

2018

# Employee Engagement from the Viewpoint of Employees in Academia

Stephanie Giles-Merrick  
*Walden University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>

 Part of the [Business Commons](#), and the [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#)

---

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu](mailto:ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu).

# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Stephanie Giles Merrick

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

## Review Committee

Dr. Steven Tippins, Committee Chairperson, Management Faculty  
Dr. Stephanie Hoon, Committee Member, Management Faculty  
Dr. Raghu Korrapati, University Reviewer, Management Faculty

Chief Academic Officer  
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2018

Abstract

Employee Engagement from the Viewpoint of Employees in Academia

by

Stephanie Giles Merrick

M S, Troy State University, 2008

BS, Georgia State University, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

August 2018

## Abstract

Research does not address how staff in the United States perceive employee engagement in the university system. Leadership training and communication for managers are essential processes that help staff become highly engaged in universities. The purpose of phenomenological study was to explore the views of employees in a selected university within the state of Georgia in an attempt to address positive employee engagement in the academic environment. The engagement theory and social exchange theory were used as the conceptual frameworks to explore how employees engaged in their department working with their managers. To address this question, a purposeful sample of 15 females and 5 males full time employees who had a direct line reporting relationship to a manager were selected from one university in the state of Georgia. The research questions indicated what lived experiences of Georgia School system employees feel about engagement and the factors employees identify as the influence on employee engagement. Employees responded to a questionnaire, containing 14 open ended questions, to gather rich data on their lived experiences. Open hand and axial coding extracted data to identify the emergent themes, such as: incentives, increased morale, increased confidence and reverence of management, reward based performance, and organizational productivity. These findings indicate that managers must learn to meet the needs of the employees to positively address employee engagement. This research contributes to positive social change by adding insights for managers seeking to increase productivity.

Employee Engagement from the Viewpoint of Employees in Academia

by

Stephanie Giles Merrick

M A Troy State University, 2008

B S Georgia State University, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

August 2018

## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughter, Angelica Wheeler, and granddaughter Saniah Williams, for their encouragement and patience with me. With all their love and cheerleading for me, I was able to finish this journey. To my mother and best friend, Ardell Henderson, who taught me that I could be whatever I choose to be and do, whatever I set my mind to do. She never stops striving for my success; my late grandmother, Helen Buchannon, looked for me always to be the best I can be and said you would do great things in this world.

To my father, Billy Giles, who supports me, and to my two brothers, Billy Giles and Richard Giles, who always encouraged me and told me that I was smart and prepared to go high, and my cousin Monique Flakes who kept me laughing. They were right, and I appreciate and will forever remember their love and belief in me.

Lastly but not least, I thank God, for the guidance, patience, and endurance to be the person he knows I could be. With his help, I was able to stay encouraged, engaged, and empowered to finish this journey. Thank you for helping me to achieve my dream.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere and deep appreciation to my mother and father, daughter, granddaughter, family, and friends for their excellent and sincere cooperation during this difficult time during my academic endeavors. I am forever grateful to all those at the university, Professor Prince A. Ordu, PhD for encouraging me to pursue this doctoral degree, Dr. Wayne Richards, who gave me permission to use his copyrighted instrument, and everyone else I did not mention but contributed in some fashion to the successful completion of this dissertation.

I owe a tremendous amount of gratitude to Dr. Steven Tippins, who served as my committee chair and mentor. In addition, I wish to express my gratitude to each of my proposal committee members: Dr. Stephanie Hoon and Dr. Raghu Korrapati. Their time and advice was appreciated sincerely. Also, my deep appreciation goes to those whose interviews have strengthened this research.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Introduction .....	1
Background of the Study.....	4
Problem Statement .....	8
Purpose of the Study .....	9
Research Questions .....	9
Conceptual Framework .....	10
Nature of the Study .....	11
Definition of Terms.....	12
Assumptions .....	14
Scope and Delimitations.....	14
Limitations .....	15
Significance of the Study.....	16
Significance to Practice .....	16
Significance to Theory.....	17
Significance to Social Change.....	18
Summary and Transition .....	18
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	19



Literature Search Strategy .....	20
Conceptual Framework .....	21
Conceptual Foundation.....	23
Literature Review Related to Key Concepts .....	26
Employee Engagement Theory .....	26
Challenges of Employee Engagement.....	27
Drivers of Employee Engagement.....	27
Significance of Employee Engagement.....	29
Employee Commitment.....	33
Motivation Theory.....	34
Employee Motivation .....	37
Empowerment.....	39
Recognition.....	40
Psychosociological Theory.....	41
Social Exchange Theory.....	42
Leadership and Employee Engagement .....	45
Transformational Leadership.....	48
Communication Theories .....	49
Communication Practice.....	51

Impact of Communication on Leadership and Strategic Planning.....	53
Communication as it Enhances Human Resources .....	54
Communication as a Tool to Enhance Engagement.....	55
Organizational Climate.....	56
Types of Organizational Climate .....	58
Organizational climate as it relates to human resources .....	59
Organizational climate as it relates to engagement.....	61
Organizational Climate Theories .....	63
Organizational Effectiveness.....	64
Gap in the Literature .....	65
Summary and Transition.....	66
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	69
Introduction .....	69
Setting.....	69
Research Design and Rationale.....	70
Role of the Researcher .....	72
Methodology .....	72
Participant Selection Logic.....	73
Instrumentation.....	75
Sampling and Sampling Procedures .....	76

Recruitment Procedures, Participation and Data Collection .....	77
Data Analysis Plan.....	78
Data Organization Technique .....	79
Issues of Trustworthiness .....	80
Validity .....	80
Transferability .....	82
Reliability .....	83
Ethical Procedures .....	83
Summary .....	84
Chapter 4: Results.....	86
Introduction .....	86
Research Setting.....	87
Demographics of Study Participants .....	88
Data Collection.....	90
Data Analysis .....	92
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	93
Credibility.....	94
Transferability .....	95
Dependability .....	96

Conformability .....	96
Results of Study .....	97
Theme Analysis: Research Question 1.....	98
Theme Analysis: Research Question 2.....	108
Theoretical Connection.....	118
Summary.....	119
Chapter 5: Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations .....	121
Interpretation of Findings.....	122
Limitations of the Study .....	127
Recommendations .....	128
Importance of Building Trust .....	130
Leader Training, Mentoring, and Continuous Learning.....	131
Creating Policy or Guidelines for Employee Engagement.....	132
Recommendations for Additional Studies.....	133
Implications .....	134
Implications for Social Change .....	136
Conclusion.....	138
References.....	140

Appendix A: Letter Granting Permission to Conduct the Study in the Georgia State University System.....	162
Appendix B: Letter Granting Permission to use Interview Questions.....	163
Appendix C: Interview Questions and Demographic Data.....	164
Appendix D: Confidentiality Agreement-Transcriptionist .....	166

## List of Tables

Table 1. Demographics of Study Participants.....	89
Table 2. Theme Analysis: Research Question 1 .....	99
Table 3. Theme Analysis: Research Question 2 .....	109

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Human capital is a vital asset for an organization to meet its goals. Human capital, together with employee effort and performance, determines business success (Handa & Gulati, 2014). Organizations are social systems, and placing workers first is an approach to improving employee engagement (Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey, & Saks, 2015). Organizational leaders should consider people before the needs of business to achieve success. Organizations need to understand the factors that influence employee motivation and behavior (Handa & Gulati, 2014). Organizations with satisfied, performance driven, and engaged employees may achieve better operational results and better retain the results than institutions that have disgruntled employees who lack involvement and enthusiasm (Grant & Marshak, 2011).

Employee engagement is not a new term. However, participation has received significant attention in the past 20 years. The concept of employee engagement is rapidly gaining popularity and importance in the workplace (Welch, 2011). Defining the term is a challenge because human resource generalists, educational consultants, and researchers have developed various definitions. According to Schaufeli and Salanova (2014), an engaged employee is energetic, mentally resilient, dedicated to working, and enjoys the challenges at work. Handa and Gulati (2014) defined employee engagement as an employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed towards desired organizational outcomes. Employee engagement can apply to workers, employees, leaders, and managers. Some theories contribute to the construct of engagement such as

motivation theory, leadership theory, and social exchange theory. A model that shows how four key HRM practices focused on engagement influence organizational climate, job demands and job resources for psychological conditions related to engagement or disengagement at work that individual employee psychological and motivational factors will need to be implemented in the policies and procedures (Gruman & Saks, 2011). Kahn(1990) described engagement, in people to express themselves cognitively, mentally, physically, and emotionally during task performance Further, engaged employees are so dedicated to their work that they find difficulty detaching them from their job (Handa & Gulati, 2014).

SET includes the exploration of relationship between the employee and organization, which provides a reason for understanding employee engagement, employee satisfaction, and organization commitment (Ariani, 2013). Given the importance of employee engagement to organizations, combined with the deepening disengagement among workers today, a critical issue involves how to promote the participation and involvement of employees. Employee engagement is a measure of satisfaction, commitment, and discretionary effort (Biswas & Bhatnagar, 2013). Therefore, it is critical for managers to cultivate engagement, given that disengagement is central to the problem of workers' lack of commitment and motivation. Also, Hakanen and Schaufeli (2012) viewed involvement as the opposite of burnout. The researchers saw engagement as active participation in the work employees do and having a personal sense of responsibility. The study is divided into five chapters, with the first being a brief introduction to the study including its purpose, significance, research objectives, and



research questions. Chapter 2 includes an exhaustive literature review regarding the practicing strategies of human resources management within the context of employee engagement. Chapter 3 involves the methodology used in the study. Chapters 4 and 5 include the data analysis and results. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to report how the lived experiences of a purposive sample of 20 full-time staff employees viewed engagement in a Georgia state university.

## **Background of the Study**

In an academic environment, staff may experience a lack of respect, no appreciation, and discomfort. During those times, managers working in the department encouraged staff to speak openly to express their concerns. When staff did speak candidly about their emotions, they felt there was no point. The perception of feedback by employees is no matter what they discussed regarding the issues or problems no one is making choices to fix the concerns. Also, the managers are not acknowledging the negative information coming from the staff perception of employee engagement (Schuck & Wollard, 2013). In the United States, research regarding employee engagement has not been done from the staff perspective in a university setting.

Although there is a significant amount of research focused on employee engagement in organizations such as consulting firms, there is limited emphasis placed on employee engagement in universities (Welbourne, 2007). In 2012, University of Georgia was chosen as one of the great places to work in the state of Georgia (Mills, 2012). Schuck and Herd (2012) found that companies in which 60% of the workforce is engaged had average five-year total returns to shareholders of more than 20%. That compared to companies where only 40 to 60% of the employees are engaged, which had an average of about 6% (Baumruk, 2006). The positive results for corporations in Europe could have the same effect for staff in the academic workplace.

Organizational investments in creating a competitive advantage by developing employee engagement are increasing, yet despite the increase in spending, levels of employee commitment and engagement are not improving (Krishnan & Wesley, 2013).

Also, organizational behavior of individuals and groups within an organizational context and how organizational processes and practices affect individuals and groups (Gibson & McDaniel, 2010), can have an effect on improving engagement. This study may identify employee engagement problems in a selected university within the state of Georgia. The findings of the study might lead to a new understanding of the role that effective management can play in the improvement of the existing university system in the state of Georgia.

