaged employees who have lowered productivity since the 2008 financial meltdown have affected the financial performances of many U.S. organizations (Purcell, 2014). Growing cycle times, excessive waste, increased rework, budget overruns, reduction of producing product because of missed deadlines, and defect increases all contribute to lowered productivity, which affects the financial performance of an organization. The longevity of an organization is affected by employee engagement, which is a factor on the financial performance of the organization (Bersin, 2014). In contrast, improved employee productivity had a positive effect on organizational financial performance.

Organizational productivity is determined by employee effort and engagement. The manner in which organizational leaders achieve financial goals is also affected by the efforts of their employees (Musgrove, Ellinger, & Ellinger, 2014). Interpersonal behaviors affect productivity; consequently, organizational leaders have begun to monitor how different interpersonal behaviors influence productivity (Hausknecht & Holwerda, 2013). Negative effects on productivity could be caused by negative interpersonal behaviors that lower employee engagement. Bersin (2014) found that only 13% of worldwide employees are fully engaged at work. In addition, twice as many are so disengaged that this negative behavior is spread to other employees (Bersin, 2014). Leaders of U.S. corporations that incorporate strategic employee engagement behaviors may experience higher employee productivity.

Problem Statement

The behavior of disengaged workers contributes to poor corporate financial performance (Purcell, 2014). Employee disengagement costs U.S. organizations $350 billion a year due to poor workplace performance and employee turnover (Hoolahan, Greenhouse, Hoffmann, & Lehman, 2012). The general business problem is that disengaged employees have a negative impact on workplace profitability. The specific business problem is that some communication business leaders lack strategies to engage their employees to increase profits.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies that some communication business leaders use to engage their employees that resulted in increased

profits. I conducted interviews to seek the insights of communication business leaders, within Jackson, Mississippi, who had been successful with employee engagement for at least a year. These leaders shared their successful employee engagement strategies through open-ended questioning sessions. The Jackson, Mississippi communication business leaders who learned and deployed effective employee engagement strategies noted better organizational cohesion. The implications for positive social change include summarizing potential strategies for improving local business relationships, providing job opportunities within the local community, and creating new industries and markets.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative method was the best approach to explore strategies communication business leaders used to engage employees in communication industries located in Jackson, Mississippi. The rationale for selecting the qualitative method was to explore issues from a group or individual perspective (Bansal & Corley, 2012). In contrast, the quantitative research method is designed to test objective theories using instruments to examine and measure variable-specific relationships (Larson-Hall & Plonsky, 2015). Quantitative researchers produce numerical data that are used to analyze statistical procedures (Larson-Hall & Plonsky, 2015). In addition, the mixed method research is used to integrate elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to generate results that exhibit implicit depth of understanding (Muskat, Blackman, & Muskat, 2012). As such, a qualitative approach was more appropriate for this study.

A case study design was the best approach to explore the communication business leaders' experience. Researchers use open-ended interview data to enable a better

understanding of the phenomenon (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013).

Researchers use a case study design to collect data from interview questions and archived

information (Boblin et al., 2013). Researchers use a case study to explore previously

unexplored phenomenon (Boblin et al., 2013). Researchers gain a deeper holistic view

within a single organization using a case study design (Haddock-Millar, Sanyal, &

Muller-Camen, 2015). Further, researchers use a case study design to explore a single

location or specific case for understanding strategies for employee engagement and

organizational profits (Boblin et al., 2013; Haddock-Millar et al., 2015).

Researchers use the ethnography design to explore behavioral patterns, beliefs, or

conditions of an intact cultural group (Gioia, 2013). They collect data through

observations and interviews in the natural setting and over a prolonged period of time

(Gioia, 2013); exploration of behavioral patterns, beliefs, or conditions was not necessary

for this study. Researchers use the grounded theory design to derive a general, abstract

theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of the participants

(Larson-Hall & Plonsky, 2015), which was beyond the scope of this study. Researchers

use a narrative research to collect group conversations, documents, and stories as the

primary sources of data to determine the meaning of what is happening in a phenomenon

(Goodson, Loveless, & Stephens, 2012). In this study, I did not collect group

conversations, documents, or stories as the primary source of data; hence, the narrative

research did not meet the needs of this study. The phenomenological research method is

a method that researchers use for the development of themes that are based on the lived

experiences of individuals in multiple organizations who are experiencing the

phenomenon; however, phenomenology would not provide an answer to strategies used to engage employees (Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). A case study design was the best approach to craft a comprehensive understanding of employee engagement for increased profitability, to address the complexities of a business problem, and to formulate a framework that future researchers can explore (Boblin et al., 2013).

Research Question

The overarching research question for this study was as follows: What strategies do communication leaders use to engage their employees to increase profits?

Interview Questions

In this study, I included interview questions necessary to explore strategies for engaging employees. Interview questions are valid for obtaining information about employee engagement techniques (Sousa, 2014).

1. How do you define employee engagement?

2. How do you keep your employees motivated?

3. What strategies have you used to engage employees within your organization?

4. Which of these strategies helped to engage employees?

5. What strategies did not help improve engagement?

6. Which of these strategies have you implemented to engage employees in your organization?

7. What causes employees to become disengaged?

8. How can employees be reengaged?

9. What effects and influence do disengaged employees have on the attitudes of other employees within the organization?

10. What does trust and respect with leadership in the organization mean to employees and their level of engagement?

Conceptual Framework

The theory of work engagement, self-determination theory (SDT), was formally introduced in the mid-1980s by Deci and Ryan (1985) to examine employee motivational factors. Deci and Ryan developed the SDT, which has been used in professional and academic research that relate to employee engagement. The self-determination theory relates to natural or intrinsic tendencies to behave in healthy and effective ways. Employee engagement and human behaviors have a connection to the theory of self-determination and the essence of work engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985). An employee's level of engagement derives from his or her being able to control personal behaviors and goals.

Disengagement and personal engagement are related to the SDT in that an employee's behavioral state is a key driver of motivation to demonstrating behavior at the professional and personal levels. The engagement level of employees affects the productivity of an organization. The motivation level of an employee is related to job satisfaction. The emotional state of an employee also relates to motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). When employees begin to withdraw and hide their identities, ideas, and feelings, these employees then become disengaged and will become defensive, resulting in an adverse effect on work performance (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Barrick, Thurgood, Smith, and Courtright (2014) suggested that employee engagement strategies implemented by business leaders result in higher levels of employee engagement (Blattner & Walter, 2015), customer satisfaction, productivity, and profit (Bowen, 2016), and lower levels of employee accidents and turnovers. Business leaders adopted the concept of SDT, as companies want their employees to hold positive attitudes towards their organization (Mowbray, Wilkinson, & Tse, 2014). Additionally, linking employee engagement with SDT provides a consistent framework for future research on employee engagement.

Operational Definitions

Affective commitment: Affective commitment is the emotional attachment that employees have for an organization's culture, job characteristics, and personal interactions with coworkers (Berens, 2013).

Collaboration: Collaboration is group work that promotes employee engagement and consists of employee skill building and the willingness to share knowledge, leadership, and fellowship (Bakar & McCann, 2015).

Continuance commitment: Continuance commitment is an attribute of an organization's commitment that creates opportunities for employees to feel satisfied with their jobs and add value to the organization (Berens, 2013).

Employee disengagement: Employee disengagement is considered detaching emotionally from the work performed; uncertainty, anxiety, insecurity, stress, and apprehension are factors that increase the reasons for employees to disengage (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Employee engagement: Employee engagement is when an employee begins to feel that he or she is valued and trusted, and the organization effectively manages employee engagement to accomplish the goals of an organization (Berens, 2013; Deci & Ryan 2008).

Job satisfaction: Job satisfaction is the most fundamental element of employee engagement (Prasad & Martens, 2015). Job satisfaction refers to how content an employee is with his or her job (Yee, Guo, & Yeung, 2015).

Motivation: Motivation is the process that allows employees to use and maintain goal-oriented behaviors. Motivation is the element that causes employees to become engaged in their work (Fallon, 2015; Kerman, Freundlich, Lee, & Brenner, 2012).

Organizational commitment: Organizational commitment is the organizational relationship that determines how an employee's willingness to remain loyal to a company is based on certain psychological conditions and circumstances of the employee (Gutierrez, Candela, & Carver, 2012; Hausknecht & Holwerda, 2013). Employees who are committed take initiative to resolve organizational problems (Welch, 2012; Zatzick, Deery, & Iverson, 2015).

Personal engagement: Personal engagement is the behavior that employees exhibit or leave out during work role performances (Martz, 2013; Shuck & Reio, 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Marshall and Rossman (2014) suggested a researcher should provide background information describing the phenomenon in question. Within this study, specific areas

were identified and established to set the boundaries of this study. In this section, the

assumptions, limitations, and delimitations in this study are addressed.

Assumptions

Assumptions are defined as facts that are considered to be true, but are not

verified (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The validity of the findings within this study

depended upon the assumption that employee engagement does affect organizational

profitability. The first assumption is that the participants in this study did understand and

comprehend the interview questions in an effort at collecting the most reliable data. I

assumed that the literacy of each participant may vary; however, all participants were

expected to understand, comprehend, and accurately answer employee engagement

interview questions. It was also assumed participants would provide clear, honest, and

unbiased feedback.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses that are out of the researcher's control

(Svensson & Doumas, 2013). The limitations within this study included the resources

available and the research designed to conduct the study. The findings from this study

reflected the perceptions of only the communication business leaders and not those of

other members within the organization. I limited the study population to the selected

communication business leaders in the communication organization in the study area.

The data for this study were collected from communication business leaders in a limited

geographic area and may not represent the views and experiences of communication

business leaders in other geographic locations.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the bounds or the scope of the research (Yin, 2013). The focus of this single case study was communication business leaders in Jackson, Mississippi. I selected a Jackson communications organization with multiple locations to participate in this study. Individuals who had not experienced successful employee engagement strategies were not eligible to participate. The study did not include staff-level employees. The data from this study may not be transferable to communication business leaders and employees of other communications organizations within Jackson, Mississippi or in other regions of the United States. The unbiased experiences of the participants are essential to the accuracy of the information received (Boblin et al., 2013). The study did not include interviews of other members within the organization about their opinions of the study participants' employee engagement strategies. This study was conducted in Jackson, Mississippi and may not represent the experiences and views of communication business leaders in other geographic locations.

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Significance of the Study

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In this section, I discussed how my study will contribute to business practices and possible implications for positive social change. An assessment of the values of this study will help communication business leaders differentiate the best strategy for employee engagement. My intent is that this study may offer a comprehensive overview of findings and discussions on the communication industry.

Contribution to Business Practice

Beneficial contributions employees make to a business can increase the profitability of an organization (Daskin & Tezer, 2012). Researchers have noted low productivity to cost the U.S. economy over $350 billion annually (Hoolahan et al., 2012). Much of these costs are attributed to disengaged employees, impacting health issues, job stress, burnout, turnover, and absenteeism (Bersin, 2014). Peretz, Levi, and Fried (2015) suggested turnover and absenteeism can increase an organization's costs and precipitate disciplinary issues with an unsafe working environment. The rising level of disengaged employees can have a significant impact on an organization's profits, ability to retain skilled employees, and employee citizenship (Berens, 2013). The knowledge gained from the current study could help resolve such issues by providing strategies organizations can implement to improve employee engagement.

Implications for Social Change

The results obtained from this study may contribute to positive social change by helping organizational leaders explore strategies for employee engagement and, in turn, will create social innovation and foster goodwill among employees, customers, and community members. The findings from this case study may contribute to positive social change by providing potential strategies for improving local business relationships, providing job opportunities within the local community, and creating new industries and markets. The quality of life for consumers and corporate social responsibility are principles of social change. Consumers can enjoy quality products and services because of increased employee engagement (Berens, 2013). What's more, leaders of business

organizations, communities, and academic institutions might benefit from this study by using the results to develop and implement strategies for reducing the high number of disengaged employees in the workforce, which is essential to community development, by changing the local community's residents' behavior in order to benefit society and the environment.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Issues related to employee productivity can affect many industries within the United States. The review of literature for this study includes information collected from industries, and this information is applied to a qualitative case study within the communication industry. The review of literature is conveyed thorough a summary of previous research, comparing and contrasting research study methods and findings. Madsen and Desai (2010) noted that employees find engaging in their roles difficult when organizational change is imminent and occurs often. The demanding makeup of job-related tasks could have an adverse effect on employee engagement (Liu, Caldwell, Fedor, & Herold, 2012). This study involved exploring strategies that could promote higher levels of employee engagement and productivity in the workplace.

Research databases I used to find literature included Walden University Library's article database and the following: EBSCOhost, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. Search terms used included *employee productivity, employee engagement, job satisfaction, disengagement productivity, self-determination theory, organizational learning, organizational profitability,* and *leadership*. Conducting searches using key terms in various databases resulted in scholarly references that related to employee productivity

and organizational profitability. Within this study, a total of 237 sources ensured scholarship, rigor, and depth, resulting in 201 or 85% of sources being from peer-reviewed journal articles published within 5 years of publication of this study. Citations for this literature review are from peer-reviewed journals, articles, and books. The sources of the references collected for this literature review were articles and books published since 1943. Citations from 141 peer-reviewed articles were included in this literature review, including 109 that are current, peer-reviewed research articles published from 2012 to 2016.

The review of the literature of this study begins with self-determination theory (SDT) as the foundation for understanding the importance of implementing new strategies to an organization. The research on self-determination includes a description of the challenges of achieving employee engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Deci and Ryan (1985) provided the conceptual framework for this study on employees' internal sources of motivation and organizational profitability. After the description of self-determination, the next section of the literature review contains references addressing employee engagement as a learning process to explore the unique challenges of implementing processes to support productivity and profitability. The remainder of the literature review contains references addressing the four major themes of employee engagement, impact of employee engagement, organizational culture, and leadership.