Change is common in organizations. Teams may change strategy and undergo restructuring, or they may implement new technology. In organizations, individuals are accountable for their engagement; anyone who supervises or manages must coach team members to have higher levels of engagement, morale, and motivation (White, 2011). In a similar fashion, organizational leaders such as supervisors play a vital role in influencing engagement among their staff employees (Mendes & Stander, 2011). Costs associated with disengaged employees in the workplace are not just monetary. Loss of productivity, business, stakeholders, and valued employees can all be the result (Crabtree, 2013). Additionally, adverse outcomes of engagement in the workplace include stress, increased absenteeism, decreased productivity, and increased litigation (Kilfedder & Litchfield, 2014). For academic institutions to achieve a committed workforce, educational leaders will need to understand that employee engagement can help develop a stronger and more dedicated group of employees. Conversely, a lack of it can weaken the workplace.

The concept of employee engagement has gained popularity since the 1990's. Although the literature revealed many studies on employee engagement, there is a gap in the research regarding the involvement of employees working in academia. According to Kahn (1990), the employee's role in job involvement, commitment, and motivation focuses on how the subjective experiences of work shape the processes of people working defines their level of engagement at work. He further supports that engagement is a multidimensional construct and employee engagement has emerged as a potentially significant employee performance and organizational management metric. Glavas and Godwin (2013) believed that some leaders do not communicate effectively, and consequently, do not provide the necessary feedback for employees to understand they are valued. Those employee outcomes influence financial outcomes and organizational success (Gavino, Wayne, & Erdogan, 2012; Gruman & Saks, 2011).

The ASTD (2012) stated that employers were spending time, money, and resources on engagement and commitment training for employees and supervisors through the mid-2000s. According to Crabtree (2013), 63% of the workforce worldwide is composed of people at work who are not engaged in their organization. Crabtree (2013) defined a disengaged employee as an individual who has given up on his or her job and is just going through the work day doing less and passing the time. There is no passion or energy in his or her work. Cardus (2013) described five components employees need to be engaged on the job: such as a competent supervisor and having broad goals established within the proper context are the first two important components. Also, objective measures of progress and regress, the necessary resources to get the job

done and sufficient autonomy to do their best work are three remaining components. The number of employees working within an organization can also play a role in their engagement. According to Crabtree (2013), one survey indicated that the engagement of employees is at its highest in organizations with fewer than 50 employees. Conversely engagement is at its lowest in organizations with 1,000-5,000 employees. The organizations with 1,000 or more employees found that 19% of them felt actively disengaged compared to 12% of workers at companies with fewer than 50 workers. The findings indicated that in those organizations, the development of relationships in the workplace, the importance of an employee's direct manager, and their role in shaping organizational culture and learning was small.

Employees' engagement for those employed by the United States federal government is lower than that of the rest of the U.S. workforce. On average, 27% of federal public servants were engaged in their jobs in 2014, compared with 30% of all other workers in the United States (White, 2011). With more than 2 million federal employees, lack of engagement costs the federal government an estimated \$18 billion in lost productivity annually, or approximately \$9,000 per employee (White, 2011). Given that the management problems such as disrespecting the employees and not showing appreciation for their work of the selected university in Georgia may go beyond those mentioned here, the researcher will strive to analyze and report the themes that will come out of the research and make appropriate recommendations related to leadership and communication.

In an unstable and uncertain environment, studies of employee engagement have shifted focus away from deficiencies, such as organizational cynicism to strengthening management (Conteh, 2016). Among many streams of new research that have come forth by way of positive psychology, employee engagement is an area of study and practice that addresses human feelings beyond activity in the workplace. As employees and their supervisors negotiate the terms of new benefits contracts, both parties have a mutual interest in redefining what it means to be engaged at work (Gruman & Saks, 2011). Leaders need to address the issue of employee commitment to reduce turnover, help discourage employees from becoming disengaged and retain engaged and willing workers. Engaged employees are more productive when they build good customer relationships and when they contribute to reducing the financial burden of employee turnover (Gruman & Saks, 2011).

### **Problem Statement**

Ruslan, Islam, and Noor (2014) indicated a Gallup poll estimated that disengaged employees cost United States about \$450 to \$550 billion a year in lost productivity (Ruslan, et al., 2014). Compared to previous years, employee engagement declined in 2015; with employee retention and employee commitment being two leading challenges facing organizations (Vesty, Sridharan, Northcott, and Dellaportas, 2015).

The general problem was that staff who worked in the university system in Georgia struggled to remain engaged in their work, resulting in high turnover and creating employee disengagement in the workplace. The specific problem was that the leaders in Georgia state university lack knowledge about how employee engagement and

job satisfaction influence their employees' commitment to the organization. Since 2007, studies are lacking regarding employee engagement from the perception of employees specifically within a Georgia state university organization. A significant amount of the researched showed the relationship with job satisfaction and organizational commitment is positively associated with employee engagement in the United Kingdom (Blanchard, Welbourne, Gilmore, & Bullock, 2009). This study was intended to fill the gap in the literature regarding staff's lived experiences in universities in the United States of America.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The goal of this qualitative phenomenological study was to report the lived experiences of Georgia university system employees regarding employee engagement. Recorded interviews of 20 staff members in a university located in the state of Georgia were completed to understand how employees perceived the construct of engagement. Learning more about what employees think about their level of employee engagement and their productivity may help the employees of the university to improve engagement and productivity. Increasing employee engagement in the college may increase productivity. The results of this study may contribute to positive social change in university's organization, culture, and management teams by determining how different levels of employee engagement and job satisfaction influence commitment from staff.

### **Research Questions**

Leaders who do not give employees opportunities for meaningful work may create workers who mentally retreat from the organization. Low levels of employee

engagement may negatively affect the success of the organization (Yukl, 2012). In this study, the researcher included interview questions to obtain data about the lived experiences of staff working in a university environment. Interview questions are valid for gathering information about a particular phenomenon (Sherrod, 2011). The researcher included the two research questions developed to identify the strategies that may increase the managers and supervisors knowledge of employee engagement in the university system. The researcher sought to answer the following research questions:

*RQ1:* What are the lived experiences of Georgia school system employees regarding employee engagement?

*RQ2:* What factors do staff employees identify as the greatest influence on employee engagement?

### **Conceptual Framework**

There were two theories, personal engagement theory and social exchange theory, provided the conceptual; framework for the study (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). These theories supported this study regarding the relationship of employee engagement and job satisfaction in the organization. Social exchange theory (SET) is one of the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding workplace behavior (Doherty, 2010). According to Schuck & Wollard (2013), an exchange requires a bidirectional transaction meaning something is given and something returned which was consistent with their description of engagement as a two-way relationship between the employer and the employee.



Kahn (1990) developed the personal engagement theory, which researchers have used in both academic and professional studies relating to employee engagement. Kahn (1990) found that there were three psychological conditions related to engagement or disengagement at work: meaningfulness, safety, and availability. The psychological conditions refer to the way people react or work in the environments with the feelings associated with the conditions. Employee engagement is viewed as the opposite of burnout; it represents active involvement in the work employees do and their personal sense of responsibility (Sakovska, 2013). Kahn (1992) addressed personnel management and further researched employee motivation factors, and suggested that personal commitment is "the harnessing of organization members to their work role" (p. 7).

Kahn's approach measures engagement or disengagement levels of employees through commitment to the workplace. Employees become physically involved in their tasks, whether in a group setting or alone, and become cognitively observant and empathically connected to the individuals while completing a task through a personal connection. Employees may have a sense of job ownership when they have a commitment to their organizations. Shuck and Wollard (2013) stated that the process of synthesizing a new definition of the concept for employee engagement.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study had a phenomenological design to identify and report the lived experiences of employees' engagement within a selected university. A qualitative method and phenomenological model was used to understand human behavior by gathering perceptions from related individuals. A purposeful sampling method to collect data for

this study was used. The phenomenological design was suitable because the study involved exploring a phenomenon to understand the perceptions of employees about their workplace engagement. The researcher helped to identify recurring themes. The approach was appropriate also because the purpose of the investigation was to develop a deeper understanding of an employee's engagement through the themes that emerged from participants' lived experiences. In this study, I interviewed 20 participants face-to-face in one university system in the state of Georgia in eastern United States. The study data was collected during an agreed upon specified time and location that the participants chose based on their availability. The data was analyzed through open coding and using NVivo11. The results from the study showed five themes in terms of the perception of employee engagement in the workplace from employees. The desire to understand the research participants lived experiences supported the use of a phenomenological research study. The phenomenological design was suitable because the study involved exploring a phenomenon to understand the lived experiences of 20 research participants about their workplace engagement in a university in the state of Georgia. The purpose was to explore what these 20 participants would say about their lived experiences regarding employee engagement. I interviewed all 20 participants; data saturation was reached at 15 participants.

### **Definition of Terms**

This section provided definitions of terms presented throughout this research. Some of the terms may have common meanings; the definitions here offer an operational meaning for the terms.

*Actively disengaged:* Employees who intentionally and consistently display unhappiness to others. They provide a minimal output and undermine the work of engaged employees (Gallup, 2013).

*Disengaged:* Employees who are not involved or who do not express themselves in the workplace positively. They exert minimal effort, and they physically withdraw from their roles (Khan, 1990).

*Employee disengagement:* Emotional detachment from work performance. Employees who are disengaged undermine the performance and accomplishments of their disengaged coworkers (Khan 1990).

*Employee engagement:* The level at which workers are willing to commit to accomplishing the goals of the organization (Khan, 1990).

*Employee satisfaction:* The degree to which employees are happy, contented, and fulfilling their needs at work. Many measures indicate that employee satisfaction is a factor in employees' motivation, goal achievement, and positive morale in the workplace (Heathfield, 2015).

*Organizational climate:* A set of measurable and perceived properties of the work environment that can influence employee motivation and behavior (Messarra, 2014).

*Supervisor paternalism:* The subordinate's overall perception that a supervisor's behavior is both benevolent and controlling toward that subordinate (Wagstaff, Collela, Triana, Smith, & Watkins, 2015).

### **Assumptions**

There were four assumptions in this study. The first was that those interviewed in this study would respond honestly to all questions. Another was that participants would have no agendas or motivational factors that may influence or shape their responses. The third assumption was that responses to interview questions would not be negatively impacted by a current situation, for example, an employee's disciplinary action or a pay increase. The fourth assumption was that the staff members participating in this study would not base their answers on personal agendas that would cause bias, such as a desire for a promotion.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2016), delimitations identify what the researcher is not going to do. This qualitative phenomenological research determined and reported the lived experiences of staff members within the field of academia. The study was limited to employees in one university in the state of Georgia who were willing to complete a one-on-one interview. A questionnaire consisting of 14 questions that Richards (2013) approved that I can utilize the research tool. The research questions used in this study were limited in focus to perceptions of employee engagement.

The scope of this study was narrow and focused on 20 employees working within one Georgia academic institution. Participants were limited to one university in the state of Georgia in the United States. A delimitation of the study was that employees such as: supervisors, managers, presidents, and vice-presidents were not included in the sample population because the research was based on the perceptions of the staff and not leaders

in the department. The participants were required to be working within the Georgia university system at the time of the study and agree to participate voluntarily. Also, the participants had multiple job titles such as administrative, information technology, and custodial staff.

According to Cooper and Schindler (2014), one reason to identify delimitations is to expose a weakness in the study; however, the weakness may not be evident before conducting the actual research. The first research delimitation in the study was that the interviews were restricted to participants who agreed to participate in the face-to-face interaction. A second delimitation was that the members had to meet specific requirements, such as working a minimum of 5 years in one department. Third, the study was limited to participants who voluntarily participated. The reason for selecting one university is because there is no research conducted in this particular institution from the perception of the employees. Only full-time employees working a maximum 5 years were included in the study.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this study included the following. The population for the study consisted of one university in the United States. The participants came from one Georgia University. The study sample was limited to the minimum sample of university staff required to meet data saturation. The study took place in the southeastern region of the United States.

### **Significance of the Study**

In the United States, disengaged employees in the workplace cost more than \$300 billion annually (White, 2013). Momeni, Anvari, Kalali, Raoofi, and Zarrineh (2010) indicated that organizational costs to keep disengaged employees who are not productive have a significant impact on profits and ability to retain skilled employees. The results of this study may help Georgia universities lead to their managers and supervisors will have a greater understanding of how better to create employee engagement within the organization, which may benefit the school system in Georgia. The study was conducted because there was an opportunity to add research exploring employee engagement from the viewpoint of employees in the university system. Providing answers regarding how employees feel about organizational commitment, trust, and respect could have a positive impact on the overall effectiveness of managers and supervisors. The researcher may be able to contribute to positive social change by helping the university system employees, supervisors, and department leaders to increase employee morale throughout the university system. Keeping employees engaged in a university environment may have a positive effect on all areas of college operation.

### **Significance to Practice**

Engagement is crucial for academia, where every employee must perform at high levels because there are few other employees available to counterbalance inferior performers (Sakovska, 2013). Engaged employees are assets to their organization, and disengaged employees can be a liability (Gruman & Saks, 2011). The findings of this study help to narrow the gap in literature existing in the business field by reporting the

effect of employee engagement from the perception of employees working in the university system. The managers and supervisor will learn tools on how to keep the employees engaged in the workplace such as being great listeners and coaches to the employees. Also, when managers respect and value the employees the higher employee engagement improves, retention, and better employee performance will benefit universities.

### **Significance to Theory**

Leaders who do not provide employees with opportunities for meaningful work can cause disengaged employees, which in turn can increase turnover, burnout, and absenteeism (Sakovska, 2013). Absenteeism and employee turnover can increase the organizational costs. Costs to retain disengaged employees can have a significant impact on an organization's profits (Gallup, 2013). With this research, the researcher attempted to narrow the literature gap on employee engagement by reporting the lived experiences of employee engagement from the viewpoint of staff in academia. Also, there was minimal research regarding engagement in universities in the United States indicated by (Welbourne, 2007). The researcher's intent was to understand the staff perceptions of involvement from the viewpoint of working in the academic community. The goal was to inform and allow universities remain great places to work in Georgia. This qualitative phenomenological study involved reporting the lived experiences from staff that promoted a better understanding of employee engagement in the workplace.

**Significance to Social Change**

The study will contribute to positive social change by helping universities in the United States and around the world to increase their performance and productivity in the workplace. Understanding the phenomenon of employee engagement as it is related to the lived experiences of staff in the university system will add to the body of knowledge on the subject. The research will be useful for leaders in academic institutions, business organizations, and communities who benefit from this study by using the information from lived experiences of staff to gain a better understanding of employee engagement.

**Summary and Transition**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to report the lived experiences of Georgia university system employees regarding employee engagement. Chapter 1 included background information that set the context for the study, the problem statement, purpose statement, and significance of the research. Chapter 1 also included an outline of the nature of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, and definitions of key terms, assumptions, scope, limitations, and delimitations of the study. Chapter 2 contains a comprehensive review that covers the important aspects of the study and highlights the research relevant to employee engagement, theories, communication, and leadership.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Staff who work in the university system in Georgia struggle to remain committed and engaged in their work, resulting in high turnover and employee disengagement in colleges in the state of Georgia. The problem that was investigated in this study was that not enough is known about the lived experiences of employees in academia regarding employee engagement. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore employee engagement from the perception of staff within the Georgia university system.

Due to the increasing concern for employee work performance and productivity, social psychological research of cognitive engagement mechanisms gained wider recognition in the field of business management and organizational leadership (Blanchard, Welbourne, Gilmore, & Bullock, 2009). The context of the problem is that the lack of understanding from managers regarding how employees are engaged at work is putting engagement of employees at risk of not being productive in the workplace, thereby reducing the effectiveness of business organizations (Dasgupta, Suar, & Singh, 2014). When commitment and engagement is low in universities, it results in turnover and employee disengagement (Blanchard et al., 2009).

The academic work environment is dynamic and fundamentally changing. The engaged employee harnesses resources for learning opportunities. The broad concept of disengagement signifies the adaptation to the requirements of the defined work role and responsibilities; furthermore, disengagement indicates a constrained commitment to

personal or organizational goals (Niessen, Binnewies, & Rank, 2010). Organizational effectiveness affects the level of commitment of the employee. This study was conducted with the hope that it would provide an opportunity to understand the perceptions of employees, develop strategies for improving engagement, and contribute to employee engagement with direct measures of organizational effectiveness and business growth. The focus of this literature review will be on employee engagement from the perspective of staff in the work place. Employee engagement can be a concern in the university system and involves costs for academic institutions (Welbourne, 2007).

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to report the lived experiences of employees in a university setting. The literature review provided a summary of relevant, current, and historical qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods studies that have addressed influential factors related to human behavior, leadership competencies, and effective communication in relation to employee engagement in academia.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

In this chapter, the researcher reviews literature on employee engagement, with an emphasis on the lived experiences of staff in the university system. Additionally, the researcher assesses current literature on communication and leadership with a focus on universities in the United States to find valuable literature on engagement in relation to staff workers. The researcher reviewed peer-reviewed articles, journals, books, periodicals, and conference records published between 2007 and 2015 to identify 157 references selected for their relevance to employee engagement. The researcher used

multiple electronic databases to conduct the search, including ABI/INFORM Global, Academic Search Premier, Business Source Primer, EBSCOhost, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, SAGE Journals, and the SOCIndex.. The key search terms included *employee engagement, disengagement, leadership, organizational benefits, engagement in the work place, disengagement productivity, motivation theory, social theory, psychological theory, and communication theories.*

The objective of this study was to understand and report the lived experiences regarding employee engagement from the perspective of staff in the university system in the United States. The research questions for this study were:

*RQ1:* What are the lived experiences of Georgia university system employees regarding employee engagement?

*RQ2:* What factors do staff employees identify as the greatest influence on employee engagement?

Additionally, there is a discussion of literature about university systems, leadership styles, organizational climate, and social change.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The concept of employee engagement is always becoming popular and essential in the workplace. The personal engagement theory was used in the research. Kahn (1990) found that there were three psychological conditions related to engagement or disengagement at work: Meaningfulness, safety, and availability. He suggested that personal commitment is “the harnessing of organization members to their work role” (p. 7). Kahn developed the personal engagement theory, which researchers have used in both

academic and professional studies relating to employee engagement. Kahn's approach measures engagement or disengagement levels of employees through commitment in the workplace. Employees become physically involved in their tasks, whether in a group setting or alone, and become cognitively observant and empathically connected to the individuals while completing a job through a personal connection.

Schuck and Wollard (2013) proposed to define employee engagement as an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed towards desired organizational outcomes. Vanpoucke and Vereecke (2010) believed that leaders' behavior influences organizational success. Leaders' communication behavior is a determining factor in the quality of information sharing, with a degree of feedback from organization members. Employees equate the communication style of the leader with the leadership employed. Bakker, Albrecht, and Leiter (2011) suggested that effective communication is an important driver of employee engagement.

Employee engagement involves an array of methodologies, hypotheses, and propositions (Adler, 2012). Engagement is a wide-ranging concept embracing an assortment of approaches, definitions, and measures. Energetic employees are highly motivated and focused on organizational goals (Kataria et al., 2012). Engaged employees are energized and optimistic (Gruman, & Saks, 2011). Organizational research studies are beginning to report these positive indications of employee engagement in association with organizational citizenship behaviors (Kataria, et al., 2012).

Kataria, Garg, and Rastogi (2012), defined organizational citizenship behavior as an approach of engaged employees towards work and organization. The engagement of a

motivated employee drives organizational citizenship behavior and creates a holistic framework for positive psychological, social, and organizational context of work. In the conceptualization of employee engagement, focuses on employees' work engagement (Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter, 2011). Motivation theories suggest the mental state of the employee that drives motivation for engagement (Bledow, Schmitt, Frese, & Kuhnel, 2011); social theories identify engagement as ethical behaviors driven by cognitive moral development (Glavas, 2012) while Kataria et al., (2012) indicated that psychological theories identify concepts of engagement in association with work creativity, safety climate, and resource availability.

### **Conceptual Foundation**

Kataria et al. (2012) performed a retrospective analysis of existing theoretical and empirical research studies supporting the associative interrelationship between organizational citizenship behavior, employee engagement, and organizational effectiveness. The causal relationship between organizational effectiveness and employee engagement establishes positive organizational performance and esteemed workplace behavior (Kataria, et al, 2012). Grant (2008) introduced the concepts of employee behavior and organizational success with the Hawthorne studies. In addition, Grant (2008) used the two concepts to describe the relationship between employees and work.

There are many definitions of employee engagement. Pedrycz, Russo, and Succi (2011) defined employee engagement as having an understanding of the organization's business strategy and a commitment to its success. Ariani (2013) noted that a significant positive relationship exists between employee engagement and employees who had a

commitment to the organization. Truss, Shantz, Soane, Alfes and Delbridge (2013), defined engagement as “an individual’s sense of purpose and focused energy, evident to others in the display of personal initiative, adaptability, effort, and persistence directed toward organizational goals” (p. 7). Shuck and Reio (2014) saw engagement as having three components: emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, and physical engagement. Emotional engagement refers to the emotional involvement in one’s work. Cognitive engagement refers to sustained attention and mental effort given by an individual at work. Finally, physical engagement refers to the willingness to put forth discretionary effort towards an individual’s work. According to Schuck and Wollard (2013), employee engagement is a mutual contract between the organization and its employees. Organizations have a responsibility to train employees and build a meaningful workplace. Further, employees have a responsibility to make meaningful contributions. The mutual contract created by employee engagement describes the expectations for organizations within the employment relationship. When organizations do not fulfill their part of the contract, employee engagement decreases (Schuck & Wollard, 2013).

Employee engagement has become increasingly topical in the management literature and, in particular, the human resources (HR) professional community (Shuck, Reio, 2011). Applied research and HR consulting firms have marketed the connections between this term and a variety of desirable business outcomes, including reduced turnover and productivity gains. Beyond improved shareholder returns, Van Rooy, Whiteman, Hart, and Caleo (2011) claimed that employee engagement is linked with

reduced absenteeism, better customer feedback, less shrinkage of inventory, and higher sales. Correlational research suggested the outcomes of engagement are indeed impressive, as they speak directly to business results (Ludwig & Frazier 2012). Employee engagement derives higher revenue (Watson, 2012; Saks & Gruman, 2014).

Organizations in the top quartile of employee engagement accrued 1% to 4% more in organizational profits annually (Harter, Schmidt, Asplund, Killham & Agrawal, 2010). Empirical studies have also identified a linkage between employee engagement and increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, and higher levels of discretionary behavior. Although the term employee engagement resonates strongly within the business community, researchers have taken a more cautious approach towards acceptance, viewing employee engagement more as an amalgamation of prior research in the work attitude arena. For example, studies have focused on linking employee engagement to job involvement, psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, and employee commitment.