Carter and Greer (2013) grouped previous research into disengaged productivity and indicators of organizational profitability. Greer and Lei (2011) cited a review of research, and the researchers' findings provide additional depth and breadth to the review

of literature on employee engagement. Research conducted on organizational

profitability contains data from which the researcher can draw to help understand the

challenges of achieving higher levels of engagement and productivity simultaneously in

an organization and correlates the issue of organizational profitability back to the SDT.

Self-Determination Theory

Employee engagement is critical to any organization. Berens (2013) suggested

Deci and Ryan conducted the most influential study on employee engagement in 1985.

Deci and Ryan (1985) expanded on early work by differentiating between intrinsic and

extrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan noted the three psychological needs, competence,

autonomy, and psychological relatedness, motivate the individual to initiate behavior

essential for psychological health and well-being of an individual. Deci and Ryan

identified three innate needs, competence, relatedness, and autonomy, which, if satisfied,

will allow for optimal function and growth. The basic needs of satisfaction have been

found to directly relate to dedication of employees (Vandenabeele, 2014).

The SDT is related to dedicated and meaningful work, which allows employees to

realize how valuable they are within the organization, which makes them engaged.

Bolman and Deal (2014) suggested there is an opportunity for employee autonomy when

SDT is leveraged, and furthermore, employees have the ability to influence those around

them. This influence transcends to the benefits of intrinsic rewards. Meaningful work

will allow for an increase in employee participation; however, it does not guarantee that

the employee will be engaged. The need for autonomy, intrinsic rewards, and influence

are required to achieve employee engagement (Bolman & Deal, 2014).

Employee motivation is attributed to the concepts of the SDT. La Guardia (2009) studied the relationship of SDT to motivational processes to identify and understand the relationship and the influence on commitment concepts. La Guardia suggested that psychological needs form a sense of development of identity by intrinsic motivation, which results in the outcomes of interest and engagement. Using potentials and commitment can influence an individual's value, behavior, and goals, which are healthy for an individual's identity (La Guardia, 2009). Fullagar and Mills (2008) conducted an investigation of the relationship between motivation and flow using a sample of 327 architecture students. The authors defined flow as the holistic sensation that employees feel when they are totally engaged within their work (Fullagar & Mills, 2008). The need for autonomy was also examined as a moderating factor between motivation and engagement (Bolman & Deal, 2014). Fullagar and Mills found a significant relationship between intrinsic motivation and flow experiences. The relationship between flow and intrinsic motivation builds a viable understanding of engagement as the psychological need of autonomy.

Four major themes evolved from the SDT research. The themes that are predictors of increasing levels of employee engagement are (a) competence and recognition, (b) needs and expectations, (c) growth and development, and (d) sense of belonging. An employee with stable emotions, which equates to a sense of belonging, is classified as highly engaged (Shuck, Rocco, & Albornoz, 2011). Mullen, Fish, and Hutinger (2010) revealed that the four themes of engaging employees are similar to the four themes within the current research: (a) relationship development, (b) workplace

climate, (c) learning opportunities, and (d) attachment with coworkers. Autonomy is referred to as a state of independence that allows an individual to express him- or herself (Shuck et al., 2011). Individuals feel a state of belonging when they are connected to one another and feel cared for and accepted within the organization. Deci and Ryan (1985) referred to competence as the effectiveness and the use of an individual's skills, which allows him or her to work at high levels. Employees that are confident in themselves are confident in their daily work duties.

Four Major Themes

   Competence and recognition. Recognizing employees and enhancing employee competencies are critical when creating an organizational culture of engagement. Being recognized for achievements is a form of appreciation and a basic human need. An employee feels valued and motivated when he or she is recognized for achieving excellence. Bradler, Dur, Neckermann, and Non (2013) noted that employee recognition does not have to be extravagant; a simple thank you or notes can make employees feel rewarded for their contribution to the organization. To make an impact, elaboration and explanation of good deeds being recognized is important. In addition, employee recognition directly affects employee performance and is a form of powerful feedback. Recognition is critical to the culture and operation within the workplace, which impacts workforce engagement (Brick, 2012; Haines & St-Onge, 2012).

   Shuck et al. (2011) commented that emotional ownership or commitment to an organization is based on interpersonal relationships. Leader-employee relationship is a major contributor to organizational commitment (Yuan, Lin, Shieh, & Li, 2012). Avey,

Wernsing, and Palanski (2012) stated that organizations should value respect, fairness, and emotional connectivity in the workplace. Competency and recognition is fostered when leaders provide employees with the opportunity to communicate issues they may experience or provide input pertaining to operations within the workplace (Yuan et al., 2012). A shared mindset among employees creates the sense of ownership for the group (Sieger, Zellweger, & Aquino, 2013). At the individual level, the notion of ownership of feelings begins. However, without strong leadership, employees may experience difficulty with individual commitment and being motivated (Ghafoor, Qureshi, Kahn, & Hijazi, 2011).

Job design, work structure, and improved communication can create a workplace that promotes competency and recognition. When an employee feels competent and recognized, group dynamics converge to create a sense of ownership of outcomes, workplace environment, and organization (Avey et al., 2012). Nasomboon (2014) suggested leaders in organizations must allow employees to share their perceptions of organizational policies and procedures in an effort at creating an emotionally safe workplace environment. When a leader and employee create a safe workplace environment together, engagement can occur.

Promoting cultural competence of the entire organization means enhancing employee competency. To ensure high employee morale and customer satisfaction, enhancement of workforce competency and development is critical to employee engagement. This act will promote long-term retention and a positive outlook with respect to the success of the company. McDaniel, Ngaia, and Leonard (2015) noted the

most significant topics for performance development and evaluation include competency enhancement. Annual appraisals assess an employee's level of competency; as such, these evaluations directly contribute to high morale and increased engagement.

   Needs and expectations. The relationship between needs and expectations of employee engagement are critical elements of employee productivity. Researchers have examined information relating to how expectations and needs impact engagement within the organization (Armstrong, Shakespeare-Finch, & Shochet, 2016; Brick, 2012; Mullen et al., 2010). Mullen et al. (2010) examined the relationship between motivation and engagement. Compensation was perceived to being more valuable than employee relations (Mullen et al., 2010). Critical factors to motivate and engage employees were the opportunities to be either promoted or have an increase in annual salaries (Armstrong et al., 2016; Brick, 2012).

   The primary determinants of organizational effectiveness are job involvement and trust (Nasomboon, 2014). Employee motivation can be created with trust in expectations (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013). When there is dysfunctional leadership and dissatisfaction within the workplace, employees are not engaged. The realms of the workplace should be where employees can build trust and communication, without retaliation (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013). Leaders must create healthy workplace environments to improve employee needs and expectations while achieving the organizational goals. Job insecurity combined with job demands can create difficulties in engagement (Karkoulian, Mukaddam, McCarthy, & Messarra, 2013).

Timms, Brough, and Graham (2012) suggested the essential requirement for an employee is to consistently engage in honest communication. Employee engagement can be affected by changes in empowerment, training, and programs. Hynes (2012) suggested leaders employ processes that address employee needs and expectation concerns, such as corporate culture awareness, team skills development, incentives, and communication. Abel (2013) stated employees that have needs and expectations met, decrease labor costs, increase efficiency, and enhance customer satisfaction. Ensuring available resources, fair treatment, and fair compensation can guarantee employee needs and expectations are properly seen to (Abel, 2013).

In contrast, DeCola and Riggins (2010) reviewed nurses and their workplace with an emphasis on their expectations and needs. In their study, the authors conducted a gap analysis between expectations and experience of these nurses. DeCola and Riggins found a disconnection between the nurses' expectations and experience. The greatest disconnection between expectations and experience affecting engagement and motivation were found to be balanced between the quality of work and life, pay and benefits, sufficient staffing, involvement in decision-making processes, and career development (Armstrong et al., 2016). When creating a culture of engagement, employee expectations and need disconnects must be allayed.

Growth and development. Career growth and development is considered as one of the predictors of employee engagement. Employees are more engaged when given an opportunity to grow their careers within the company. Mentorship is defined as the process in which an advisor guides or helps experienced people in their areas of expertise

(Ledlow & Coppola, 2013). Ledlow and Coppola (2013) suggested that mentorship involves openness, equality, and trust between the mentor and the mentee. In another context, mentoring can be either a formal or an informal relationship between a mentor and a mentee.

Most leaders believe employee motivation has a direct impact on employee commitment and performance (Vallerand, 2012). The success of an organization is determined by employee commitment and performance (Shahid & Azhar, 2013). Employees' overall performance is an essential component in an organization's success (Talib, 2013). A key determinant of job performance could be employee growth and development. Korzynski (2013) believed that employees that have proper growth and development channels can better select a career development track to meet their growth needs. Leaders must understand the importance of providing adequate developmental and growth opportunities.

Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, the common theory of motivation, is based on the greatest needs of humans. Human growth and development depends on five areas of needs: (a) physiological, (b) safety, (c) love/belongingness, (d) esteem, and (e) self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Leaders should ensure employees' growth and development needs are met if employee satisfaction is to ensue. One need could motivate an employee in one way, while that same need could motivate another employee differently. Employee growth and development can depend on workplace environment, relationships, and behavioral influence (Panaccio, Henderson, Liden, Wayne, & Cao, 2014).

To enhance employee growth and development, Andrew and Sofian (2012) suggested incorporating mentors. A person who has an influence and advanced experience is a mentor within an organization. A mentee is defined as a junior leader whom a mentor coaches (McCuriston & DeLucenay, 2010). The process for developing a relationship involving two or more people with the same goal of achieving excellent professional outcomes, which can benefit both parties, is the process of mentoring (McCuriston & DeLucenay, 2010). Mentoring can provide greater employee stability within an organization and hence can increase organizational profitability. Achieving better organizational performance and profitability increases the company's ability to survive. Hartmann, Rutherford, Feinberg, and Anderson (2014) noted that mentoring can increase employee satisfaction and reduce employee turnover, which are key elements in employee engagement. Employees that are satisfied in their workplace are less likely to leave jobs and hence tend to retire from jobs (Andrew & Sofian, 2012).

Organizations that are actively engaged in the learning and developmental process and opportunities are more profitable, more satisfied, and enjoy higher retention rates (Carter, 2015; Schramm, Coombs, & Boyd, 2013). Latif (2012) noted organizations that are actively involved in their employees' learning development have a retention rate of 59%. In addition, these organizations are more innovative, which generates greater profits and a higher customer satisfaction rate. Organizations that use mentoring and coaching approaches have 59% customer loyalty, 50% less turnover, and are 29% more profitable (Carter, 2015). Organizations that have a healthy and conducive workplace environment are much more sustainable than their competition (Schramm et al., 2013).

Sense of belonging. The sense of belongingness is a factor in engaging employees. The sense of belongingness is an intrinsic factor that affects the employee's ability to find meaning in his or her job. Once the sense of belonging is achieved, the employee feels connected and a part of the organization. The factor of belonging emotionally engages an employee in their daily jobs. Belle, Burley, and Long (2014) described workplace belongingness as being accepted, respected, and included in the decision-making process within an organization. In addition, the support from coworkers and management is also a form of belongingness in the workplace.

An employee can begin to feel isolated and unhappy when a sense of belongingness is lacking. The link between belongingness and depressive symptoms in the workplace was explored by (Cockshaw & Shochet, 2010). Cockshaw and Shochet (2010) recruited a sample staff for observation. The sample staff included a variety of administrative and client services within the South East Queensland Regional offices in Australia. The depression anxiety stress scale was administered to analyze the data collected. Cockshaw and Shochet indicated the importance of having a sense of belongingness in the workplace directly affects the profitability of the organization and employee engagement. In addition, Cockshaw and Shochet suggested that the sense of belongingness is directly related to themes of acceptance, support, respect, and inclusion.

Furthermore, in a study conducted by Cockshaw, Shochet, and Obst (2014), the importance of belongingness is a strong affirmation that it is perhaps one of the most important aspects of human engagement. The researchers found that the level of belongingness expressed by individuals, shapes how they react to process and procedural

fairness. Cockshaw et al., further determined that individuals who were found to have a strong desire to belong were more cognizant of procedures, than those with a weak desire to belong. It was found that organizations should encourage employees' sense of belongingness to enable employees to be more engaged.

Impact of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement matters to both the employee as well as the organization as a whole. The failing global economy has created a huge shift in the way business takes place (McCuiston & DeLucenay, 2010). An organization that is bound by rules and regulations, from a union perspective, can either make or break the organization, since employees can utilize contract agreement provisions to impede the attainment of the organizational goals and objectives. Management's capability to leverage employee engagement strategies is essential in an organization.

Cooper-Thomas, Paterson, Stadier, and Saks (2014) establishing a high level of expectations and frequent performance reviews can increase employee participation and cooperation. The nonavailability of resources has lead organizations to think more about reducing costs and increasing productivity and efficiency. Reduced variation in processes can reduce cost over time as it relates to process improvement (Emrouznejad, Anouze, & Thanassoulis, 2010); however, an organization must continue to incorporate processes that enhance employee engagement levels. McCuiston and DeLucenay (2010) noted short-term cost cutting processes are not uniformly successful.

Employee engagement has emerged as one of the greatest challenges in today's workplace. It has been an area of concern in the past and still is today. With

complexities and stringent regulations in many organizations today, employee engagement will continue to challenge organizations in the future (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014). This aspect challenges management due to the fact that engagement is a critical element in maintaining the organization's vitality, survival, and profitability (Albercht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey, & Saks, 2015; Breevaart et al., 2013; Farndale & Murrer, 2015). Further research on the impact of employee engagement, including studies conducted by Gallup Consulting and Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) indicated that organizations that have highly engaged employees have greater profits than those that do not (Mann & Darby, 2014; SHRM, 2014). The organizations that were impacted, experienced increased customer satisfaction, profits, employee productivity, and earnings per share with publically traded organizations (Ahmetoglu, Harding, Akhtar, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2015; Carter, 2015; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2014; Vandenabeele, 2014).