Beyond efforts to distinguish engagement from other established constructs, research has also focused on the degree to which employee engagement is an attitude or behavior. Others have attempted to confirm whether it is an individual or group phenomenon. Based on this tapestry of research perspectives, scholars have suggested that the term's greatest utility may be derived from its use as a means of describing behavioral outcomes associated with established work attitude constructs. This study will follow an inquiry logic that positions employee engagement as a multi-dimensional term, which aggregates desirable work attitude outcomes, including reduced turnover and discretionary efforts. To understand the varied dimensions of employee engagement and

to position the word within the context of this study, a review of the work attitude literature will be conducted in order to focus on the construct Employee Engagement. Based on meta-analysis studies, these two constructs are the most frequently cited in the engagement studies. Additionally, the discussion will highlight three components that seem to permeate employee engagement literature, including emotional (affective) attachment, cognitive commitment, and behavioral outcomes (Conteh, 2016).

### **Literature Review Related to Key Concepts**

#### **Employee Engagement Theory**

Adler (2012) believed employee engagement has become a primary focus for both research and practice around the world. The mechanisms of engagement approaches range from social psychology to developmental psychology to philosophy and ethics (Glavas, 2012). Bhatnager (2012) indicated engagement is a direct measurement of organizational effectiveness as job performance, quality, output, business growth, and profits. Soieb, Othman, and D'Silva (2013) defined engagement as “a strong bond between oneself and the job responsibility where people fully express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally” (p. 92).

Employee engagement creates a framework for building commitment based on inspiring, rewarding, and involving employees in collaborative actions with human resource (Mone, Eisinger, Guggenheim, Price, & Stine, 2011). The effective shift model of work engagement is the assumption that both positive and negative effects have important functions for work participation (Bledow, Schmitt, Frese, & Kuhnel, 2011). Work engagement is the involvement of the self and the presence of positive work-



related feelings (Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010). Bakker, Albrecht, and Leiter (2012) emphasized organizations' need for "employees who are connected to their work and able to invest themselves fully in their roles, and who are proactive and committed to high-quality performance standards" (P. 5).

### **Challenges of Employee Engagement**

Challenges within organizations may influence the amount of work and performance of the individual and the organization. Much of the literature on employee engagement has focused on the benefits and drivers of engagement (Bakker, & Demerouti, 2008) However, there is little emphasis on implementation challenges and understanding how employees view participation. According to Robertson & Cooper (2010), one of the barriers to achieving employee engagement is bureaucracy, as the bureaucratic structure of organizations significantly affects its potential to engage its employees. In addition, the findings of Mosadeghrad and Ansarian (2014) concluded that the workload, accompanied by poor management and ineffective communication, are key challenges to employee engagement.

### **Drivers of Employee Engagement**

A challenge that may occur in building engagement is based on how employees feel about their work experience (James, McKechnie & Swanberg, 2011). Fundamentally, engagement is about whether or not an employee desires to put discretionary effort into the job. Shuck and Rose (2013) argued that engaged employees exhibit apparent behaviors such as belief in the organization, desire to improve their work, understanding of the business strategy, and collaborating with and assisting colleagues. In addition,

engaged employees demonstrate extra effort in their work, and continually enhancing their skill set and knowledge base.

James, McKechnie & Swanberg (2011) described varying levels of engagement that employees can experience at work. Employees tend to be engaged or actively disengaged. Engaged employees feel connected to their work and work with passion. Uninterested employees participate at work but are considered timeserving and do not have a passion for their work. Actively disengaged employees are unhappy at work and act out their unhappiness in the workplace through workplace deviant behaviors. There are several drivers of employee engagement. However, two key elements are particularly critical in closing the engagement gap: having a sense of value and involvement in the values of the organization's leadership (Shuck & Rose, 2013).

The strongest driver of employee engagement is having a sense of feeling valued and involved. Organizations need to understand the voice of the employee and conduct diligence to understand employees' needs, issues, and values (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Several key components contribute to feeling valued and involved: involvement in decision-making, ability to voice their ideas, opportunities to develop their jobs, and the extent to which the organization demonstrates care for its employees.

Shuck and Herd (2012) noted several generalizations that contribute to varying levels of employee engagement within organizations. First, as employees get older, their participation declines compared to when they were young. Similarly, there is an indirect correlation between participation and time of service. As the time of service increases, participation decreases. Minority and ethnic employees typically demonstrate higher

levels of engagement than their white counterparts do. Further, management usually shows greater participation than the employee population. Negative experiences at work, such as an accident or experiencing harassment, have an adverse impact on participation. Employees who have career development plans in place, as well as those who recently received a performance evaluation, have higher levels of participation. Additionally, an organization must have an engaged leadership team. According to Shuck and Herd (2012), ten critical leadership capabilities are essential to engaging employees, they are building trust, building esteem, communicating effectively, and building an enjoyable and fulfilling work environment. Other critical capabilities include being flexible in understanding individual needs, developing talent and coaching team members, as well as reinforcing high levels of performance. Three additional critical capabilities are engaging necessary knowledge, monitoring engagement issues, and identifying appropriate members for the team.

### **Significance of Employee Engagement**

Human resources consulting firms have used employee engagement as a marketing initiative related to organizational performance (Tilman, Smith, & Tilman, 2011). Employee engagement has captured the attention of corporate leaders because it can drive the bottom-line of an organization. In addition, engagement has been utilized as an interpretive tool for how well an organization will perform financially. Employee engagement has a long history because of the payoff it can add to an organization and the value it can add to the well-being of an employee. Researchers have differing opinions concerning the concepts of engagement (Nimon, Zigarmi, Houson, Witt, & Diehl, 2011).

At the onset of trying to understand what caused job satisfaction, researchers developed a theory called organizational commitment. Employee organizational commitment occurs when employees align with the organization's goals and values. These employees perform beyond management's expectations in an effort to become as one with the organization. In recent years, the term "employee engagement" replaced organizational commitment (Eversole, Venneberg, & Crowder, 2012). An organization lacking engaged employees or abundant with disengaged employees can experience adverse effects. Despite the increased awareness of how valuable employee engagement is to organizations, several organizational surveys revealed that the number of engaged employees is small. Singh and Loncar (2010) conducted a study that showed that 21% of the 90,000 employees surveyed worldwide were engaged while at work, and 38% were partly disengaged.

The attitude of today's workforce differs from that of the past in that today's employees seek meaningful outcomes. Employees of today find jobs that will provide them with a feeling of accomplishment, as well as a sense that compensation matches their services (Tilman, Smith, & Tilman, 2011). The term engagement, according to Doherty (2010) is about respect from all aspects of an organization; respect happens when both employer and employee are willing participants in the culture and are committed to the organization's objectives. When employees align with and embrace the organization's culture and goals, they are in the right job. When managers select people, who have the right skill set and understand the mission and goals of the organization, the payoffs for the organization are tangible.

Whittington and Galpin (2010) revealed that employees had a strong desire to engage in meaningful work. According to Watson (2012), a meaningful job for employees yielded higher employee engagement, increased production, and reduced turnover. In addition, Watson indicated that organizations have done a less than stellar job at providing employees with meaningful work experiences, with tools, or with inspiration. Of the 40,000 respondents in their study, only 17% were identified as being highly engaged. Watson (2012) revealed a correlation between employee engagement, employee performance, and reduced turnover. It is more likely for a highly-engaged employee to remain passionate and aligned with the organization's overall goals and mission.

The *Society for Human Resource Management* (2012), journal article indicated that company's one difficult task is developing an engaged workforce. Organizations are cognizant that when the job markets improve, they may see an increase in employee turnover. In addition, a Job Retention Poll conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (2012) showed that 76% of employed individuals are likely to seek another job for better conditions. The data represented employees who did not align with their organization, because they were performing work that was meaningless to them. Whittington and Galpin (2010) asserted that most organizations have disengaged employees; and the concern is for the number of disengaged employees to decrease, to have a culture of engaged employees.

Craig (2015), employers reported that strategies for retaining employees were of paramount importance, and such policies would result in a restructuring of the workplace.

Employees may experience meaningful work if they see their performance add to the success of the organization. Employees may also experience meaningful work when the job they perform is aligned with who they identify themselves to be. According to Doherty (2010), the number one indicator of a company's stability is the level of employee engagement; customer satisfaction and financial performance were named as the second and third indicators respectively. Welch (2011), further asserted that regardless of the size of a company, none would be satisfactory in the absence of enthusiastic employees who live the organization's mission. Leaders must appreciate the impact working conditions have on their employees. There can be a significant financial impact on an organization when employees in key roles leave the group (Pepe, 2010).

Employee engagement is critical because of its direct, positive relationship to increased profits. Franchises listed in the top 20% of employee retention are reported as having a 55% higher profit margin when compared to those franchisees listed in the lower 20% for employee retention (Doherty, 2010). Shuck and Wollard (2013) reported that the Ritz-Carlton leaders know that its employees are responsible for satisfied customers, which positively affects their financial success (Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

According to Doherty (2010), a culture of engaged employees is necessary for organizational innovation. A deficit of engaged employees may limit the number of new ideas and products a company can expect. The Gallup Organization (2013) indicated that their research on engagement began in the early 1990s. The Gallup Organization developed the Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement Index after completing several hundred focus group sessions and analyzing the results of one million employees and

80,000 supervisors surveyed. The Gallup Management Journal (2013) presented their global follow-up study on engagement. The Gallup study revealed that of the 1,000 adults sampled, 17% were actively disengaged, 54% were not engaged, and 29% were engaged.

Low productivity of disengaged employees results in an expense of \$300 billion a year for U.S. businesses. Engagement is the critical missing component organizations require to be successful. Employee engagement and commitment have become relevant constructs in organizational research due to its potential outcomes of positive employee behaviors, retention, and organizational performance. Engaged employees care about the success of the organization and are passionate about their jobs. Engaged employees live and believe in the organization's mission. According to Singh & Loncar (2010), there do their leaders in the organization value a positive relationship between employee engagement and employees feeling. As a result, organizations experience higher levels of financial performance and increased employee retention. Schuck and Wollard (2013) reported engaged employees spread feelings of engagement and team loyalty. An engaged employee also aids in the development of positive customer relationships, resulting in a better financial performance for the organization (Schuck & Wollard, 2013).

### **Employee Commitment**

Management's commitment to and awareness of employee engagement is evident through relevant organizational policies, practices, and procedures. Employee-engagement evaluations appraise managerial performance in many organizations. Consistency of administrative words, actions, and moral perceptions relate positively to

employee engagement (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Best industry practices identify results-based performance management as the practical, proven, and effective way to get organizations to focus on achievements (Adler, 2012). The management model of engagement is driven primarily by financial metrics; however, studies suggest that profit alone does not move employee engagement (Glavas, 2012).

Engagement is based on trust and commitment. Organizational leaders who concentrate on effective communication manage differently from leaders of organizations who do not place much emphasis on commitment (Adler, 2012). Company leaders who encourage effective communication continuously work to improve the effectiveness of the commitment of employees, and the leaders measure the impact of commitment on the critical business metrics. Also, Adler (2012) indicated that leaders can encourage or create informal and collegial work across the different levels in the organization and various generations of workers to be committed in a workplace.

### **Motivation Theory**

Yudhvir and Sunita (2012) defined motivation as the processes that accounts for an individual's intensity, direction, and persistence of efforts toward attaining a goal. In most cases, motivation stems from a need that must be fulfilled and this in turn leads to a specific behavior. Fulfillment of needs results in some type of reward, which can be either intrinsic or extrinsic. Motivation researchers are increasingly interested in how motivation and cognition influence one another (Aron, Lewandowski, Mashek, & Aron, 2013). Employee motivation is the key factor in influencing their performance in the workplace (Gallup, 2013)



Each organization and business need to be profitable and thus requires engaged employees. The current times are exceedingly competitive, and organizations, irrespective of size and innovation, are confronted with employee challenges (Josefy, Kuban, Ireland, & Hitt, 2015). To conquer these limitations, positive relationships should be encouraged between employees and their organizations. Employees of any organization are the most valuable, to have impact towards task accomplishment (Bledow, Schmitt, Frese, & Kühnel, 2011). White's (2011) survey indicated that employees are engaged for what they can give; the disengaged employees stay for what they can get. When employees are self-driven, motivation and passion to work override compensation models and performance management systems.

Maslow's Hierarchy (1970) described the five levels of needs: 1) Physiological - food and other subsistence's; 2) Safety - shelter and healthy work environment; 3) Belonging - desire for social contact; 4) Esteem - recognition and positive regards; and 5) Self-actualization - desire for achievement. Maslow's description of needs is classified into intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. Herzberg utilized Maslow's theory of motivation as a foundation for his Two-Factor Motivator/Hygiene Theory, the first one is Hygiene: company policy, administration, and work conditions and the second one is Motivators: advancements, recognition for achievements and growth.

In addition, Deci and Ryan (2008) proposed the self-determination theory, which builds on intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. Intrinsic motivators focus on internal thought process and perception about motivation, as opposed to extrinsic motivators, or external factors, and their role in understanding employee motivation. According to Yudhvir and

Sunita (2012), motivation in the workplace depends on the employee's intrinsic and extrinsic needs or goals, age, cultural background, and motivation to learn.

The concept of emotional contagion is the idea that that engaged workers who take advantage of opportunities to socially spread their enthusiasm and engagement to coworkers create whole teams that are highly engaged (Weiss & Rupp, 2011). Here, intrinsic motivation engages the employee by way of internal enjoyment of and interest in work activities. In contrast, extrinsic motivation exposes the craving for increased compensation or the avoidance of penance as a means for engagement. Sustained intrinsic motivation maximizes task efficiency and engagement to achieve organizational effectiveness (Kataria, Garg, & Rastogi, 2012).

According to Manzoor (2012), motivation is a thought process, "a need or desire that causes a man to act" (p. 2). Rouse asserted that motivation characterizes demonstration or procedure of rousing. Therefore, motivation is the execution or system of displaying an aim that causes a person to achieve. Kamalian, Yaghoubi and Moloudi (2010) depicted motivation as a power that fortifies conduct, gives the cause to do, and triggers the inclination to proceed with. This clarification indicates that with a particular end goal to accomplish guaranteed targets, people must be perceptible, and what's more, be clear about their destinations. In their perspective, it is an inner drive to fulfill an unsatisfied need and the will to accomplish. Motivation is a method that starts with a physiological or mental need that invigorates an execution planned at a target. It is the closing result of the interface between personality behavior and organizational

uniqueness. It symbolizes a mental technique that establishes the incitement, course, and determination of intentional activities that are target arranged (Manzoor, 2012).

Additionally, motivation is defined as an accrual of diverse routes supporting objectives and coordinated conduct (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015). Furthermore, motivation is an accumulation of different courses that control and express our goal to accomplish some specific desire (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015). Motivation supports communication and proceeds with behavior. The motivation of an individual conceals all the thought processes in which he chooses to work within a distinct methodology.

### **Employee Motivation**

Motivating employees can be tricky business. Leaders often do not understand the concept of motivation well enough to put it in practice. Creating employee motivation requires leadership in an organization to engage with the learning process of their employees. The performance evaluations of employees are based on performance appraisals, employee motivation, employee satisfaction, compensation, training, development, and job security. Employee motivation is the key factor to influencing the job performance of employees in the workplace (Gallup, 2013).

Successful management seeks new ways to continue motivating employees to increase their role in leadership with the organization. A motivated employee focuses on achieving success while obtaining goals and objectives. Rutherford (2010) stated that motivation influences the success of an organization. Because there are several different staff within the university system with different perceptions and lived experiences, the level of motivation may impact the administrative staff, custodial, staff, and IT staff

differently. The employees find creative ways to complete job assignments. Challenging employees to perform their best using motivation can be the greatest test for leadership (Chaudary, 2012).

Among the financial, economic, and human assets, the latter are most crucial and have the capacity to bless an organization with an aggressive edge when contrasted with others (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015). One function of a leader is to expand employee motivation in the organization (Manzoor, 2012). Leaders tend to have misconceptions about motivation. It is important to assess and understand such misconceptions in an effort to become better leaders.

Many leaders are not as good at identifying employee motivation as they think they are (Manzoor, 2012). The thought is that all motivation must be intrinsic. This is because a combination of factors motivates employees, as people spend approximately one - third of their lives at work, and leaders need to recognize that the work place is one of the most important aspects of an employee's identity (Gallup, 2013). Getting employees to try their best to work even in strenuous circumstances is one of the employer's most consistent difficulties. Nobody lives up to expectations free of charge, nor should they (Manzoor, 2012)

Cash is the essential actuation; no other motivation or motivational system comes near to it as for its powerful esteem (Bell & Martin, 2012). It has the matchless quality to charge, keep up, and rouse people towards higher performance. Bell and Martin (2012), described money as the most crucial consideration persuading the modern laborers to achieve more noteworthy gainfulness. Greater awareness and better understanding of

motivation will result in better management. The organization can continue to be profitable and keep the staff engaged in the workplace in academia.

### **Empowerment**

According to Lee, Kim, Son, & Kim, (2015), empowerment is permitting employees to participate in the development of decision-making within an organization. Empowering is giving authority and liberating employees to perform their duties efficiently. The primary objective that initiates empowerment is when control is given to employees in order to determine how jobs are completed. Employees want to feel appreciated and empowered on the job and to have a sense of ownership in their work Lee, et al., (2015). Empowering motivates employees. Positive feedback on performance adds value to an organization's reputation.

Empowerment benefits the organization (Schuck & Wollard, 2010). Employees feel a sense of special recognition and pride. A win-win relationship creates a positive situation for both parties. There are factors that contribute to enhancing employee motivation such as: 1) Fair pay and incentives; 2) Leadership and encouragement; 3) Trust and respect; 4) Joint decision-making and quality of supervision; 5) Adequate working relationships, recognition and appreciation; 6) Chances for growth and loyalty within the organization, 7) Identification and fulfillment of personal needs; and 8) Information availability and transparency (Yazdani, Yaghoubi & Giri, 2011). Empowering workers gives advantages to an organization; it can cause people to take pride in their work. Employees execute their finest curiosities and considerations with the feeling of having a place, energy, and enjoyment, in enabled organizations. In addition,

they work with an awareness of others' expectations and favor advantages of the organizations to their own (Manzoor, 2012).

Trust is the key to having excellent teamwork in the workplace. In the event that an organization needs to improve and be effective, trust assumes a critical part, to guarantee its presence and improve employee motivation (Manzoor, 2012). It can make an intrapersonal and interpersonal impact on the relationship with the organization (Manzoor, 2012). In addition, regardless of how important an organization may be, high productivity relies on the level of motivation and the effectiveness of the workforce, so staff training is essential for inspiring employees.

One way leaders can impel motivation is through transparency (Chaudary, 2012). Baldoni (2015), in his article *Leader to Leader*, indicated that empowerment and recognition persuade individuals to work. He explains that empowerment gives individuals the obligation and power to act, as it places people in control. In addition, Baldoni stated that it is important to humankind everyone is recognized for the work he or she has done. (Manzoor, 2012). Manzoor (2012), stated empowerment and recognition play a vital role in enhancing employee motivation towards organizational projects. Thus, the motivation of employees towards the accomplishment of tasks increases with motivation. (Manzoor, 2012).

### **Recognition**

Establishing a balance in the workplace is one of the main reasons to reward and recognize employees. Organizations that follow a model approach to creating this balance focus on the three main components of employee motivation, which include recognition,

empowerment, and organizational effectiveness (Ghosh, Satyawadi, Prasad Joshi & Shadman, 2013). Khan, Farooq, and Ullah (2010) conducted a study of the relationship between rewards and employee motivation in commercial banks of Pakistan. The study focused on four types of compensation and tested the recognition through Pearson correlation. The results showed recognition significantly correlates (0.65) with employee work motivation. This supports the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between job content, work motivation, and satisfaction. The second study showed that there is a significant ( $r=0.13$ ,  $p 0.05$ ) relationship between recognition and employee work motivation (Haider, Ahmad, Farooq, Parveen, 2014).

### **Psychosociological Theory**

Kataria, Garg, and Rastogi (2012) believed the psychological mechanism of engagement drives Organizational Citizenship Behavior and organizational effectiveness. In their study, they emphasized the connection between work engagement and employee engagement; here, engagement is the experience of the work itself interpreted by the employee. Shuck and Herd (2012) defined psychological theory as a new construct of a psychosocial safety climate that influences senior management's effect on working conditions and employee engagement. A longitudinal study of workers within education predicted changes in individual psychological distress and emotional exhaustion through the relationship with work pressure and emotional demands. Data revealed that individuals in academia experience mental health problems because of job demands. However, those who experienced a psychologically safe teamwork environment, "a

shared belief held by a work team” were free to engage in the interpersonal risk-taking behavior necessary for learning (Shuck & Herd, 2012).

Policies, practices, and procedures for the protection of employee psychosocial health are imperative. Positive psychosocial health allows for freedom from psychological and social risk or harm for productive engagement. Mental health moderates the positive relationship between employee engagement and job demands, such that motivational pathways are triggered (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Studies contribute notions of employee engagement as a significant predecessor to organizational effectiveness and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Kataria, Garg, & Rastogi, 2012). Bakker, Albrecht, and Leiter (2011) emphasized the organizations’ need for employees who psychologically connect to their work, and who are able to invest themselves fully in their roles, who are proactive and committed to high quality performance standards.

### **Social Exchange Theory**

The suggestion for the basic tenet of SET is that relationships evolve over time into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments as long as the parties abide by certain “rules” of change. Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli (2012) elaborated this tenet, saying, “Advantageous and fair social exchanges lead to healthy relationships that produce effective work behaviors and positive employee attitudes” (p. 241). They believed that social exchange relationships involved a series of interactions that generate unspecified obligations. Individuals feel obliged to respond in kind and repay the organization when they receive economic and socio-emotional resources from their organization.



Rich, Lepine and Crawford (2010) stated that, “One way for individuals to repay their organization is through their level of engagement; employees will choose to engage themselves to varying degrees in response to the resources they receive from their organization” (p. 603). Employees tend to exchange their engagement for resources and benefits provided by their employer (Pedrycz, Russo & Succi, 2011). Therefore, when employees are autonomous, receive support, and have opportunities for development, they are likely to reciprocate by showing higher levels of engagement. Pedrycz et al., (2011) tested the model of the antecedents and consequences of job and organization commitment based on existing models of engagement. In addition, he found that perceived organizational support (POS) predicts both job and organization participation.

Job characteristics predict job commitment and procedural justice predicts team participation. Employees seem to reciprocate with greater levels of job and organization involvement because of the obligation created by the caring and concern associated with perceived organizational support. Employee engagement can drive the bottom-line of the university system and its well-being. Therefore, I believe the leaders are interested in the subject of engagement.