Leaders that are authentic influence the engagement of employees (Nicholas & Erakovich, 2013). Balancing moral perspectives with interpersonal relationships can create a healthy leadership-employee relationship. Employee engagement that is improved is a by-product of leadership that has a direct relationship with employees (Lowe, 2012). Ensuring work engagement and empowerment, plays a major role in employee involvement (Nicholas & Erakovich, 2013). Effective leadership provides vision and direction for employee development (Souba, 2011). The ability for leadership to effectively communicate is a basis for employee engagement.

The main focus of employee engagement is the alignment of the employee with the organizational goals and to go beyond what is expected (Menguc, Auh, Fisher, & Haddad, 2013). Anitha (2014) suggested employee engagement reflects two essential elements: (a) willingness to contribute to organizational success and (b) a positive and energized employee who is at a motivational state (Eldor & Harpaz, 2015). In a study conducted by Karanges, Johnston, Beatson, and Lings (2015), engagement was defined as the extent in which employees are willing to commit both emotionally and rationally within their organization, how long they are willing to stay as a result of that commitment, and how dedicated they are to their work.

Employee engagement is related to the psychological experiences of people who shape their work process and behavior. Of which, employee engagement is multidimensional, making the employees emotionally, physically, and cognitively engaged in their daily work (Eldor & Harpaz, 2015). Shuck and Wollard (2010) defined employee engagement as the individual employee's cognitive, emotional and behavioral state that is directed towards the organizational outcome. The organization has the responsibility to provide for the needs of employees by providing proper training and building a meaningful workplace environment, in turn, employees have the responsibility to provide a meaningful contribution to the organization. Many organizations perceive the importance of employee engagement, however, the issue of how to increase the level of employee engagement is warranted (Wang & Chia-Chun, 2013).

In the current economic environment, employee engagement must be operationalized to a deeper level using strategies that will increase employee engagement

and involvement. Taylor and Kent (2014) suggested good communication is the key to promoting employee engagement. Communication is, hence, a two-way process between leaders and employees. In addition to communication being a key to operationalizing employee engagement, Ruck and Welch (2012) suggested that empowering employees are a viable tool that would make them more engaged.

Ugwu, Onyishi, and Rodriguez-Sanchez (2014) suggested empowerment involves identifying the rights of employees and providing them with the proper resources for being successful. Adequate cross-training opportunities are also identified as key drivers in operationalizing employee engagement (Ruck & Welch, 2012). Taylor and Kent (2014) suggested to make employees feel engaged, the organization must develop a process to operationalize its employee engagement programs such as employee involvement in problem resolutions, respect, positive feedback mechanisms, and considering ideas from employees to implement in daily processes.

Organizations must provide a psychologically safe workplace to improve employee engagement (Kompaso & Sridevi, 2010). The culture of psychological ownership and engagement begins when leaders create a psychologically safe workplace (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). The manner in which an individual feels satisfied and enthusiastic in work-related activities, fosters employee engagement (Nasomboon, 2014). Organizations should develop training programs that focus on skills to influence employee performance and engagement. Kompaso and Sridevi (2010) described engaged employees as those who have an emotional connection with the organization. A study

revealed service training increased engagement to 77% and had a direct effect on the organization's profits (Granatino, Verkamp, & Parker, 2013).

The U.S. Department of Labor, identified employee engagement as a challenge, with a negative percentage of 35% or higher for organizations (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). Therefore, organizational leaders are rapidly finding ways to engage employees for long-term employment. Engaged employees are noted to having lower turnover rates and higher retention (Ahmetoglu et al., 2015).

Gallup Consulting conducted a study on employee and management performances in efforts of researching how to improve organizational performance globally (Mann & Darby, 2014). The earnings per share from organizations that had highly engaged employees were compared to organizations with disengaged employees (Beck & Harter, 2015). The study's population comprised of companies who participated in the Gallup's Employee Engagement Q12 survey. The results indicated that 30% of U.S. employees are engaged at work, and a staggeringly low 13% worldwide were engage (Beck & Harter, 2015). In addition, within the past 12 years, the low numbers indicated in this study have changed minimally, meaning that worldwide, a high number of employees fail to develop and contribute at work.

Gallup also studied performance outputs at organizations and measured the engagement of over 27 million employees (Sorenson & Royal, 2015). From the results, it is indicated that regardless of the industry, size or location, many companies struggle to unlock the perplexities of why performances vary from one workgroup to the next (Sorenson & Royal, 2015).

The SHRM's employee engagement research identified various impacts, drivers of employee engagement, and engagement trends. The SHRM's results from the study indicated significance of the finding that employee turnover is affected by engagement (Lee, 2014). Engagement also affects productivity, loyalty to the organization, and commitment (Lee, 2014). Organizational character, stakeholder value, and customer satisfaction are all associated with engagement (Lee, 2014).

Researchers have studied employee engagement and have applied it among various organizations. Employee engagement, as often referred to as organizational commitment or organizational citizenship (Slack, Orife, & Anderson, 2010) is an emotional and intellectual commitment to an organization (Andrew & Sofian, 2012; Meyer, Stanley, & Parfyonova, 2012). Farndale and Murrer (2015) defined employee engagement as when employees harness themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally while completing daily tasks. Saks and Gruman (2014) synthesized employee engagement within two categories: attention and absorption. The amount of time an employee spends thinking about his or her role in an organization is referred to as attention. The level of intensity an employee engages within their current roles is referred to as absorption.

Communication plays a major role in employee engagement (Welch, 2012). The focus on employee engagement has developed over time through various intervals. The first interval of engagement was noted in 1980, when businesses examined need to engage employees in the workplace (Welch, 2012). The next interval (1990-1999) began with defining employee engagement as a movement to promote employee satisfaction

and organizational profitability (Welch, 2012). In the years of (2000-2007), researchers defined how engaging employees could lead to decreased costs and improved financial foundation, with increased productivity (Welch, 2012). Ghafoor et al. (2011) defined engagement as a positive psychological attitude.

Psychological engagement involves more than just the leaders within the workplace. Psychological engagement begins at the board of directors leadership level (Guerrero & Suguin, 2012). The board of directors should provide motivation strategies for management to implement within the organization. Guerrero and Seguin (2012) explored the board of directors found that organizational motivation achievement, identification, self-motivation, and engagement has a significant relationship with achievement. Shareholders, leadership, and employees should all hold a general interest in the stability and success of an organization (Adelman, 2012). Faleye and Trahan (2010) suggested the relationship between stakeholders and shareholders improves business-friendly relationships. Leaders created a psychologically safe workplace, which created a culture of psychological ownership and engagement (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). Focusing on improving shareholder return while improving the stakeholder's work life should be the ultimate goal. A return on investment while increasing profitability is a direct relation with employee engagement (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

An individual's feeling of satisfaction and enthusiasm is noted to relate to employee engagement (Farndale & Murrer, 2015). When there is a dysfunctional management, there will be problems that arise in employee engagement and dissatisfaction in the workplace. Employees who are dissatisfied in their workplace will

have less productivity and decreased customer service skills. Dollard and Bakker (2010)

suggested workplaces should be where employees can be confident with building trust

and communication without thought of being fired. Hynes (2012) suggested employee

engagement as the ability to harness emotionally cognitive attributed to improve

organizational profitability. Employee engagement is affected by changes in recognition,

training, and empowerment. Improved communication and relationships between

management and employee fosters a foundation of engagement (Hynes, 2012). Hynes

(2012) identified successful business outcomes are impacted by positive employee

engagement. Management must identify skills that can enhance employee engagement

and performance (Mishra et al., 2014).

In order for an organization to be effective, employees that interact with

customers, must have a sense of engagement (Korschun, Bhattacharya, & Swain, 2014).

Employees who possessed social support, demonstrate a higher level of engagement.

Employees who demonstrate improved engagement are those that proactively personalize

their daily job demands (Korschun et al., 2014). Eisenhardt, Furr, and Bingham (2010)

noted that job satisfaction and engagement was influenced with manger-employee

relationship. Management is encouraged to boost communication, goal setting, and

employee recognition (Eisenhardt et al., 2010).

In a study conducted by Cooper-Thomas et al. (2014), low self-esteem can also

affect the engagement of employees. Decreased employee morale heavily influences

employee engagement. Work performances and employee engagement can be

strengthened with improved employee development. Pendleton and Robinson (2015)

reviewed the relationship between employee development and their shared ownership. The likelihood of employee satisfaction depends greatly on engagement and employee shared ownership. Pendleton and Robinson noted that involvement within the organization can have great influences on employee training. As a result, improved engagement has a direct effect on the consumer base and customer satisfaction.

Satisfied employees increase efficiency, influence customer satisfaction, and decrease labor costs (Madsen & Desai, 2010). Other factors that attribute to satisfied employees are fair treatment, fair compensation, and available resources (Madsen & Desai, 2010). Trust is a factor that influences the management-employee relationship, which in turn improves work performance, communication, and employee retention (Metcalf & Benn, 2012). Metcalf and Benn (2012) noted creating strategic objectives and focusing on employee satisfaction and engagement is critical to the overall success of the organization. Organizations that provide a high quality of service create a high customer loyalty base (Pun & Nathai-Balkissoon, 2011). Samli and Czinkota (2010) suggested employees who are self-motivated have organizational attitudes that lead to better organizational outcomes.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is a fundamental element within any organization (Stokes, Baker, & Lichy, 2016). The values of beliefs and behavior patterns represent the identity of an organization and play an essential role in shaping the behavior of employees (Altaf, Afzal, Hamid, & Jamil, 2011). Organizational culture is considered to be multileveled and ubiquitous, confused and mistrusted, and varied (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Keyton,

2010; Schein, 2010). Denison, Hooijberg, Lane, and Lief (2012) suggested the transformation progress in an organization has a major effect on organizational culture.

Organizational culture has been defined and perceived differently by many researchers. There is little agreement among practitioners regarding the meaning of this concept, the manner in which it is measured and observed, and the relationship with organizational theories. Employees' attitudes and high job satisfaction were major contributors to organizational culture (Chatman, Caldwell, O'Reilly, & Doerr, 2014). Hogan and Coote (2014) implied that organizational culture is similar to human cultures in that both (a) have events that may cause disruptive change, (b) identify with individuals in a group, (c) enable a higher purpose, and (e) develop individuals. Hogan and Coote also added that human and organizational cultures' goals are to create a more effective environment, which influences human behaviors.

An employee's desire to belong to an organization and their willingness to make extra efforts for the betterment of the organization is defined as organizational commitment (Sani, 2013). This commitment can drive behaviors and attitudes towards organizational citizenship, satisfaction, and the intent to remain loyally employed (Taing, Granger, Groff, Jackson, & Johnson, 2010). Employees who add value to an organization require a business leader to seek retention strategies (Balassiano & Salles, 2012). Organizational commitment is also described by researcher in the management and behavioral science field, as a major influence in the relationship between employees and organizations (Rehman, Shareef, Mahmood, & Ishaque, 2012).

Farjad and Varnous (2013) examined various dimension of work quality and organizational commitment. The effects of work conditions, security, health, and the development of employee capabilities ranked highest on organizational commitment (Farjad & Varnous, 2013). Another key driver for organizational commitment is job satisfaction (Srivastava, 2013). Leadership and organizational culture have a great influence on employees feeling satisfied in their jobs (Gallato et al., 2012). If the two relationships develop a working commitment, results show a positive relationship between organizational commitment and job satisfaction with employees (Srivastava, 2013).

Hardcopf and Shah (2014) suggested organizational culture is difficult to manage, holistic, relentless, and socially constructed. A study conducted by Hofstetter and Harpaz (2011) focused on characteristics of the industry and their influence on organizational culture. Hofstetter and Harpaz's research indicated various elements that defined organizational culture. These elements were identified as market position, size, and diversity. Martinez, Beaulieu, Gibbon, Pronovost, and Wang (2015) referenced numerous elements that make-up organizational culture. The elements referenced shared a common thread of behavior and language within the organization. The research conducted by Chatman et al. (2014) indicated the difficulty with measuring, managing, and analyzing organizational culture. Wei, Samiee, and Lee (2013) and Morris (2014) agreed the orientation of people and their perceived assumptions should have a greater emphasis placed on it.

Organizational culture has been studied widely and the definition is still considered vague and controversial (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). A vast amount of definitions have been noted for organizational culture in the fields of management theory (Altaf et al., 2011). Hofstetter and Harpaz (2011) indicated the definition of organizational culture as the assumption developed by a group in efforts of coping with internally or externally environmental conditions. Hofstetter and Harpaz explained that shared assumptions are accepted by people who belong to the culture. Also Hofstetter and Harpaz indicated that both large and small organizations contain specific cultures that can be interpreted for the basis of problem solving within the organization. Hogan and Coote (2014) indicated that organizational culture is a behavior that is learned and provides rules for the organization internally and guide employees to understanding philosophies, practices, and assumptions. Campbell and Goritz (2013) defined organizational culture as a system of common values held by members of a group that are unique to the organization.

Challenging, varied, and creative tasks in an environment where the employee feels valuable and worthwhile are likely associated with meaningfulness (Song, Kolb, Lee, & Kim, 2012). The condition of safety is met when employees have trust, predictable, and have supportive relationships. Job demands are aspects of the job that are draining for an employee can include workload, engagement, organizational change, and conflict (Song et al., 2012). The culture of an organization likely has a strong impact on the resources available to employees because the organization's values help determine the resources provided to employees and the demands made of them (Keyton, 2010).

Some researchers have suggested a relationship by discussing how culture helps foster an environment that enables employee engagement (Schein, 2010). Schein (2010) conducted studies to suggest organizational values and other culture-related factors positively related to employee engagement.

A structured organizational culture can promote highly motivated and engaged employees. Organizational culture can promote competitive work environments and continuous improvements (Morgeson, Aquinis, Waldman, & Siegel, 2013). This allows for development and growth not only for leaders, but also with employees. Leaders of organizations that fully support employees, promote continuous learning, and are transparent in their decision-making, have a greater impact on the increased level of employee engagement (Morgeson et al., 2013).