Skarzauskiene’s (2010) research provided a rational explanation for employee engagement based on social exchange theory, and this was in accordance with many other studies. In addition, Skarzauskiene (2010) concluded that a lack of reciprocity, or imbalanced social exchange processes, is predictive of burnout. Skarzauskiene (2010) further found that imbalanced social exchange, such as organizations expecting more from their employees and providing little in return other than a job or employability,

resulted in increasing employee cynicism and mistrust. In addition, social exchange positively relates to employee's feelings of perceived organizational support and affective commitment, and contextual performance behaviors. Universities should be working constantly to develop and create positive engagement in order to gain the benefits for having a positive, engaged workplace.

Skarzauskiene (2010) was able to interpret results based on SET, and found that, "employees who perceived that the organization cares about their well-being through adequate resource allocation, are more likely to be motivated and engaged" (p. 582). This theoretical position argues that the dominant force in interpersonal relationships is the satisfaction of both people's self-interest (Skarzauskiene, 2010). Theorists in Social Exchange posit that self-interest is not necessarily a bad thing and that it can enhance relationships. In the social exchange approach, interpersonal exchange is analogous to economic exchange, where people are satisfied when they receive a fair return on their expenditures (Erickson, Weber & Segovia, 2011).

Cognitive Dissonance Theory is entirely opposite to Communication Accommodation Theory and Social Exchange Theory. According to Cognitive Dissonance Theory, people who follow this communication strategy tend to be conservative. They keep their opinions strictly into their favorite perspective, and try to avoid others' opinions. Communication Accommodation Theory and Social Exchange Theory support people in adjusting their communication styles in order to find common voice in communication (Erickson et al., 2011).

However, there is a difference between Communication Accommodation Theory and Social Exchange Theory. During a conversation, people will try to accommodate or adjust their style of speaking to others within the context of Communication Accommodation Theory, especially when they are powerless individuals and try to find social approval. On the other hand, based on Social Exchange Theory, people communicate and exchange their self-interest so that they are both satisfied with the communication (Erickson et al., 2011).

### **Leadership and Employee Engagement**

The role of the leader is vital for making worker engagement practices; but, knowledge reveals very little regarding leadership and its impact (Adler, 2012). Leadership commitment and awareness of worker engagement vary across organizations. The practical ideas of effective leadership establish its effects on worker structure citizenship behavior, the continuance of structure commitment, job satisfaction, job involvement, positive affectivity, low burnout, vigor, optimism, vitality, personal initiative, and learning orientation (Newman & Harrison, 2008). Adler (2012) counseled the following leadership practices: The leaders set organization, division, department goals; supervisors and workers set objectives and discuss behaviors, and expectations; supervisors and workers hold in progress performance discussions.

The literature offered possible leadership objectives joined to the organization's goals, with substantive performance measures that postulate results and behaviors, competencies, and strategic communication plans (Newman & Harrison, 2008). Leaders who invest in their employees' well-being through adequate resource allocation square

measure a lot of probably to boost motivation and engagement. Substantial meta-analysis joined management vogue to commitment. The empirical proof showed a powerful predictor of involvement with communication practices. Leadership might offset the impact of worker engagement and structure climate conditions. Distal longitudinal implications for leadership via management support and commitment square measure necessary for worker engagement. The adoption of acceptable values and philosophies with adequate out there resources for geographic point changes helps to modify the mixing of worker engagement activities into conventional management systems (Glavas, & Godwin, 2013).

Schuck and Herd (2012) noted that poor leadership is often from worker disengagement. Consistent with Walumbwa, Hartnell, and Oke (2010), a 3rd of workers rate their supervisors as truthful or poor. Workers hold their organizations within the same think of their management. Further, workers can keep longer and contribute a lot to organizations wherever they need sensible relationships and open dialogue with their immediate supervisors. Leadership may be a method of actions to realize goals and to boost the organization. Dollard and Bakker (2010), states that leaders outline culture by their efforts. Transformational leaders demonstrate a capability to inspire workers towards the accomplishment of structure goals.

Transformational leaders produce a foundation of integrity, trust, and community among organizations and instill pride, vision, and high expectations throughout the organization (Pepe, 2010). Consistent with Pepe (2010), future structure leaders would force a broader set of dynamic skills. Further, Kouzes and Posner (2011) delineate five

practices of effective leadership: (1) Model the approach (2) Inspire a shared vision (3) Challenge the method (4) modify others to act, and 5) Encourage the guts. Kouzes and Posner instructed that leaders who master these five practices may accomplish extraordinary things in their organizations. A leader's talent in exhibiting leadership traits helps to achieve followership. Further, these traits inspire confidence in the leader's leadership skills. Not demonstrating these traits decreases a leader's ability to influence and effectively lead in organizations.

Crawford, LePine and Rich (2010), evaluated six case studies to work out the correlation between leadership vogue, worker perception, and therefore the implementation of structure amendment. The primary research, Facilitating structure Change: A take a look at of Leadership ways instructed that however, leadership frames any structure amendment is essential too; however, the message from the individuals throughout the organization understand the word. The second study, associate degree investigation into the amount and Impact of Merger Activity Amongst Hospitals within the UK's National Health Service, incontestable a transparent link between the actual winning outcomes of a merger and therefore the active involvement of key stakeholders.

The third study, The Impact of Corporatization and National Competition Policy by Crawford et al., (2010) showed that instructional leadership resulted in the more significant participation of workers within the amendment method, and enhanced communication from structure leaders to workers.

The fourth study, Leadership vogue and Post-Merger Satisfaction, proved incontestable that workers were much happy once management engaged them throughout

the amendment method and uncontested less powerful. The study additionally determined that transformational leadership result in the highest worker satisfaction, whereas great administration resulted in the lowest worker satisfaction scores. The fifth study, bestowed within the article the event of life to assess structure amendment (James, McKechnie and Swanberg, 2011), finished that workers responded absolutely to structure amendment efforts once open communications, established trust, and proactive preparation for the amendment were evident within the amendment method.

A sixth study, according to James, McKenzie, and Swanberg (2011), stated that no matter the sort of amendment poignant the organization, the favored leadership strategies for amendment implementation did not vary. Conclusions by James et al., (2011) enclosed four themes that leaders ought to take into account before implementing structure amendment. First, leaders should not underestimate the impact of workers on structure amendment outcomes. Second, worker resistance is natural in amendment implementation. However, characteristic the optimum leadership fashion is critical to beat worker resistance. Third, the transformational leadership vogue establishes success in making open communication and trust, furthermore as garnering worker participation. As a result, transformational leadership has a bonus over charismatic leadership.

### **Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership refers to the leader transformation process in creating sustainable change in the attitude and behavior of employees for moral elevation and organization performance. The internal standard of transformational leadership encourages adaptation of changes in employees in motivation and a sense of purpose.

Soieb, Othman, and D'Silva, (2013) stated that transformational leadership style enhances organizational commitment, which improves job performance. Sharma Mohapatra and Rai (2013) indicated that motivation and job satisfaction advances interpersonal relationships and communication.

Markos and Sridevi (2010) identified a healthy work environment as crucial to the improvement of job performance. An employee's trust is positively consistent with managerial words and actions, which relate positively to employee engagement. The employees' perception of leadership style determines positive and negative associations for engagement. DasGupta, Suar, and Singh (2014) stated that a combination of significant problem solving and decision-making skills may be able to create compelling leadership. Gaining specific mediating factors in active listening, communication, conflict management, and moral discipline distinguishes the transformational leader, and thus, positive employee engagement outcome (Soieb, Othman & D'Silva, 2013).

### **Communication Theories**

Aertsen, Jaspert and Van Gorp (2013) stated that theories help us make sense of the world around us. Some theories are "grand" (think ideologies) while others are narrow (think particular economic or scientific theories such as the theory of relativity). However, regardless of their scope, all ideas shape how we make judgments about reality, relationships, circumstances, and decisions in our lives. Erickson, Weber and Segovia (2011) explained the cognitive dissonance theory as the experience of conflict (or incompatible beliefs and actions) is unpleasant, and people are highly motivated to avoid it. In their efforts to avoid feelings of conflict, people will avoid hearing views that

oppose their own, change their beliefs to match their actions, and seek reassurance after making a difficult decision (Erickson, Weber & Segovia, 2011).

Erickson, Weber and Segovia (2011) explained the nature of communication accommodation theory, which examines the underlying motivations and consequences of what happens when two speakers shift their communication styles. Communication accommodation theorists argue that during conversation, people will try to accommodate or adjust their style of speaking to others in one of two ways: Divergence and Convergence. The styles of divergence groups with high ethnic or racial pride often use change to highlight group identity. Convergence occurs when there is a high need for social approval, frequently from powerless individuals (Erickson, Weber & Segovia, 2011).

The two basic types of communication are nonverbal and verbal. Nonverbal communication includes behavioral communication such as eye contact, facial expression, or body language. Verbal communication is any spoken communication such as conversation, speech, or sound. When used correctly, each can be an effective method of successful communication (Keyton, Caputo, Ford, Fu, Leibowitz, Liu & Wu, 2013). Direct eye contact lets a speaker know that one is listening and receiving his or her message. It also lends credibility to the message the speaker is trying to convey to the listener. Facial expressions as nonverbal communication also tells a lot about what people are thinking and feeling.

Smiling with wide eyes and an interested expression lets the speaker know the listener is engaged in the conversation. A smile may give a new acquaintance a sense of



affirmation and let that person know the listener is interested in learning more. A smile gives other people a warm, welcome feeling. Nonverbal communication can sometimes provide people with an optimistic and open attitude toward those they are communicating. Verbal communication is the use of words to construct sentences. Moreover, it is the most powerful and widely used form of communication. Effective communicators use vocal variations and sounds. Vocal variations include tone, inflection, and pitch. Listeners need this variation to maintain their interest in what the speaker is saying. Studies have shown that most people immediately retain about 50% of what they hear. After a few days, what people retain drops to 25%. A short, concise message has a greater chance of sticking with the people in an audience (Sriram, 2014).

Listening is a key component of effective communication. Most communication involves more than one participant. Audiences must hear the message someone is trying to convey in order to communicate successfully and give adequate feedback. To ensure that a message has been received, listeners should repeat back what they have heard the person say (Sriram, 2014). An open mind is essential when communicating an idea, feeling, or message. Speakers must understand that not every subject is black and white. A person can be a successful communicator by finding the gray area. A listener should remove all distractions in order to focus on the message sent (Sriram, 2014).

### **Communication Practice**

According to the National Communication Association, communication is the process of conveying information, ideas, or feelings (De Vries, Bakker-Pieper & Oostenveld, 2010). Although there are just two types of communication, there are many

unsuccessful ways to execute these types of communication. Simple miscommunication can lead to the loss of a message or idea. It can also contribute to conflict. The discipline of communication focuses on how people use messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels, and media. Communication promotes the effective and ethical practice of the human process (De Vries et al., 2010). Furthermore, communication is a diverse area that includes inquiry by social scientists, humanists, and critical and cultural studies scholars. A body of scholarship, the theory of all forms of human communication, is in the textbooks, electronic publications, and academic journals.