Campbell and Goritz (2013) also identified common value systems that are comprised of seven characteristics that are essential to organizational culture. These characteristics are noted to include (a) attention to detail, (b) being people oriented, (c) innovation and risk taking, (d) stability, and (e) aggressiveness (Campbell & Goritz, 2013). These characteristics can be used to better understand organizational culture in efforts of improving and explaining the behavior of employees (Campbell & Goritz, 2013). Stokes et al. (2016) also defined organizational culture as shared beliefs and expectations of employees to determine cultural norms within the organization. Fehr and Gelfand (2012) implied organizational culture as being the core values, beliefs, and norms, which may be construed, while commonalities are identified in the description of culture.

Leadership

Leadership has been proven to influence and motivate employees through clear values and teamwork in an agreeable manner as indicated by Kouzes and Posner (2012) and Yukl (2012). The definitions suggested by the researchers clearly outline that leadership, retention, and culture are all intertwined. Culture is influenced by leaders with the acceptance of core values of the organization and providing a positive environment with clear communication and engaging employees (Men & Stacks, 2013). Parris and Peachey (2012) concluded retention is manifested from meeting employees' needs. In addition, Mihalache, Jansen, Van den Bosch, and Volberda (2013) referred to the connections between retention, culture, and leadership as an opportunity for leaders to create an organizational culture that positively encourages employees and influences retention.

Concepts such as appreciative inquiry, complexity theory, and emotional intelligence overshadow traditional leadership (i.e., servant leadership, participative leadership, transactional leadership). The convergence of these leadership methods could assist organizational leaders in better managing employee actions, needed for a more collaborative approach to completing workplace tasks. Leadership is not always an intrinsic function, but should transform into an adaptive interactive series of events in which preferences, action, knowledge, and behavioral changes can affect the nature of business executions. Organizations that embrace emotional intelligence can manage opportunities to become adaptable and more self-sustaining through employee engagement.

Leadership development can influence the improvement in employee engagement (Hsieh & Wang, 2015). Carey, Philippon, and Cummings (2011) suggested creativity and innovation in leaders can unlock the catalyst for employee engagement. When employees are engaged, their performance is high, and the overall organizational performance is increased. Leaders should incorporate strategies to positively affect employee engagement and motivation that meet the needs of the organization. Tonkham (2013) suggested that leaders become more creative and apply creativity within the workplace. Employee motivation can be enhanced by creativity when applied properly (Tonkham, 2013). Eyal and Roth (2011) believed employees can only be influenced by leaders who display proper behavior.

Certain behaviors leaders must exercise in the workplace environment in order to be effective. Sadeghi and Pihie (2012) suggested organizations should look for leaders that can not only communicate the organization's vision, but they can also secure their employees' support in achieving organizational goals. It was found that leaders with higher education levels were more apt to having better workplace behaviors (Sadeghi & Pihie, 2012). Flexibility and adaptive leadership is critical in today's organizations (Crossman & Crossman, 2011). A successful business has a driving force of excellent leadership. What motivates employees can be determined by various leadership models and styles.

The impact of leadership styles on employee engagement was derived from the idea that leadership success is a trait of personality characteristics (Shuili, Swaen, Lindgreen, & Sen, 2012). Research on leadership shifted from the specific characteristics

of leaders, over to the actions those leaders demonstrated, suggesting that leaders learn the qualities that enable leadership development (Monzani, Ripoll, & Peiro, 2014). Leadership style is noted to be the balance between managerial behaviors and attitudes (Monzani et al., 2014). Pierro, Raven, Amato, and Belanger (2013) noted leaders guide employees through task and role clarification, inspire employees through self-development, and allow employees to make decisions. Leaders exhibit these behaviors with various leadership styles ranging from laissez-faire, transactional, or transformational leadership (Shuili et al., 2012).

Laissez-faire. Laissez-faire leadership is characterized by an absence of leadership, in which, the leader avoids exercising authority and considered not accessible by employees (Skogstad, Hetland, Glaso, & Einarsen, 2014). Furtner, Baldegger, and Rauthmann (2013) noted laissez-faire leaders often avoid making decisions. Researchers suggest laissez-faire leadership is the least effective leadership style (Moors, 2012). Moors (2012) noted laissez-faire leadership contributes to bullying, distress, and stress in the workplace.

In a study conducted by Yang (2015), when under laissez-faire leadership, the majority of the participants experienced low levels of supervision and oversight. The participants also indicated they experienced high levels of workplace bullying, psychological distress, disengagement, and role ambiguity. Munos (2015) described role ambiguity as when a leader is absent or fails to communicate the expectations or responsibilities, goals, and work duties. Yang (2015) suggested laissez-faire leadership can create a social climate of high levels of interpersonal conflicts and role stressors in

which the disengagement of employees could take place. In addition, researchers

suggested disengagement of employees is not merely the result of ineffective leaders, but

is promoted by the presence of laissez-faire leadership (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016).

Munos (2015) suggested laissez-faire style of leadership involves questions and answers,

but avoids providing feedback. Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016) indicated that laissez-faire

leadership is not conducive to high levels of engagement among employees in

organizations.

Transactional. Transactional leaders are noted to be leaders that take certain

steps to complete an outcome to satisfy their employees' needs in exchange for individual

achievements (Stefano & Abbate, 2013). Wilson and Thompson (2014) suggested

transactional leaders can offer rewards or impose punishments to gain compliance. A

transactional leader is noted to be one that promotes the leader-subordinate relationship

based on bargains between leader and employee (Clark, 2012). This exchange may be

economic, psychological, or political (Clark, 2012). A transactional leader has a

responsibility to motivate employees to embrace the next level of achievement and guides

them to achieve goals (Strom, Sears, & Kelly, 2013). These findings can include

clarifying employees' roles, duties, and responsibilities so that employees are

comfortable in performing (Deichmann & Stram, 2015). In exchange for these

supervisory actions, Popli and Rizvi (2015) noted that employees are expected to carry

out the delegations assigned to them to achieve the desired outcomes specified by leaders.

Clark (2012) noted the transactional leader uses three incentives: (a) contingent

reward, (b) management by exception active, and (c) management by exception passive.

The contingent reward incentive is noted for allowing the leader to give rewards to employees for their effort and good performance (Strom et al., 2013). Wilson and Thompson (2014) noted that the management by exception active is an incentive in which leaders monitor employees' performance and identify areas for improvement. The management by exception passive incentive is where the leader enforces punishment or corrective measure for deviations (Stefano & Abbate, 2013).

Researchers view the transactional leadership as an essential element of effective leadership for employee engagement in organizations (Strom et al., 2013). An employees' desire to achieve and value the outcome can be attributed to transactional leadership (Clark, 2012). Deichmann and Stam (2015) suggested when the workplace does not provide the employee with the necessary motivation, satisfaction, and direction, the leaders should compensate by offering the employee an exchange of benefits. Transactional leaders clarify the role and task assignments for employees that are willing to engage in their work. This clarification provides employees the confidence that is necessary to perform their duties and allows employees to have a sense of fulfillment of their satisfactory performance (Stefano & Abbate, 2013). Popli and Rizvi (2015) argued that leaders tend to observe their employees' needs and set goals for them based on the effort expected of them.

Transformational. Choudhary, Akhtar, and Zaheer (2012) described the transformational leader as one that motivate employees, generate awareness, and build a relationship with them. Mittal and Dhar (2015) suggested transformational leadership is most effective when executed in a manner that is beyond simple exchanges. Further

studies proposed that transformational leaders encourage employees to go above and beyond the expected, while seeking shifts in their employees' values, attitudes, behaviors, morals, and needs (Schaubroeck, Lam, & Peng, 2016). Kelloway, Turner, Barling, and Loughlin (2012) suggested transformational leaders who stimulate engagement among employees, generate awareness about the mission of the organization. As a result of the dynamics of their interactions, transformational leaders inspire, empower, and motivate employees to take charge of their work performance (Lehmann-Willenbrock, Meinecke, Rowold, & Kauffeld, 2015). By empowering employees, transformational leaders help employees align their individual goals with those of the organization (Lehmann-Willenbrock et al., 2015).

Transformational leaders enhance the interests by increasing the level of needs of employees that relate to self-fulfillment, self-actualization, and achievement (Li, Gupta, Loon, & Casimir, 2016). Under such a leader, employees are more likely to transcend their self-interest for the sake of the organization. Henker, Sonnentag, and Unger (2014) described the transformational leader as a model of integrity, fairness, and continually encourage employees' self-development. Researchers suggested transformational leaders are good listeners and build self-esteem within their employees (Schaufeli, 2015). Transformational leaders are willing to seek new and innovative ways for employees to be engaged.

Mittal and Dhar (2015) identified four attributes related to the transformational leaders: (a) inspirational motivation, (b) idealized influence, (c) individualized consideration, and (d) intellectual stimulation. The inspirational motivation attribute is

where a leader exemplifies an acceptable behavior for an employee to exhibit

(Schaubroeck et al., 2016). Choudhary et al. (2012) suggested the idealized influence

attribute is when the leader instills trust and respect with employees. Leaders that

promote improving self and willing to communicate through teaching and coaching are

exhibiting the individualized consideration attribute (Kelloway et al., 2012). Schaufeli

(2015) noted leaders who support developmental activities that enhance employee

engagement are emulating the intellectual stimulation attribute. These leaders encourage

the imagination, logic, creativity, and capabilities of their employees.

Organizational leaders must become more flexible in presenting viable solutions

to emerging employee engagement dealings. Kainen (2010) noted that flexibility will

assist leaders to guide their employees in seizing new opportunities to address complex

problems. In addition, organizational leaders who are knowledgeable with regard to

emotional intelligence are equipped with tools to reduce tension and motivate disengaged

employees (Hong, Catano, & Liao, 2011). Leadership should develop commitment by

fostering emotional resonance. When leaders and managers exude emotional resonance,

they establish an environment that promotes organizational citizenship and employees are

able to develop their skills and accept change (Hur, Van den Berg, & Wilderom, 2011;

Opoku, Cruickshank, & Ahmed, 2015).

In an effort at promoting employee engagement, organizational leaders must

understand that the use of intellectual capital and behavior are needed to ensure the drive

for perfect task completion. Opoku et al. (2015) noted aggressive schedules, labor

shortages, and strict deadlines are barriers to increasing employee engagement. Often

times, employees can become disengaged when organizational leaders shorten deadlines

for difficult tasks (Gils, Quaquebeke, Knippenberg, Dijke, & Cremer, 2015). Leaders in

organizations who can simultaneously address operational concerns and employee

engagement, will continue to make profits.

Transition

Section 1 provided an introduction on how employee engagement affects

organizational profitability. The review of the literature included topics on employee

engagement, as well as employee engagement processes and how it affects the

productivity and financial performance of an organization. The review included various

attributes on employee engagement, organizational culture, leadership, and so forth. By

highlighting the employee engagement processes within the literature, I indicated that

leaders must manage the aforementioned attributes separately. Mismanagement of those

attributes can continually lead to employee disengagement. Low employee engagement

is a great business problem because it can negatively influence organizational

profitability.

In this literature review, I provided a historical overview and formed the

foundations for this qualitative study. In Section 2, I provided detailed information

regarding the research design and methodology for approaching the problem statement.

In Section 3, I presented the findings of this study and the significance of the study, as it

relates to a business practice.

Section 2: The Project

Researchers who examined employee productivity with respect to organizational profitability have focused on new strategies to aid leaders who often struggle to keep employees engaged in their daily tasks (Kipping & Kirkpatrick, 2013; Spagnoli, Caetano, & Santos, 2012). Yee et al. (2015) noted that lower levels of job satisfaction, a lack of organizational commitment, and decreased motivation can affect an employee's ability to remain engaged and to complete daily tasks. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to use previous employee retention research on employee engagement and organizational profitability, along with understanding the phenomenon of the study from the participants' perspective. This section includes a description of the study, including the purpose of the study, details on the research approach, and a summary of how this approach has resulted in a valid and reliable study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies that some communication business leaders used to engage their employees that resulted in increased profits. I conducted interviews to seek the insights of communication business leaders, within Jackson, Mississippi, who had been successful with employee engagement for at least a year. These leaders shared their successful employee engagement strategies through open-ended questioning sessions. The Jackson, Mississippi communication business leaders who learn and deploy effective employee engagement strategies may note better organizational cohesion. The implications for positive social change include

summarizing potential strategies for improving local business relationships, providing job opportunities within the local community, and creating new industries and markets.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the data collection instrument (Silverman, 2015). Data collection for this study consisted of participant interviews along with the collections of prior archived research. The role of the interviewer is to introduce the study to the selected participants and answer any questions the participants may have regarding the planned research (Boblin et al., 2013). The interview questions were prepared in advance to aid cohesion within the process and adherence to the protocols set forth in the Belmont Report (Fiske & Hauser, 2014). The interview questions were open-ended, which allowed the participants an opportunity to share their perception of the strategies for employee engagement and organizational profitability (Bansal & Corley, 2012).

As I prepared to collect the data, to eliminate bias, it was necessary for me to set aside any preconceptions about the importance of employee engagement and how it will relate to organizational profitability. Personal bias can occur when the researcher relies on personal judgment versus reliance on data that are collected to present the findings (Silverman, 2015). Personal bias is also a risk when using a case study design due to the reliance on personal interactions with the participants (Boblin et al., 2013). As data were collected, I assumed the role of coinstrument. As a coinstrument, I participated in the study by collecting data, analyzing data, and interpreting the data collected from the participants. I was the only person with the participants' identifiable information. I

protected and ensured the rights of the human participants. To ensure their participation in the study and to gain the trust of the participants, I kept their identifiable information secure. I had a professional relationship with the communication organization and the communication business leaders that participated in my study.