Researchers report the results of studies that are the basis for an ever-expanding understanding of how we all communicate (De Vries et al., 2010). Additionally, if we communicate effectively, it can help us better understand a person or situation and enable us to resolve differences. In addition, it will build trust, respect, and create environments where creative ideas, problem solving, affection, and caring can flourish. As simple as communication seems, much of what we try to communicate to others and what others try to convey to us can be misunderstood, which can cause conflict and frustration in personal and professional relationships. Thus, effective communication can improve relationships at home, work, and in social situations by deepening our connections to others and improving teamwork, decision-making, and problem solving. Effective communication enables you to communicate even negative or difficult messages without creating conflict or destroying trust. Effective communication combines a set of skills

including nonverbal communication, attentive listening, and the ability to manage stress (De Vries et al., 2010).

### **Impact of Communication on Leadership and Strategic Planning**

The importance of effective communication for leaders is shown daily in all organizations. Thus, effective leadership in any business requires knowing how to communicate with all elements of the organization, including employees, other supervisors, customers, and investors. Each group may require a different communication style and leadership style. Leaders must be able to adapt based on the group they are communicating with at the time. Effective communication skills are an important aspect of any leader's portfolio of skills and experience (De Vries, Bakker-Pieper & Oostenveld, 2010). Furthermore, a good leader can adapt his or her communication style depending on the audience. When speaking to employees, the leader may need to have a much more directive style than when he or she is delivering a presentation to the community or speaking to customers.

Leaders should identify the audience and its characteristics and interests, and then adjust their communication style based on what the audience needs and what will meet the goals of the communication. Throughout the course of a day, the leader may have to switch to an authoritative style with employees and to an inspiring style with stockholders (Singh, 2012). For strategic planning, a leader's communication strategy varies depending on a team's purpose, strategy, and posture. Contact with groups possessing dominant market positions will likely be more formal, systematic, and direct, in line with the discipline required to maintain that top position. Conversely, teams

playing niches or creating completely new things will be better served by a more informal, adaptive and reflective approach (De Vries et al., 2010).

### **Communication as it Enhances Human Resources**

Keyton, Caputo, Ford, Fu, Leibowitz, Liu & Wu (2013), stated human resources provides a way for employees to be social in the context of their everyday work; it paves the way for enhanced collaboration and communication throughout the enterprise. This in turn encourages productivity, passion, and commitment. Apparently, communication enhances employee motivation and dedication to the company. In addition, communication fosters teamwork (Keyton, Caputo, Ford, Fu, Leibowitz, Liu & Wu, 2013). Then communication among staff must be encouraged to ensure that all energies focus on that goal. Thus, communication can inspire productive staff input (Keyton, Caputo, Ford, Fu, Leibowitz, Liu & Wu, 2013).

Various forms of communication from the human resources department are essential for workplace structure. Human resources communications include guidelines, policies, notices and procedures that help us manage our workforce. Communication between human resources and the employee base is necessary to sustain employee satisfaction and morale. When little or no interaction between human resources and the workforce exists, productivity and performance may decline because employees feel they are unappreciated and undervalued (Keyton et al., 2013). In addition, most relationships are based on organizational communication.

### **Communication as a Tool to Enhance Engagement**

Communication helps connect people, when they can share and understand each other more through effective communicating. Therefore, communication is essential to building relationships between staff members and between levels of employees, both on professional and social levels (Martins A., Donald, & Martins I., 2013). An atmosphere of open communication makes it safe for employees to express their ideas; as a result, managers will have the benefit of staff's combined experience in coming up with innovative solutions. Communication prevents employees from feeling isolated, builds teamwork, and creates a more collegial atmosphere in the office. When relationships are strong, employees are better able to trust one another and they work together more effectively. As a result, they can engage and contribute more to the company's activities and success (Karanges, Johnston, Beatson & Lings, 2015).

Moreover, in an organization, confusion and ambiguity can create negative feelings and a tense atmosphere. By making roles and responsibilities clear to everyone on staff, leaders can give their employees the information they need to get their jobs done. Informing the staff is particularly important when employees come from different backgrounds. Communication reduces misunderstandings and cuts the costs associated with mistakes (Martins et al., 2013). Finally, communication can help employees collaborate effectively, which will make for a more productive team overall. When an organization has multiple departments, who are working on different facets of the same project, communication can streamline the process and improve the result. When members of the staff talk openly to each other, they can communicate potential issues,

requirements, and feedback that can create better results. Communication can ensure that everyone is on the same page and can prevent problems down the road (Martins et al., 2013).

### **Organizational Climate**

Senior management plays a significant role in setting the tone for the organizational climate. Organizational climate refers to a collective understanding of corporate policies, practices, and procedures (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Measurement tools help to determine employees' perceptions of management's commitment and performance regarding organizational policy, procedures, and practice. Organizations that provide particular job resources such as work tools, performance feedback, supervisory coaching, and autonomy, enhance engagement (Bakker, 2011). Official policies, practices, and procedures measure components of most importance to the organization. The integrative review of Kataria, Garg, and Rastogi (2012) suggested the development of human resource practices and assessments to achieve value-based organizational behavior and effectiveness. Organizational commitment has been determined to be a central parameter for assessing employee engagement (Soieb, Othman, & D'Silva, 2013).

Messarra (2014) defined organizational climate as "a set of measurable properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by people who live and work in this environment and assumed to influence their motivation and behavior" (p.1).

Organizational climate refers to members' perceptions of organizational features like decision-making, leadership, and norms about work (Messarra, 2014).

In addition, numerous aspects of work, such as leadership, structure, rewards, and communication, characterize the organizational context in which people work. Climate refers to perceptions of organizational practices reported by people who work there. Common features of climate include communication (as describable, say, by openness), conflict (constructive or dysfunctional), leadership (as it involves support or focus) and reward emphasis (i.e., whether an organization is characterized by positive versus negative feedback, or reward- or punishment-orientation). When studied together, they said that organizational features are highly interrelated (e.g., leadership and rewards). Climate characterizes practices at several levels in organizations (e.g., work unit climate and organizational climate). However, studies of climate vary in the activities they focus upon, such as for example, climates for safety or climates for service. Therefore, climate is essentially a description of the work setting by those directly involved with it (Messarra, 2014).

Randhawa and Kaur (2014) stated that the relationship of climate to employee well-being (e.g., satisfaction, job stress) has been widely studied. Since climate measures subsume the major organizational characteristics workers experience, virtually any study of employee perceptions of their work may be considered a climate study. Researchers Randhawa and Kaur (2014) conducted a study, which positively link climate features, particularly leadership, communication openness, participative management, and conflict resolution with employee satisfaction and inversely with stress levels. Stressful organizational climates are characterized by limited participation in decisions, use of punishment and negative feedback rather than rewards and positive feedback, conflict

avoidance or confrontation rather than problem solving, and non-supportive group and leader relations (Randhawa & Kaur, 2014).

Socially supportive climates benefit employee mental health, with lower rates of anxiety and depression in supportive settings. When collective climates exist where members who interact with each other share common perceptions of the organizations, researchers observed that shared perceptions of undesirable organizational features link with low morale and instances of psychogenic illness (Randhawa & Kaur, 2014). When climate research adopts a specific focus, as in the study of climate for safety in an organization, evidence is provided that lack of openness in communication regarding safety issues, few rewards for reporting occupational hazards, and other negative climate features increase the incidence of work-related accidents and injury (Randhawa & Kaur, 2014). Since climates exist at many levels in organizations and can encompass a variety of practices, an assessment of employee risk factors need to systematically taken into account the relationships and activities (e.g., safety, communication or rewards) in which employees are involved. Climate-based risk factors can differ from one part of the organization to another (Scotti & Harmon, 2014).

#### Types of Organizational Climate

Scotti and Harmon (2014), stated there are several types of climates in organizations that indicates the culture of the company. In one approach, the different types of organizational climates described groups as people-oriented, rule-oriented, innovation-oriented, and goal-oriented. In this study, organizational climate related to human resources and engagement.



### **Organizational climate as it relates to human resources**

Organizational success was largely dependent on the quality and effort of the people that work for the organization. Flexible, productive, and knowledgeable people within an organization are a source of sustainable competitive advantage for companies (Elçi & Alpkın, 2010). Top managers increasingly acknowledge that the people within the organization make a difference by creating value for the organization. Human resource management concerns the management of people within organizations. Regardless of the type of organization, all firms need to manage their workforces using appropriate policies and practices (Elçi & Alpkın, 2010). Policies and practices need to be coordinated with each other, as well as with the needs of the organization. The latter, known as strategic human resource management, is based on the recognition that organizations can be more effective if they manage their human resources in such a way that they deliver the right number of people with the appropriate behaviors (Elçi & Alpkın, 2010). In addition, Elçi and Alpkın (2010) suggested that the necessary competencies and the right levels of motivation to the organization's human resource management involve the use of several policies and practices.

Human resources practices are in three specific groups: 1) Entry; 2) Performance; and 3) Exit. Entry practices include the recruitment and selection of new employees. Performance practices include managing and developing employee performance, and exit practices include managing the exit of employees. Top and line management play a central role in human resource management. Top management uses human resource management as an integrated part of their business strategy. Line management, on the

other hand, is responsible for managing employment relations. Human resource professionals have an important advisory role helping to develop and distribute human resource policies and practices. Line managers, however, recruit new employees, do the performance appraisal, and are responsible for the development of the core employees, making them the actual practitioners of human resource management (Elçi & Alpkın, 2010).

Ideally, the Human Resources strategy that top management has in mind transfers exactly as intended to the lower employee levels; however, this is often not the case. Elçi and Alpkın (2010) developed a model to represent the Human Resources practices implementation process by making a distinction between intended Human Resources practices, actual Human Resources practices, and perceived Human Resources practices. The intended HR practices are the outcomes of the HR strategy developed by top management and intend to achieve employee reactions that are necessary for organizational success. Middle management implements the intended HR practices. Often, the intended practices are implemented in a different way than intended by top management or not implemented at all. The practices implemented by middle management are the actual human resource practices. Employees perceive and interpret the actual human resource practices, which results in perceived HR practices. Thus, top management is responsible for establishing the human resource strategy of the organization, while middle management interprets and distributes the human resource strategy among the organizational members using several HR practices (Elçi & Alpkın, 2010).

### **Organizational climate as it relates to engagement**

Researchers Zhang, Liu, Wang, and Shen (2011) have conducted a study and found the relationship between organizational climate and organizational performance. A large group of studies only considers specific aspects of organizational climate and outcomes related to these aspects. For example, the relation between service climate and customer satisfaction, the relationship between safety climate and safety outcomes, the relationship between risk-taking climate and knowledge creation in the unit, and the relation between innovation climate and creativity (Mahal, 2010). For example, Zhang, Liu, Wang, and Shen (2011) studied the relation between climates for initiative and psychological safety and company performance at 47 mid-sized Chinese banks. Their results showed that climates for initiative and psychological safety positively related to two measures of firm performance: return on assets and firm goal achievement. Nevertheless, studies on the relationship between global climate (a broad range of climate aspects) and global performance outcomes are limited.

Mahal (2010) indicated that employee effect mediation between organizational climate and company performance are based on the framework of organizational climate with the relationship between leadership practices and work behaviors. Although the study highlights employee affects as a mediator between organizational climate and organizational performance, it does not explain why employee effect mediation the relationship between organizational climate and organizational performance. Social Exchange Theory explains the relationship between organizational climate and organizational performance. The theory assumes that social exchanges involve several

actions that create obligations, and that relationships evolve into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments (Mahal, 2010). Employers can reward employees in two different ways, by using economic or socio-emotional resources.