Use of data collection techniques from previous case studies and findings from studies on employee engagement at a corporate level reduced the risk of researcher bias (Bansal & Corley, 2012). Building on previous research for both data collection and analysis contributed to data interpretation and support of the findings unique to this case study (Bansal & Corley, 2012). Using this framework will allow the reader to understand the basis for the findings of this study. Walden University has policies and procedures in place for ethical research, which systematically prepare the researcher for the process (Walden University, 2015). Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) had to approve all aspects of this study before starting the project, as such; I complied with all ethical guidelines, to include the Belmont Report Basic Ethical Principles: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice as mandated by the institution. When conducting the interviews, I established an interview protocol to ensure each participant was treated the same and to mitigate bias. I introduced myself and notified the participants that I would take notes and audio-tape the interviews during the session. As recommended by Bansal and Corley (2012), the rationale for using an interview protocol is to be consistent with staying within the bounds of my designed research interview process.

Participants

Data collection for this case study occurred within a single organization based in the Jackson, Mississippi. The organization selected for this case study was founded in 1875 and has grown into a multibillion dollar industry in over 200 countries, suggesting the communication business leaders of the selected organization have achieved success with engaging employees and making profits for the organization. I chose this company as a result of my professional affiliation; as such, immediate access to the participants was granted (Boblin et al., 2013). The initial interaction was a group discussion, which served the purpose of building rapport and afforded me the opportunity to explain all research protocols to the participants (Dworkin, 2012). The group discussion was to explore the roles and responsibilities of each communication business leader and their perception of how the interaction among them is affecting disengaged employees within their realm.

Data collection was then moved to face-to-face interviews with four communication business leaders of the organization to explore leadership practices resulting in more fully engaged employees. The individual interviews served as the first phase toward achieving adequate saturation of data, which occurs when there are no new patterns or themes observed with additional data collection (Bansal & Corley, 2012). I achieved adequate saturation of data by interviewing four communication business leaders of the organization, who had responsibility for operations, innovation, or both (Dworkin, 2012). The four individual interviews included four communication business

leaders with at least 1 year of proven success with employee engagement each, as displayed within their personnel file.

I used a purposeful sample of the four participants (Dworkin, 2012). I selected the four participants based on their role with consideration of the following key criteria: intimate knowledge of organizational profits, the ability to influence engagement strategy adoption, and at least 1 year of proven success with employee engagement. I contacted the participants initially via e-mail, which was followed up with a group discussion to explain the study using the text from the consent form. In addition to interviews, I reviewed archived data that document internal processes that can be potential strategies for engaging employees throughout the data collection process (Dworkin, 2012). Data collection occurred on the premises of the selected organization. I had a professional relationship with both the communication organization and the communication business leaders that participated in my study, hence ensuring the ease of access and establishing relationships.

Research Method and Design

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) identified three choices for research methods: mixed methods, quantitative, and qualitative. In this section, I discussed the selected research method and design. I also addressed how both contributed to my study.

Research Method

A qualitative method allowed me to fully explore employee engagement through an organizational level, by reviewing the perceptions and practices of communication business leaders who have had at least 1 year of proven success with employee

engagement. In qualitative research, researchers must continue to refine and develop

received information from participants, as recurring themes may surface as the research

continues to develop (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Boblin et al., 2013; Sousa, 2014).

Qualitative research allows the researcher to bring order to complexity through

categorization of the participants' lived experiences (Bansal & Corley, 2012; Bloomberg

& Volpe, 2012; Yin, 2013). Employee engagement and productivity are critical

antecedents to organizational profitability (Berens, 2013; Hausknecht & Holwerda, 2013;

Price & Whiteley, 2014). Hence, a qualitative study has provided a deeper understanding

of strategies that some communication business leaders used to engage employees that

resulted in increased profits.

A qualitative study has provided a framework for exploring and understanding

employee engagement. The interactions with participants allowed me as the researcher to

explore how certain actions affect them, within the context of their everyday experiences

(Soderberg, 2014; Sousa, 2014; Yap & Webber, 2015). Exploring the management

practices and activities of the participants has led to an in-depth understanding of factors

that may influence employee engagement in an organization (Soderberg, 2014). Using a

quantitative study would have only provided quantified results and would highlight

problems based on the data provided (Larson-Hall & Plonsky, 2015; Ragin, 2014;

Svensson & Doumas, 2013). In addition, a quantitative method would require a

reductionist approach, as the intent would have been to reduce complexity into a discrete

set of ideas for testing a theory through data collection and measurement (Carlo, Gelo, &

Manzo, 2015; Larson-Hall & Plonsky, 2015; Ragin, 2014). In contrast to the intent of a

quantitative study, the intent of this research was to understand strategies that some communication business leaders used to engage employees that resulted in increased profits. As the understanding of a phenomenon has become better defined, a quantitative study would have only validated a hypothesis formed about the phenomenon (Carlo et al., 2014; Larson-Hall & Plonsky, 2015; Ragin, 2014).

Mixed method researchers combine the processes of qualitative and quantitative research methods, garnering the benefits of deductive and inductive worldviews (Bansal & Corley, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies that communication business leaders used to engage employees that resulted in increased profits. The objective of this study was not to test a theory or hypothesis, but to explore communication business leaders' strategies used to engage employees to increase profits. A mixed method that includes a quantitative component and qualitative component was not necessary to answer my research question.

Employee productivity requires more than quantifying data and would need a descriptive articulation of the personal experiences of the participants (Boblin et al., 2013; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Sousa, 2014). A qualitative approach was more appropriate than a quantitative approach for this study, because the objective of the study was to understand the lived experience and perceptions of an individual from his or her perspective (Bansal & Corley, 2012; Boblin et al., 2013; Yin, 2013).

Research Design

The case study research design was appropriate for the study because I explored the processes, practices, and programs of experienced communication business leaders;

sharing this rich data may contribute to a better understanding of employee engagement. Case study research involves the understanding of complex issues and emphasizes the understanding of the context in a limited set of conditions and relationships between conditions (Basurto & Speer, 2012; Bruin, McCambridge, & Prins, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Researchers have used case studies to explore and conduct comprehensive analyses of experiences, which promotes better understanding of real-world contexts (Bezrukova, Thatcher, Jehn, & Spell, 2012).

The case study involves more than conducting research on a phenomenon (Anderson, Leahy, DelValle, Sherman, & Tansey, 2014; Cairney & St. Denny, 2014; Yin, 2013). A goal of the research was to help identify strategies that could lead to best employee engagement practices, which leads to increased organizational profitability. The case study approach addresses simple to complex situations (Basurto & Speer, 2012; Boblin et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Case studies are used to focus on a particular issue and to understand the phenomenon within a situation (Anderson et al., 2014; Cairney & St. Denny, 2014; Yin, 2013).

A case study design was more appropriate for this study than the ethnographic, phenomenological, narrative research, or grounded theory designs. An ethnographic design relies on the culture within the field of study in an effort of describing a phenomenon without consideration of empirical evidence of factors that moderate the phenomenon (Baskerville & Myers, 2014; Flint & Woodruff, 2014; Weisner, 2013).

Phenomenological researchers explore generalizations of a phenomenon described by the participants and do not represent a proven case in which the studied

phenomenon has occurred (Flint & Woodruff, 2014; Snelgrove, 2014; Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). Narrative researchers explore a phenomenon by using data collection techniques that include life experiences, consultations, journals, photographs, field notes, and discussion as information sources (Goodson et al., 2012; Thomas, 2012). Grounded theory researchers create or discover a new theory that may be based on data collected from interviews and observations (Charmaz, 2014; Levitt, 2014; Yin, 2013). The purpose of this study was to discover strategies that some communication business leaders use to engage employees that result in increased profits. Purcell (2014) suggested disengaged workers often display behaviors that contribute to poor financial performance.

For this research, the case study was within a single organization based in the Jackson, Mississippi. The organization selected for this case study was founded in 1875 and has grown to a multibillion dollar industry in over 200 countries, suggesting the members of the organization selected have achieved success with engaged employees and for organizational profitability. I strived to understand the meaning and influence of identified strategies on employee engagement by asking open-ended questions to enable participants to provide responses to better convey their perceptions. Hence, the case study design was selected as the best method of collecting data for this study.

Population and Sampling

In this study, I focused on exploring strategies that some communication business leaders use to engage employees that result in increased profits. The geographic location was in Jackson, Mississippi at a single organization. Sampling in a qualitative study

includes using a small number of participants or locations to collect information to generalize the findings to a limited geographic location (Silverman, 2015). Doody and Noonan (2013) noted sampling involves selecting a clear case that allows a researcher to learn about a phenomenon. The selection of participants was based on their ability to provide accurate and reliable information with regard to the particular phenomenon (Li & Titsworth, 2015).

The sample selected for this single case study was four communication business leaders who have had at least 1 year of proven success with employee engagement in an organization with more than 200 employees. I used a purposeful sample to select the participants (Anderson et al., 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Titsworth, 2015). For this research, four participants were appropriate to reach saturation in which no new data emerged. I achieved saturation by verifying the transcripts gathered from the open-ended interviews with participants, member-checking by allowing the participants to verify the accuracy of my interpretations of their experiences, and review of archival data until no new data emerged (Yin, 2013). Purposeful sampling was appropriate because the four participants are at different levels of the organization, and answered the interview questions based on their extended knowledge of the process being investigated (Cairney & St. Denny, 2014).

Data collection consisted of interviews and a review of documents describing strategies for employee engagement and organizational profitability in aid of answering the research question: What strategies do communication leaders use to engage their employees to increase profits? A purposeful criterion sample of four communication

business leaders of the organization was conducted, they responded to open-ended interview questions. There are over 30 types of purposeful sampling; however, a purposeful criterion sample of participants was appropriate, because the researcher did not interview all employees who represented the organization (Bruin et al., 2014). During the interviews, I explored possible strategies communication business leaders used to engage their employees and increase profits.

Ethical Research

Participation in this study was completely voluntary and participants could withdraw from the study, during the interview time, without penalty. No incentive was offered for participating in this study. There were no known risks from taking part in this study; however, as noted in any research, there could be some possibilities that participants could be subjected to risks that may have not yet been identified. The consent form outlines the precautionary measure that were followed when conducting my research. I minimized risks by protecting the participants' identification and their organization, which complies with the Belmont Report ethical guidelines (Fiske & Hauser, 2014).

Before conducting the study, the Walden University IRB provided written permission and approval number 09-07-16-0445741 to proceed in compliance with ethical research requirements. After receiving Walden University IRB approval, I contacted the participants via e-mail explaining the study and requesting the selected participants to sign and return the consent form, as requested per Walden University (Walden University, 2015). Using the form as a tool, I explained the nature, demands,

benefits, and any risks of the study to the participants. By signing this form, participants

agreed knowingly to assume any risks involved and did not waive any legal claims,

rights, or remedies. Each participant was provided a copy of the consent form prior to the

initiation of the interview process (Walden University, 2015).

The possibility of participants experiencing any harm during the study was

minimal to none. The focus of the interview questions (Appendix B), was on employee

engagement. To ensure compliance with privacy and confidentiality requirements, I was

the only person with knowledge of the participants' names and their responses (Bruin et

al., 2014). The participant's names remained confidential in the documentation of

research findings through the use of alphanumeric coding such as I1, I2, and so forth

(Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Any electronic media or documentation gathered or

created during the research was stored in a personal safe, accessible only by me, and will

be destroyed after 5 years. The consent to record the participant's interview form was

followed by the same process for safeguarding information and identifying protection.

Data Collection Instruments

Qualitative research does not include a predetermined or specific manner in which

to collect data (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). A detailed analysis is required to develop a

rich description of the strategies of employee engagement meaningful to organizational

profitability (Bansal & Corley, 2012). To achieve that level of analysis, data collection

included review of archival data and individual interviews (Yin, 2013). In a qualitative

study, the researcher becomes the primary instrument for data collection (Marshall &

Rossman, 2014). For this study, I asked in-depth, open-ended questions (Appendix B).

Participant observation was appropriate, because I played a specific role as an observer within the case (Yin, 2013). I designed a set of open-ended interview questions to explore employee engagement. A transcript review and member-checking were used to ensure reliability and validity.

The set of questions I used while conducting the interviews with individual participants, served to identify strategies for employee engagement and organizational profitability from the participant's perspective (Appendix B). Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was conducted at the corporate office in a secure meeting place. Individual interviews are required to develop the rich descriptive findings related to strategies used by communication business leaders for employee engagement meaningful to data analysis (Basurto & Speer, 2012; Bruin et al., 2014; Yin, 2013). The data collected from the participant responses and the review of archival data pertained to strategies for employee engagement and consisted of key themes that emerged from the participant responses to the interview questions and the archival data pertaining to employee engagement strategies.

Data Collection Technique

Qualitative data collection consists of establishing boundaries for the study and collecting information about the problem from the participants, collected through interviews in textual, visual, video, or audio formats (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The technique used for data collection was face-to-face interviews and the review of archival data. Reviewing archival data was appropriate because it provided access to company engagement information that is not available in public records (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

I used individual interview questions (Appendix B) to guide the interviews and keep participants focused (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The interview questions were open-ended and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Yin, 2013). The use of general open-ended questions allowed me to collect information on increasing employee engagement in an unbiased manner (Silverman, 2015). The interview process opened with an introduction about the importance of the study, and value the interviewee provides by participating in the study (Appendix C). Each interview was conducted at the corporate office in a secure, private meeting place. Using the interview questions gave the participants the ability to provide responses that the parameters of quantitative research would otherwise restrict (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013).

The advantages of interviews in qualitative research are that interviews provide an understanding of a whole phenomenon (Rossetto, 2014). Face-to-face interviews are synchronous communication in time and place, which takes advantage of social cues (Berger, 2013). The disadvantage of face-to-face interviews in qualitative research is the time it takes to transcribe the recording of the interviews (Wolgemuth et al., 2014). The length of time of the interview depended on the thoroughness of the participant's responses to the interview questions. Initially, 45 minute intervals was scheduled per individual. Reviewing archival data was an advantage because it provided access to company engagement information that is not available in public records (Doody & Noonan, 2013). In addition, I reviewed archival data to access data that I could not otherwise obtain. In contrast, the disadvantage of using the archival data can increase subjectivity with the participants' preferred strategies for employee engagement and the

information could be incomplete, inaccurate, unavailable, or outdated (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

Participants received a typed Word Document copy of transcripts via e-mail, to verify the accuracy; member-checking was also used as an additional data verification process. Yin (2013) suggested member-checking as a technique to ask the participant for their feedback upon collection of the data. I used member-checking to verify the accuracy of my interpretation of their responses to the interview questions. By using member-checking, the credibility and trustworthiness of the study was increased (Bassurto & Speer, 2012).

Data Organization Techniques

The data collected and transcribed remained on my personal computer in a password-protected file. This is where the data was housed for the duration of transcribing the interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The written transcripts and audio-recorded interviews were encrypted on a password-protected thumb drive for storage.

Both audio and written transcripts will remain stored for 5 years after completion of the study and will be destroyed immediately afterwards (Doody & Noonan, 2013). I am the only person having access to the files. Each participant was assigned an alphanumeric code to protect his or her identity during the research (Yin, 2013). These codes consisted of a capital I for interviewee and a number that indicated the order of the participants' interview (i.e., I1, I2).

Data Analysis

Structured data analysis is the systematic process of searching for meaning (Lalor et al., 2013; Yin, 2013). Identifying categories that are applicable across multiple data sources will create a convergence of evidence, which will support an observation of a phenomenon and increase the validity of the study (Johnson, 2015; Yin, 2013). Data analysis is a way to process data and share the outcome with the audience (Johnson, 2015). In qualitative research, there are six steps for data analysis (a) read through all the data, (b) organize and prepare the data for analysis, (c) begin detailed analysis with a coding process, (d) advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative, (e) use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis, and (f) develop an interpretation or meaning of the data (Johnson, 2015; Lalor et al., 2013; Yin, 2013).

The NVivo 11 qualitative analysis software was appropriate for creating categories because it helped to highlight emerging themes in the analysis of both the interview text and audio recordings (Gilbert, Jackson, & DiGregorio, 2013). Kaefer, Roper, and Sinha (2015) suggested the NVivo 11 software would also help to organize the raw data for revealing themes by structuring the material into chunks and interpreting data, then labeling the data into categories. In addition, I used key aspects of the conceptual framework models identified in the literature review to code the extracted data (Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, & Casey, 2015). I also captured the notes using the comment feature within the Microsoft Word platform. The comment feature in Microsoft Word allowed text to be highlighted that describes the phenomenon (Silver & Lewins, 2014).

For physical documents collected during the case study, I manually highlighted the text that describes the phenomenon noting the occurrence in the margin of the document. After coding, analyzing, and the identification of themes, I provided a summary of findings that described the meaning and essence of each participant's experience.

The occurrence of each category in the case study database was recorded along with a narrative to allow for triangulation of multiple and independent data sources (Johnson, 2015). The narratives were developed from participant responses to the open-ended questions, which were asked during the face-to-face interviews (Yin, 2013). This process allowed the narratives to become reminders that were placed in the case study database for exploring new concepts during the data analysis process (Yin, 2013). The questions that were used in the individual interviews explored personal perceptions of employee engagement for those who have proven successful with employee engagement for at least 1 year. After collecting the data from the open-ended interview questions, I transcribed the participants' responses verbatim.

Triangulation through multiple participant views allowed the researcher to move beyond the experience based on a single perspective, deepening the understanding of the experience that adds to the validity of the study (Carter et al., 2014). In addition, Yin (2013) suggested the use of methodological triangulation, as a technique to ensure the trustworthiness of a finished case study. I used methodological triangulation to analyze the data collected. Methodological triangulation is used by researchers to examine different sources of data for building coherent justification of themes (Carter et al., 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2014; Yin, 2013). Data from interviews are available upon request.

Reliability and Validity

In this section, I discussed accuracy and its relationship to interpreting data; moreover, the roles of reliability and validity with respect to qualitative studies will also be addressed. Noble and Smith (2015) suggested ensuring the reliability and validity of data provides objectivity and creditability. Addressing this strategy required me to rationalize identified themes collected from numerous data sources. Holliday (2012) noted validity as the key aspect of all research. Qualitative researchers establish trustworthiness through (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability (Gordon & Patterson, 2013; Holliday, 2012).

Because of the complexities of data analysis in qualitative research, achieving reliability may be difficult due to the many different types of methodologies (Sandelowski, 2014). Reliability depends on the consistent themes of data collection. Holliday (2012) and Yin (2013) noted demonstrating reliability includes (a) detailed notes, (b) completed documentation of the interviews, (c) member-checking for data saturation purposes, (d) accurate transcripts, and (e) accurate coding for themes. In addition, revisiting data has ensured transcriptions are correct and increased the reliability of the research (Yin, 2013). Following the recommended processes and building on previous research, it is expected to provide future researchers the ability to repeat the study to prove the reliability of the design (Yin, 2013).

Credibility

Interpreting participants' experiences accurately pertain to credibility. A researcher establishes credibility through a process of reviewing interview transcripts for

similarity (Gordon & Patterson, 2013). I established credibility and trustworthiness by implementing the appropriate steps to maintain the highest level of research integrity. To ensure credibility, I completed a member-check by reading the collected responses to the interview questions, back to the participants – to ensure I have captured their intended replies. Member-checking also provided an opportunity to validate the findings by sharing the results with each participant (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). I provided a transcript of the interview and the reviewed results from the study to the participants. Each participant had an opportunity to review the transcripts for data saturation purposes and sign the transcripts, validating the authenticity of their answers. Sandelowski (2014) referred to contradictory evidence as personal bias. I mitigated bias by acknowledging personal agendas, personal beliefs, views, and experiences.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research is the ability to transfer findings from one study to other settings, people, and situations (Harvey, 2014). However, transferability is completely left up the reader to make a decision (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Triangulation is a concept that involves a combination of information sources, such as individuals and types of data, as evidence to support a premise that enhances validity (Gordon & Patterson, 2013; Hartman, 2013). I used data triangulation by cross-checking sources of information, open-ended interviews responses, and review of academic literature. I established transferability by providing in-depth descriptive explanation of the phenomenon of employee engagement, which will enable readers to make an

informed judgment on how practical transferability is to new research (Lakshmi &

Mohideen, 2013).

Dependability

The dependability of this study depended on being able to repeat the study of the

phenomenon of employee engagement (Gordon & Patterson, 2013). Reliability occurs

when a researcher follows and replicates the process used to form the study's conclusion

(Gordon & Patterson, 2013; Holliday, 2012). Qualitative researchers can establish

reliability through dependability (Holliday, 2012). Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2013)

described dependability as a measure that provides the same results consistently through

repetition and peer-review. I established dependability by providing a detailed summary

of the research steps, enabling future researchers to repeat the process.

Confirmability

Confirmability is whether others can objectively confirm the data collection and

outcome of the study (Gordon & Patterson, 2013). Respondent validation provided

participants the opportunity to complete a transcript review. Validity was established by

ensuring interviews were conducted in a controlled and consistent setting (Reilly, 2013).

I conducted the interviews by presenting each question in the same identical order to

increase the validity by assuring consistent communication. This process allowed

participants to review transcripts for corrections, authentication, and clarification

(Hartman, 2013).

Data Saturation

The objective was to make an attempt to access the accuracy of the findings while ensuring data saturation occurs when no new data or themes emerge (Lakshmi & Mohideen, 2013). Data saturation within this study occurred when there was sufficient depth of redundancy and information of data were reached (Gordon & Patterson, 2013). Frequently checking the data, I conducted ongoing analysis of the data and confirm its accuracy through follow up member-checking. I collected (beyond the original four participants if need be), analyzed, and coded the interviews and archived documents pertaining to employee engagement strategies, until data saturation was achieved. Trustworthiness of the study was increased by continued reference between data and analysis (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Transition and Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies that some communication business leaders used to engage employees. The objective of Section 2 was to provide a detailed description of how the project took place. In Section 2, I included a description of the role of the researcher, the participants, and the purposeful sampling technique. I also presented the selected data collection method of open-ended interview questions, emphasizing the ethical aspects, the reliability, and validity of the study. The discussion included an explanation regarding why a qualitative case study was the most appropriate method for this study and an outline of the study's processes. Section 3 contains the findings of the study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies that some communication business leaders used to engage their employees that resulted in increased profits. Based on the research question, analysis of interview responses, and archived documents, I identified three themes (a) rewards and recognition, (b) empowering employees, and (c) building a bond between leaders and employees. The summary of the communication business leaders' strategies included (a) team building, (b) effective communication, and (c) promotions, which all align with the SDT theory.

Presentation of the Findings

In this case study, I addressed the overarching research question: What strategies do communication leaders use to engage their employees to increase profits? I selected four communication business leaders in a single organization based on their experience with having at least 1 year of implementing successful employee engagement strategies. To maintain confidentiality, I assigned each participant a code of I1, I2, I3, or I4, versus using his or her name. Interviews with the participants occurred in a setting where participants felt comfortable to provide detailed responses to 10 open-ended interview questions (Appendix B). The follow-up, probing questions varied according to the interview question and experience of the participant. The objective of each probing question was for the participant to expound on his or her experience.

In addition to face-to-face interviews, employee personnel files and company policies regarding employee engagement strategies were reviewed to triangulate and

confirm interview data. Document review included the company engagement policies.

Communication business leaders utilize the company engagement policies as guidelines

for improved employee engagement, to encourage consistent company policy, and to

ensure legal compliance. Participant's I1 and I4 confirmed the findings identified in their

company's employee engagement policy. For example, the company's employee

engagement policy indicated that leaders should (a) focus on discussing and addressing

the root causes of issues, (b) strive for steady progressive improvement, and (c) avoid

focusing on an arbitrary, absolute engagement score.

As indicated in Section 2, I used the NVivo 11 software to input and store data for

coding and exploration of themes. Before loading the interview transcripts into NVivo, I

replaced participants' names with their assigned code, to maintain confidentiality. I used

member-checking and transcript review to ensure that I had captured the meaning of each

participant's responses. Upon completion of the data collection and analysis processes, I

reviewed the company's employee engagement policies and employee personnel files to

triangulate and confirm the face-to-face interview data. The most prominent themes that

emerged from the data were (a) rewards and recognition, (b) empowering employees, and

(c) building a bond between leaders and employees. The conceptual framework for this

research was Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory. To gain a better

understanding of employee engagement strategies that resulted in increased profits, I

applied the SDT framework to the study findings.

In presenting the findings, I discuss the (a) the participants' responses to the

selected themes, (b) explanation of data in addressing the overarching research question,

and (c) alignment of findings with existing research. Through face-to-face interviews and reviewing archival records, I gained an in-depth understanding of the employee engagement strategies used by communication business leaders that can result in increased profits. After thorough research and analysis, I determined themes related to the overarching research question.

Theme 1: Rewards and Recognition

The results interpreted from the interviews of the communication business leaders were based on their responses to what rewards and recognition they used to engage their employees. Based on the coded responses of the communication business leaders and archival records, I discovered the rewards and recognition reflected Deci and Ryan's (1985) SDT framework. For example, I1 indicated leaders must implement incentives to engage employees. According to Brick (2012), recognition is critical to the culture and operation within the workplace, which impacts workforce engagement. Also, employee rewards and recognition directly affect employee performance and are a form of powerful feedback. The strategies I1 identified were in alignment with Haines and St-Onge (2012) findings that rewards and recognition directly affect employee engagement and performance. I3 indicated that employees wish to feel appreciated and valued when performing daily tasks. The need for autonomy, intrinsic rewards, and influence are required to achieve employee engagement (Bolman & Deal, 2014). Competency and recognition are fostered when leaders provide employees with the opportunity to communicate issues they may experience, or provide input about operations within the workplace (Yuan et al., 2012).

All participants indicated that for most employees, pay is the positive outcome of working. However, other employees reported that feelings of stability and insurance are more important than pay (I2, I1). When an employee felt competent and recognized, group dynamics converged to create a sense of ownership of outcomes, workplace environment, and organization (Avey et al., 2012). According to I1, with rewards and recognition systems in place, the atmosphere becomes more harmonious, thus creating a sense of work enjoyment amongst employees.

According to company employee engagement policies, employees are regularly asked to participate in activities designed to foster an enhanced work environment. Organizational leaders also provide participation incentives. When addressing the company policy, I2 agreed regular activities have increased employee engagement; as a result, employees exceeded their quota goals, which increased company profits. I2 indicated that local communication business leaders made an effort to promote creative, energetic, and passionate employees who also demonstrated dedication to a high standard of excellence. To boost employee engagement, all participants mentioned yearly events, such as time off, center dinners, off-site events, and bonuses. Promoting cultural competence of the entire organization means enhancing employee competency. McDaniel et al. (2015) noted the most significant topics for performance development and evaluation include competency enhancement. Annual appraisals assess an employee's level of competency; as such, these evaluations directly contribute to high morale and increased engagement. Compensation was perceived to being more valuable than employee relations (Mullen et al., 2010). According to I1, the employee who strives

for additional responsibilities is sought out because he or she will be more likely to be rewarded with greater compensation and the opportunity for advancement within the organization.

I2 and I3 encouraged employee engagement by providing nonfinancial rewards or even changing employees' daily routine. Employee engagement is related to the psychological experiences of people who shape their work process and behavior. Improved employee engagement is a multidimensional process, best achieved through enhanced employee emotional, physical, and cognitive daily work engagement (Eldor & Harpaz, 2015). For example, I2 and I3 met employee's physiological needs by providing snacks throughout the day, extending breaks, offering reward books, and conducting morning cheers. Other rewards and recognition practices identified by I4 were gift cards, an employee of the month parking space, and raffle drives.

The company's employee engagement policy mentioned providing a safe work environment for all employees. The organizational leaders have the responsibility to provide for the needs of employees by providing proper training and building a meaningful workplace environment. In turn, employees have the responsibility to provide a meaningful contribution to the organization. All participants' responses aligned with studies conducted by Gallup Consulting and SHRM, which indicated that organizations that have highly engaged employees have greater profits than those that do not (Mann & Darby, 2014; SHRM, 2014).

Theme 2: Empowering Employees

The research findings provided clues in identifying the needs and challenges leaders faced while empowering employees. All participants indicated that employees desire a challenge in their work and want leaders to trust them in completing their assigned tasks. Further, all participants believed employees should receive the necessary training and resources to do their jobs. Deci and Ryan (1985) referred to competence as the effectiveness and the use of an individual's skills, which allows him or her to work at high levels. Employees that are confident in themselves are confident in their daily work duties. Hynes (2012) suggested leaders employ processes that address employee needs and expectations' concerns, such as corporate culture awareness, team skills development, incentives, and communication. I3 and I4 recommended increasing opportunities for employee empowerment and development. I4 stated employees' opportunity for job advancement and development play a critical role in improving engagement. All participants mentioned that career growth and empowerment were key determinants of job performance and engagement. Changes in empowerment, training, and developmental programs can affect employee engagement.

I4 agreed with the company's policy on employee engagement, in that the company provides a variety of development programs to accelerate the employee's career path and gain new leadership skills. I4 further stated that employees that feel empowered to do their jobs and know that there are opportunities for advancement demonstrated increased employee engagement and hence the company's profitability. Career growth and development is one of the predictors of employee engagement. I1 pointed out a

strategy used to boost employee engagement by providing quarterly training to ensure employees have all the knowledge needed for high performance. In my review of the literature, I found that Ledlow and Coppola (2013) claimed mentorship involves openness, equality, and trust between the mentor and the mentee. Vallerand (2012) believed that employee motivation has a direct impact on employee commitment and performance. In accordance with the company's employee engagement policy, leaders recommend employees for enhanced developmental programs. All participants suggested that recommending employees for enhanced developmental programs has improved employee engagement, in that employees feel leaders care about their success and organizational engagement.

All participants indicated the need for employees to have personal goals. These personal goals influence how well an employee performs at work. Employee commitment and performance determine organizational success (Shahid & Azhar, 2013). I1 and I2 believed leaders who fail to help employees meet personal goals can negatively influence engagement.

All participants have implemented strategies designed for an employee with the potential to become part of the leadership team and advance within the organization. The company's employee engagement policy included a recently updated and hands-on curriculum for shaping employees into leaders. I2 indicated that listening is an important element in helping an employee to reach their personal goals and to feel empowered. I2 stated that when employees vent, they offer leaders clues about their success needs. I2 stated that these clues are critical to employee empowerment; leaders must find a way to

cultivate the employee's needs. All participants' responses aligned with Talib's (2013) conclusions in that an employee's overall performance is an essential component in an organization's success. According to all participants, once an employee has a sense of empowerment, his or her engagement and performance then exceed expectations. I2 indicated many employees yearn for advancement opportunities. I4 indicated the need to conduct weekly team meetings to address employee's concerns. Of these weekly meetings, I4 stated they provide an opportunity for the leader to encourage employees by delineating the necessary steps for advancement. I2 and I3 stated that many employees want to move up in the organization. However, many employees are not aware of the available opportunities. As a remedy, I1 conducts quarterly meetings with employees to encourage advancement, promote empowerment, and improve employee engagement. Korzynski (2013) believed that employees that have proper growth and development channels could better select a career development track to meet their growth needs. All participants indicated the importance of providing adequate development and growth opportunities.

When leaders apply Deci and Ryan's (1985) SDT, their leadership strategies will transform the work environment to ensure employees can reach their full potential. I1 indicated that empowerment enables an employee to have a sense of value within the organization. Ugwu et al. (2014) suggested empowerment involves identifying the rights of employees and providing them with the proper resources for being successful. Organizational leaders that actively foster opportunities and engage the learning and developmental process create more profit, more satisfied employees, and enjoy higher

retention rates (Carter, 2015; Schramm et al., 2013). For example, Latif (2012) measured employee retention at 59% for an organization with employee-focused learning development. All participants indicated that an employees' sense of being valued helped the employee feel connected to, and identify as, a part of the organization. According to Belle et al. (2014), an employees' desire is to be accepted, respected, and included in the organizational decision-making process. I2 indicated that employees who have a strong desire for empowerment are those that were more cognizant of the procedures. Organizations that have a healthy and conducive workplace environment are much more sustainable than their competition (Schramm et al., 2013). I4 suggested that organizational leaders must cultivate employees holistically to ensure employee engagement for a more harmonious workplace environment. Finally, all participants' responses aligned with the SDT by referring to competence as the effective use of an individual's skills, which allows him or her to work at high levels.

Theme 3: Building a Bond Between Leaders and Employees

Leaders have an influential role in improving employee engagement. Leaders have been proven to influence and motivate employees through demonstrating clear values and fostering positive teamwork in an agreeable manner as indicated by Kouzes and Posner (2012) and Yukl (2012). Both I1 and I4 indicated that employees who exhibit enthusiasm in completing their work duties, also show a strong bond between that employee and their leader. Review of the company's policy on employee engagement confirmed I1 and I2 responses that a strong relationship between an employee and leader fosters a healthy team environment and can increase job satisfaction and productivity.

When employees are engaged, their individual performance is high, which can positively impact overall organizational performance. Flexible and adaptive leaders are critical in today's organizations (Crossman & Crossman, 2011). A successful business often boasts a driving force of excellent leadership.

All participants indicated the essentials of having great communication between employees and leaders. Communication plays a major role in employee engagement (Welch, 2012). I2 and I3 indicated that leaders should be as good at listening as they are at being authoritative. I4 claimed effective communication is imperative to meet company goals on a daily basis. I1 indicated effective communication increases the positive bond between employee and leader. I2 indicated being creative in the workplace environment increases employee engagement. I3 gives team members opportunities to critique leaders in various areas. I3 further stated that obtaining feedback from employees gives leaders insights regarding strategies to implement for improved employee engagement that results in increased profits. All participants indicated employees' responses on communication between employee and leaders is essential to the employees' success in the organization. Leaders of organizations that fully support employees, promote continuous learning, and are transparent in their decision-making, have a greater impact on the increased level of employee engagement (Morgeson et al., 2013). I3 indicated when providing feedback to employees, leaders must be positive, as this improves the relationship between leaders and employees. In an environment where the employee feels valuable and worthwhile, there is a meaningful bond between the leaders and employees (Song et al., 2012). I1 indicated that many employees come from

various backgrounds; to strengthen the bond and relationship, leaders need to know how to communicate with each employee.

All participants expressed the importance of building trust with employees to improve engagement. I2 indicated that employees are more willing to do all they can for leadership when they are confident leadership will have their backs. I2 further stated that with the number of diverse employees, an effective leader could identify, develop, and help employees advance. I2 responses clearly aligned with the SDT, for example, the basic need of satisfaction relates to employee dedication (Vandenabeele, 2014). I1 stated if our organization's customer base is diverse and we can meet their needs, leaders should be adequately prepared to manage a diverse employee base.

A positive organizational culture can promote competitive work environments and continuous improvements (Morgeson et al., 2013). Therefore, leaders that foster a generative organizational culture encourage development and growth for themselves and their employees. Fehr and Gelfand (2012) implied an organization's culture included its leader's core values, beliefs, and observed norms. I4 suggested an effective organization does use diversity just to have legitimacy with the customer base but uses their diverse employee environment to increase cultural awareness and appreciation. I2 suggests understanding various cultures is not easy; leaders must create an environment where all employees feel appreciated and engaged. Organizational culture is a fundamental element within any organization (Stokes et al., 2016). The values, beliefs, and common behavior patterns represent the identity of an organization and play an essential role in shaping the behavior of employees (Altaf et al., 2011). Both I2 and I3 stated having a

diverse employee workplace is a critical component of innovation and is a competitive advantage for the organization. However, as I2 and I3 indicated, failure to foster the bond and relationship between employee and leader impairs employee engagement. Organizational commitment is an employee's desire to belong to an organization, and that employee's willingness to go over and above expectations to ensure the success of their organization (Sani, 2013). I1 emphasized the importance of the employee and leadership bond, through the building of cultural dexterity of all employees. This commitment can drive behaviors and attitudes towards organizational citizenship, satisfaction, and the intent to remain loyally employed (Taing et al., 2010). I1 further indicated leaders must cultivate a workplace culture in which every employee is valued for their unique contributions, as this bond invokes employees to achieve their highest potential.

Leaders influence depends on the leadership ability to connect emotionally with employees. I1 suggests this particular kind of leader can influence employee engagement. Researchers, who have conducted prior research, clearly outline that leadership, retention, and culture are intertwined. Leaders influence culture by acceptance of core organizational values and providing a positive environment with clear communication and engaging employees (Men & Stacks, 2013).

The convergence of leadership methods could assist organizational leaders in better managing employee actions, needed for a more collaborative approach to completing workplace tasks. All participants suggested various leadership strategies to improve employee engagement and confirmed the transformational leader is the most

identified with and the most effective at the organization. Choudhary et al. (2012) described the transformational leader as one that motivates employees, generate awareness, and builds a relationship with them. I2 suggested being able to identify the need for change while creating a vision and being inspiring is critical to fostering the employee and leadership relationship. I1 identified that an effective leader could understand the future and see and articulate that vision. Such a leader will ignite employee enthusiasm and create a stronger employee-leader bond. To promote employee engagement, organizational leaders must understand the use of intellectual capital and the needed behaviors to drive perfect task completion.

I4 indicated the importance of creating trust between an employee and leader. I4 further indicates collaboration increases trust between an employee and leader. Both I1 and I2 believe leaders must increase the employees' satisfaction and engagement. Under such a leader, employees are more likely to transcend their self-interest for the sake of the organization. I1 believes an effective leader should be fair and have a sense of integrity. Transformational leaders enhance the interests by increasing the level of needs of employees that relate to self-fulfillment, self-actualization, and achievement (Li et al., 2016). I3 believes an effective leader is willing to implement new and innovative ways for employees to remain engaged. I3 found that building an employee's self-esteem further strengthen the employee and leader bond and relationship. I3 response aligned to Schaubroeck et al. (2016), whereby transformational leaders encourage employees to go above and beyond the expected, while seeking shifts in their employees' values, attitudes, behaviors, morals, and needs. All participants indicated the importance of employee and

leadership relationships for addressing the organization's goals, as keeping employees engaged results in increased profits.

The findings from this study aligned with the SDT framework. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), SDT is related to dedicated and meaningful work. Participants confirmed that employee engagement rose when leaders clearly communicated employees' value. For example, participants noted that dedicated employees understood the relative value of their work to the organization. Meaningful work allows for an increase in employee engagement and organizational profitability. Each participant evaluated employees' performance for organizational goal alignment and insights regarding the effectiveness of employee engagement improvement strategies. Participants agreed that effective employee evaluations included positive feedback. In addition, implied incentives encourage employees to exhibit greater pride when performing assigned tasks.

The findings from this study indicated the need for autonomy, intrinsic rewards, and influence to achieve employee engagement. In a recent study, Groen, Wouters, and Wilderom (2016) recommended using performance metrics and incentives to enable employees to work in a manner that will increase employee engagement and contribute to the overall organizational objective. As the participants indicated the need for cultivating their employees' development through the use of positive feedback evaluations; Groen et al. also added, by improving the quality of performance evaluations, employees can have a more positive attitude regarding their career development within the organization. These recent extracts from the literature map closely to the findings of this study.

Drawing from the SDT concept may assist leaders with identifying processes that increase employee motivation. Employees that have interesting jobs are excited about daily tasks, autonomously motivated, and intrinsically satisfied (Groen et al., 2016). According to Van den Broeck, Ferris, Chang, and Rosen (2016), motivation is a self-endorsed behavior which is closely associated with the employee's values. Also, Van den Broeck et al. (2016) suggested that when leaders foster on employee enrichment (and engagement) conducive environment, individual employees are more likely to realize their natural potential. Again, these assertions are in line with the findings of this investigation.

Finally, achieving employee engagement increases organizational profitability. All participants agreed that the organization's profits rose when employee engagement increased. An employee's overall performance is an essential component contributing to an organization's success. Employee engagement theorists also suggested that employee engagement strategies implemented by business leaders, resulted in higher levels of employee engagement, customer satisfaction, productivity, profits, and lower levels of employee accidents and turnovers (Armstrong et al., 2016; Bowen, 2016; Martinaityte, Scaramento, & Aryee, 2016; Van den Broeck et al., 2016).

Application to Professional Practice

The findings from this study support the idea that Deci and Ryan's (1985) SDT theory is important for guiding the development of employee engagement strategies for business leaders in the communication industry. Leaders that are authentic influence the engagement of employees (Nicholas & Erakovich, 2013). To make or maintain their

companies' profitability, leaders of companies must work hard to engage employees (Kortmann et al., 2014). Improved employee engagement is a by-product of leaders who have a direct relationship with employees (Lowe, 2012). From the research findings, each participant believed that the bond between leaders and employees was the most important element for engaging employees, which in turn increased organizational profitability. Sadeghi and Pihie (2012) suggested organizations should look for leaders that can both communicate the organization's vision and secure employees' support in achieving organizational goals.

Engaged employees deliver improved organizational and individual performance. Tonkham (2013) suggested that leaders become more creative and apply creativity within the workplace. Communication business leaders must understand the need for autonomy, intrinsic rewards, and influence as required to achieve employee engagement (Bolman & Deal, 2014). Based on the findings from this research, organizations attract employees who are willing to be engaged, which leads to an increase in employee engagement that results in high profitability. Therefore, the organization is less effective when employees are not motivated to do their jobs, as this directly affects job performance. Bersin (2014) found that work engages just 13% of worldwide employees. It is imperative that business leaders better understand what engages, or fails to engage, employees and what can result in effective employee engagement strategies. Also, 26% of highly-disengaged worldwide employees spread negative behaviors to other employees (Bersin, 2014). To gain the best overall business results, business leaders should strive to motivate employees to perform. Research has found that leaders who implement employee engagement strategies noted:

(a) higher levels of employee engagement (Blattner & Walter, 2015); (b) improved customer satisfaction, productivity, and profit (Bowen, 2016); and, (c) lower levels of employee accidents and turnovers (Barrick et al., 2014). To make or maintain their companies' profitability, leaders must develop an understanding of what strategies improve employee engagement; organizational profitability is a top challenge for leaders (Kortmann et al., 2014). As noted by participants, leaders who monitor the recurrent reasons employees become disengaged, can provide valuable feedback to improve employee engagement.

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), the SDT relates to natural or intrinsic tendencies to behave in healthy and effective ways. Employee engagement and human behaviors have a connection to self-determination and the essence of work engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985). An employee's level of engagement derives from his or her being able to control personal behaviors and goals. Low productivity has been noted to cost the U.S. economy over $350 billion annually (Hoolahan et al., 2012). Much of these costs are attributed to disengaged employees, impacting health issues, job stress, burnout, turnover, and absenteeism (Bersin, 2014). Autonomy is referred to as a state of independence that allows an individual to express him or herself (Shuck et al., 2011). Individuals feel a state of belonging when they are connected to one another and feel cared for and accepted within the organization. Avey et al. (2012) recommended that organizational leaders should value respect, fairness, and emotional connectivity in the workplace. Competency and recognition are fostered when leaders provide employees with the opportunity to communicate issues they may experience, or provide input about

operations within the workplace (Yuan et al., 2012). Based on the participants'

responses, uncertainty associated with which employee engagement strategies are the

most effective due to the changing of the organization's tactics on customer demands, is a

major challenge. Promoting cultural competence of the entire organization means

enhancing employee competency. To ensure high employee morale and customer

satisfaction, enhancement of workforce competency and development is critical to

employee engagement. This act will promote long-term retention and a positive outlook

on the success of the organization.

Three themes emerged from the research: (a) rewards and recognition, (b)

empowering employees, and (c) building a bond between leaders and employees. If

business leaders incorporate these three themes into their leadership practice, they could

create growth potential for the organization. All participants confirmed that they are

successful in their roles and in implementing successful employee engagement strategies,

which have resulted in increased organizational profits. Employee engagement has

emerged as one of the greatest challenges in today's workplace. With the complexities

and stringent regulations in many organizations today, employee engagement will

continue to challenge organizations in the future (Mishra et al., 2014). Employee

engagement is a critical element in maintaining the organization's vitality, survivability,

and profitability (Albercht et al., 2015; Breevaart et al., 2013; Farndale & Murrer, 2015).

All participants concurred that implementing successful employee engagement strategies

is critical to organizational success. Also, participants emphasized that leaders who

embark on an employee engagement strategy must develop good listening techniques, be fair, have and demonstrate respect, build trust, and understand the employees' concerns.

The primary determinants of organizational effectiveness are job involvement and trust (Nasomboon, 2014). Setting expectations helps to create employee motivation (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013). Mentoring is the process of developing a mutually beneficial relationship involving two or more people with the same goal of achieving excellent professional outcomes (McCuriston & DeLucenay, 2010). A leader's capability to successfully leverage employee engagement strategies is essential to organizational achievement. By applying effective employee engagement strategies, business leaders could achieve improved employee performance and yield greater organizational profitability.

Implications for Social Change

The results from this study might affect social change by revealing possible key determinants of effective strategies for employee engagement. It is essential to understand the factors that engage employees to trigger changes in the workplace environment. Organizations differ based on size, products, and services, which distinguishes an organization from its competitors. By applying the concepts associated with the research findings, organizational leaders could increase employee engagement that may result in increased organizational profits. All participants believed that employee engagement had a positive influence on the organization. The rising level of disengaged employees can have a significant impact on an organization's profit, ability to retain skilled employees, and employee citizenship (Berens, 2013). The findings from

this study could aid in resolving such issues, by providing strategies that can be implemented to improve employee engagement.

Business leaders, who ignore the impact of low employee engagement, often lack the understanding of how employee engagement contributes to economic stability. Karanges et al. (2015) defined engagement as the extent in which employees are willing to commit both emotionally and rationally within their organization, how long they are willing to stay as a result of that commitment, and how dedicated they are to their work. Participants concurred with Karanges et al.'s definition of employee engagement. Further, organizational leaders have the responsibility to provide for the needs of employees by providing proper training and building a meaningful workplace environment, in turn, employees have the responsibility to provide a meaningful contribution to the organization. Many organizational leaders perceive the importance of employee engagement, yet lack the strategies for how to increase the level of employee engagement (Wang & Chia-Chun, 2013). Further, all participants' responses aligned with Granatino et al. (2013) results, which determined training increased engagement to 77% and had a direct effect on the organization's profits. The study findings are a summary of proven strategies for operationalizing employee engagement to a deeper level.

Considering the SDT theory discussed in this study can help business leaders gain a rich understanding of the many challenges faced in continuing to engage employees in their organizations. The SDT is complementary in that it focuses on aspects of engagement. Business leaders that adopt the concept of SDT, as companies want their

employees to hold positive attitudes towards their organization, see an increase in employee engagement and organizational profitability (Mowbray et al., 2014). Business leaders that examine the importance of the SDT can gain a better understanding of how to keep employees engaged.

When business leaders achieve financial success, leaders have more opportunities to (a) improve a local business relationship, (b) provide job opportunities within the local community, and (c) create new industries and markets. The results obtained from this study can be used to contribute to positive social change by assisting business leaders in exploring strategies for employee engagement. Enhanced employee engagement will create social innovation and foster goodwill among employees, customers, and community members. The success of business leaders will also improve common practices of their employees by providing a healthy work-life balance. Deploying effective employee engagement strategies can lead to organizational policies and practices that raise overall commitment and increase organizational profitability. Further, the social implications of effective employee engagement strategies can include consumers enjoying quality products and services. Engaged employees are an asset to local community development, as positively changing residents' behavior can benefit society and the environment.

Recommendations for Action

Employee engagement matters to both the employee as well as to the organization as a whole. The global economy's downturn has created a huge shift in the way business is conducted (McCuiston & DeLucenay, 2010). Sorenson and Royal (2015) indicated

that regardless of the industry, size, or location, many companies struggle to unlock the perplexities of why performances vary from one workgroup to the next. An organization that is bound by rules and regulations, from a union perspective, can either make or break the organization since employees can utilize contract agreement provisions to impede the attainment of the organizational goals and objectives. All participants suggested that employee engagement had a positive influence on meeting organizational goals and consumer expectations.

Based on the results, I have four recommendations for actions. The first recommendation is communication organizations would benefit from focusing more on (a) rewards and recognition, (b) empowering employees, and (c) building a bond between leaders and employees as strategic objectives. The rising level of disengaged employees can have a significant impact on an organization's profit, ability to retain skilled employees, and employee citizenship (Berens, 2013).

The second recommendation is utilizing management's capability to leverage employee engagement strategies in an organization. The application of effective employee engagement strategies may assist business leaders in successfully engaging employees and sustaining profitability. Improving employee engagement will positively affect an employee's job performance and organizational profitability (Mann & Darby, 2014). All participants agreed the need for leadership focus and support to improve employee engagement is imperative.

The third recommendation is that communication business leaders could benefit from considering the study findings that contribute to improved business practices and

positive social change. Supported by Cooper-Thomas et al. (2014), and as indicated in the findings, communication business leaders must understand the relationship between employee engagement and organizational profitability, and there should be an investment in improving employee engagement strategies. Well-developed employee engagement strategies could close the gap between employee motivation and optimal job performance by incorporating employee needs.

The fourth and last recommendation is organizational leaders could use the results to create leadership strategies that could raise employee engagement and job performance. Business leaders can conduct quarterly employee surveys with employees to develop a better understanding of the employees' expectation trends over time. Monitoring and tracking employee engagement strategies of an organization and its competitors can be useful when planning to implement effective employee engagement strategies. To reach maximum results for the organization, most business leaders plan to increase productivity. To increase overall profitability, improvements in employee engagement should be an organizational goal.

The scope of this research should be comprehensible to communication company leaders, in all sectors. The findings from this study are important to communication business leaders, organizational business leaders, and management professionals. In addition, communication business leaders could apply the results from this study to other sectors by sharing the research results in leadership conferences and training.

I will share my study findings with business professionals in business publications and scholarly journals. I will also share my findings through seminars and training

classes on employee engagement strategies. These forums will provide an opportunity to present insights into this study while creating interactive sessions with the participants. Additionally, I will send a copy of the study findings and recommendations to all participants. Finally, I could provide consulting services to communication organizations in regards to improving employee engagement strategies that result in increased organizational profitability.

Recommendations for Further Research

My recommendations for future research that could further the discussions pertaining to the problem of disengaged employees are as follows:

1. Future studies should focus on improving business practices beyond the parameters of this investigation.

2. Future research could provide researchers with a foundation for deepening the understanding of the relationship between employee engagement and organizational profitability.

3. Future researchers might want to apply the research findings from this study to improve current business practices.

Given the selected method and design, this study had limitations that can be addressed by additional topical research. For example, the absence of other organizational members was a limitation of this study. The employee engagement strategies identified in this study merit investigation from the viewpoints of other organizational members. Further studies may be necessary to understand the correlations between other members and employee engagement in the communication industry. My

research focus was on exploring strategies that communication business leaders used to engage employees that resulted in increased profits. I recommend that researchers conduct further studies to explore additional employee engagement strategies. I recommend further research on employee engagement strategies used by communication business leaders in other geographical locations, as this study focused on the area of Jackson, Mississippi. Future research should determine how these findings could be transferable to other organizations and locations.

Reflections

As I reflect, the Doctor of Business Administration Program at Walden University has been both rewarding and challenging. From the beginning of being in this program, I was very excited and ready to take on the new challenge before me. This new challenge is one that has transformed my mindset into being more scholarly. Throughout my journey, I have been honored and blessed to meet colleagues and professors that continued to encourage me throughout my journey. With the strategy set by Walden University for a doctoral student to complete the study within five DDBA 9000 courses, #strivefor5, I became discouraged, as my progression did not match this timeline. However, my faith, coupled with the encouragement of my chair, committee members, editor, colleagues, family, and friends steadied my feet and assisted me in remaining determined to successfully complete my study.

Understanding the essence of employee engagement has been both a personal and professional interest of mine since I have been in the workforce. The study involved four participants from one single organization in Jackson, Mississippi. Each participant

shared their lived experiences about strategies used to engage employees that result in increased profits. I was cautious not to include my personal bias concerning the responses of the participants and the assessment of archival data, to eliminate my personal beliefs about employee engagement strategies. My goal in conducting this qualitative case study was to build my competence as a researcher while exploring an agenda that will improve employee engagement and organizational profitability.

The findings of this study directly affect me as being an employee of a large organization, I understand the similarities and differences of employee engagement. From the perspective of the participants, I gained a greater understanding of strategies and practices that communication business leaders use to engage employees that result in increased profits. From this study, I understood the importance for both leaders and employees to have a more consistent understanding of the organization's mission and goals. All of the participants suggested strategies for communication standards and having transparency. The findings from this study encouraged me to put in perspective what is necessary for a business leader to be effective in engaging employees and increasing profits.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies that some communication business leaders used to engage employees that resulted in increased profits. Responses from interviews and review of archival data provided insights into the aspects of employee engagement. The focus of employee engagement is the alignment of the employee with the organizational goals and for employees to go beyond what is

expected (Menguc et al., 2013). Organizational leaders should develop training programs that focus on building skills shown to influence employee performance and engagement. For example, the study's findings included three emergent themes (a) rewards and recognition, (b) empowering employees, and (c) building a bond between leaders and employees. The conceptual framework for the research study was the SDT theory. Using the concepts derived from the study, business leaders have the ability to create new strategies to engage employees that result in increased profits. Findings from this study might affect social change by providing potential strategies for improving local business relationships, providing job opportunities within the local community, and creating new industries and markets.

Findings of my study highlighted employee engagement could have a direct positive effect on organizational profits. Using the results of this study, business leaders can understand the importance of employee engagement strategies among business processes. The study approach can provide a foundation for organizational leaders currently implementing some of the strategies identified but may lack strategies which can improve employee engagement. I concluded that improving employee engagement strategies is essential to an organization's profitability. Disengaged employees will result in reduced workplace productivity and decreased customer service skills. Finally, the findings of this study align with those of Hynes's (2012). Improved communication and relationships between management and employees fosters a foundation of engagement.

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Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation

Community Research Partner
Contact Information

Dear [Name],

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Employee Engagement and Organizational Profitability within our organization. As part of this study, I authorize you to interview participants and record their interviews. I will provide potential participants' email addresses for your contact purposes. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: a safe and quiet room to conduct interviews and provide supervision. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

The student will be responsible for complying with our site's research policies and requirements, including our mission statement, meaning that we behave in law-abiding and ethical ways in all our business relationships, dealings, and activities. Company records include employee, payroll records, vouchers, bills, time reports, billings records, measurement, performance, production records, and other essential data. To protect our records we always, disclose records only as authorized by company policy or in response to legal process.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Authorization Official Name
Contact Information

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview Questions:

1. How do you define employee engagement?

2. How do you keep your employees motivated?

3. What strategies have you used to engage employees within your organization?

4. Which of these strategies helped to engage employees?

5. What strategies did not help improve engagement?

6. Which of these strategies have you implemented to engage employees in your organization?

7. What causes employees to become disengaged?

8. How can employees be reengaged?

9. What effects and influence do disengaged employees have on the attitudes of other employees within the organization?

10. What does trust and respect with leadership in the organization mean to employees and their level of engagement?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

The interview protocol will consist of the following six steps:

1. an opening statement;

2. semistructured interview questioning;

3. probing questions;

4. participants verifying themes noted during the interview;

5. corrections to themes if noted by the participants; and

6. a recording of reflexive notes.