According to Mahal (2010), the financial rewards are tangible and immediate, whereas the socio-economic reward is intangible that addresses the social needs of the employees. By employing these resources, employers can create strong relationships with their employees, as employees tend to repay these rewards with better work behavior and positive attitudes. Organizational climate is part of these socio-emotional and economic resources. Therefore, employees will have a high level of commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction when employers can establish an organizational climate that is positive. Employee engagement, which is an umbrella term for aspects of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job involvement, is affected positively or negatively by organizational climate (Van De Voorde, Van Veldhoven, & Paauwe, 2010).

In setting the tone of the organizational climate, senior management plays a significant role. Organizational climate refers to a collective understanding of organizational policies, practices, and procedures (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). Measurement tools help to determine employees' perceptions of management's commitment and performance regarding organizational policy, procedures, and practice. Here, results are used to gauge employee engagement, availability of resources to the employee, the effectiveness of human resource programs, training, compensation, and benefits (Adler, 2012). Organizations that provide job specific work tools; performance feedback, supervisory coaching, and autonomy will enhance engagement (Bakker, 2011).

Official policies, practices, and procedures measure components of most importance to the organization. The integrative review by Kataria, Garg, and Rastogi (2012) suggested the development of an architectural Human Resource practice and assessment to achieve value-based organizational behavior and effectiveness work. Organizational commitment has been determined to be a central parameter for assessing employee engagement (Soieb, Othman, & D'Silva, 2013).

### **Organizational Climate Theories**

Organizational climate theories stem from the research concerning organizations. They have evolved in the pursuit of practical organizational management. Several principles combine to provide an outline for the development of a productive organizational climate. The major themes in the literature suggest that supporting teamwork, developing an enabling culture, and developing a shared vision create an effective organizational climate. The first cornerstone of inspiring a positive organizational climate is teamwork. The organization should provide the proper context for facilitating group activities as well as the creation and accumulation of knowledge at the individual level, and there should be support for construction of a self-organizing team (Messarra, 2014). The second key to developing a positive organizational climate is constructing an enabling work environment. Efficient knowledge creation depends on an enabling context, which is a shared space that fosters emerging relationships (Boh & Wong, 2013).

Boh and Wong (2013) stated that since knowledge enabling emphasizes human relationships and excellent communication, a positive impact could happen on the quality

of new insights. New knowledge creates; employee satisfaction; corporate image; and relations with customers, suppliers, and other strategic partners happen. Therefore, communication encourages participants to experiment with the way people work together. The third element of developing an excellent organizational climate entails developing a vision (Boh & Wong, 2013). Boh and Wong (2013) stated, “When there is a genuine vision, people excel and learn because they want to.” To do this, they suggested using mental models with systems thinking, which means seeing the relationships between cause and effect in large scale as well as small-scale, to develop a shared vision for the organization. Based on this, any organization requires shared goals, values, and norms. Finally, Boh and Wong (2013) recommend encouraging the development of personal visions to augment and improve the group vision (Boh, & Wong, 2013).

### **Organizational Effectiveness**

Organizational effectiveness is a vital element for speeding up the process of organizational development. Organizational effectiveness uses available resources to fulfill goals without having to put unwanted strain on employees (Malik, Ghafoor & Naseer, 2011). The maximum combined utility of an organization is needed.

Organizational effectiveness is the process by which employees become motivated and attain its objectives. There are several models of organizational effectiveness. The legitimacy model assesses background data from the external environment.

The consistency model uses statements to evaluate criteria completed by different constituencies. The systems resource model addresses a bargaining position that the organization uses (Malik et al., 2011). These models formed the Maslach Burnout

Inventory (Schaufeli, & Taris, 2014) that increased employee motivation and strengthened the relationship between organizational effectiveness with employee motivation. Turkyilmaz, Akman, Ozkan, & Pastuszak, (2011) indicated that authoritative viability is the idea of how viable an organization is in fulfilling its intended outcomes. Authoritative viability assumes a critical part in quickening organizational advancement.

Employee satisfaction and motivation for engagement depend upon the feelings of the employee about the organization and its approaches toward the service. Therefore, organizational effectiveness locates targets and attains them proficiently in spirited and energetic surroundings. A motivated employee becomes a productive employee in an organization that contributes to efficiency and effectiveness of profits for the organization. Thus, there is a definite relationship between employee motivation and organizational effectiveness.

### **Gap in the Literature**

While there is existing literature about employee engagement, there are limited resources about academic. The specific gap in literature exists concerning employee engagement in the Georgia university system from the viewpoint of staff. Additional research is needed on academia in the United States for long-term sustainability. Shuck, Ghosh and Nimon (2013) explained the need for future research to understand how employee engagement occurs in the constructs of job satisfaction and job commitment specific to the academic environment. Researcher Anitha (2014) concluded there is the need to identify the key determinants of employee engagement in a healthy working atmosphere that reflects on the social impact created by the organization.

Looking at the relation between job satisfaction and the sustainability of the organization through this lens could be valuable. Many organizational leaders believe that employee engagement is a dominant source of competitive advantage and are drawn to its reported ability to solve challenging organizational problems such as increasing workplace performance, productivity, and avoiding widespread economic decline. As organizational leaders embrace employee engagement, they are increasingly turning toward Human Resources Development (HRD) cultures. Further, Shuck, et al., (2011) indicated that models provide a theorized structure for developing engagement but fall short of exploring how workers might react to such structures. This gap overlooks an important facet of the engagement. Unfortunately, the lack of research focused on employees' experience of engagement as well as documented declining levels of engagement come at a time organization are searching for strategies to engage their workforce.

#### Summary and Transition

The literature review included a description of the information available on the topic of employee engagement. The literature helped reveal gaps in the available information on the subject. The literature reviewed was on constructs related to employee engagement, such as commitment and trust. The researcher also discussed transformational leadership and communication practice. Anitha (2014) indicated the gap in the literature is apparent in the lack of employee views of engagement. Through the discussion of the historical and current literature, the researcher provided the foundation for this phenomenological study. A review of the literature on employee engagement and



related concepts such as trust and the theory of transformational leadership revealed gaps and demonstrated the need for future research.

Understanding the lived experiences of employees may expand the body of knowledge necessary to build strategies for improving employee commitment within Georgia universities. The researcher provided the conceptual framework for this research. This literature allowed for an investigation of support for the theoretical framework of employee engagement from the perspective of the employee. The researcher also reviewed the relationships between employee engagement and other constructs. Chapter 2 also included a discussion of organizational effectiveness and organizational climate.

Employee engagement interventions are most likely to succeed if they are in corporate culture. In that, interdependence between leadership and employee emphasis is the responsibility of all participants in the organization in engagement practices. Engagement and empowerment have a key impact in upgrading employees' motivation towards organizational tasks. By recognizing the employees for the work they do and giving them opportunities in decision-making, employees feel greater fulfillment in their employment, are more engaged, and improve their organization.

In organizations, communication is vital. There are many different ways to communicate, through reading, writing, speaking, listening, visual means, technology, the media, and numeracy. In fact, communication practices include many ways of ensuring that the employee's voice is heard by different people, in different languages, at different levels, in different contexts and at different times. Each factor is important, and various means have relatively different effectiveness and contexts (Blume, Baldwin, & Ryan,

2013). In Chapter 3, the researcher described the methodology along with the research design, analytical approach, and research strategies that identified the specific problems of the study. Additionally, there was a description of the population, sampling procedures, recruitment procedures, data collection, and threats to validity. The chapter concluded with ethical procedures.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

Crabtree (2013) stated 63% of employees are disengaged at work in business organizations in the United States for the last 5 years (Crabtree, 2013). Employees who work in the university system in Georgia struggle to remain engaged in their work, resulting in high turnover and employee disengagement in the workplace. Despite this problem, there has been little research regarding employee engagement in academia. As such, the purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Georgia university system employees regarding employee engagement.

In this chapter, the researcher will describe the approach used to address the research questions listed. The research design, the rationale, and the role of the researcher will be outlined. Also, the population and sampling strategies further described in the survey will be discussed. The instrumentation design, along with arguments for instrument validity and reliability, will be presented. The data collection process and subsequent data analysis will be discussed in detail. Additionally, aspects of trustworthiness and ethical procedures will be explained, and a summary of topics will be included at the end of this chapter.

### **Setting**

The study was conducted in a selected higher education institution in the state of Georgia. The institution was a four-year research university with a mission to recruit a diverse population of faculty, students, and staff. The academic department within the University had 224 staff employees eligible to participate in the study. The university

provides integrated educational programs and is considered an outstanding institution in the Southeast. The university is a member of the University System of Georgia and is under the supervision of the Board of Regents. The governing board for the university handles the standards set by the Board of Regents based on their policies on education.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The purpose of this phenomenological research was to report the lived experiences regarding employee engagement from the perspective of staff employees. For this study, the research questions to be explored were:

*RQ1:* What are the lived experiences of Georgia university system employees regarding employee engagement?

*RQ2:* What factors do staff employees identify as the greatest influence on employee engagement?

Choosing a qualitative methodology required using NVivo 11 software that allowed me to use open coding to identify themes and patterns of the lived experiences of the staff.

There are three main research methods, one is quantitative, the second is qualitative, and the last one is mixed methods, and each software require different decision-making processes and affect the direction of investigation (Christensen & Johnson, 2014). Qualitative and quantitative research approaches have similarities; however, they also differ. Yin (2015) indicated researchers use qualitative research to interview, observe in-depth analyses, rely on the lived experiences of participants, analyze, and describe words for themes by examining relationships among variables participants. The phenomenological research method was appropriate for this study.

In phenomenology, the development of a research question should communicate the researcher's aim to understand the meaning of the phenomenon and experiences of lived interest (Englander, 2012). A phenomenological design helps to obtain information and perceptions through inductive and qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions, and participant observation. In addition, Marshall and Rossman (2014) asserted that the scope of the phenomenological design is to understand the meaning of human life experience

Englander (2012) asserted that phenomenological is good for collecting data due to interest in the meaning of a phenomenon as described by research subjects (Englander, 2012). This level of research differs substantially from ethnographic research for two reasons; the first focuses on individuals, claiming subjectivity as a source of knowledge, and the second focuses on group phenomena. Also, the depth of a phenomenological inquiry allows the researcher to capture direct quotes that are unrehearsed personal perspectives and experiences critical to understanding a phenomenon (Englander, 2012).

Edmund Husserl, credited with the discovery of phenomenology, asserted that this qualitative form of analysis sets aside simple messages and allows the researcher to deal with reality through lived experiences directly as they appear (Englander, 2012). Husserl also indicated the goal of phenomenology is to produce an account of occurrences through a person's everyday experience while attempting to understand and explain the phenomenon through the eyes of individuals. This qualitative study using a phenomenological approach examined the lived experiences of 20 employees regarding employee engagement.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The interviewer is the primary instrument in a qualitative study. As people's experiential life is not observable by others, interviews serve to engage subjects directly in a conversation to get a first-person account of their social reality (Schultze & Avital, 2011). The role of the researcher is not to build consensus but to understand the participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This study involved identifying shared experiences regarding employee engagement. The researcher was actively engaged in the data collection process.

This study received approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) #09-18-17-0198727 and university before making any contact with the participants or collecting data. The participants were instructed to answer the questions as they saw fit and no attempt to influence the outcome was made by the researcher. The participants were given no incentives and participated voluntarily. Yin (2015) noted that qualitative researchers do not use pre-established instruments to measure distinctive variables. Also, Petty, Thomson, and Stew (2012) asserted that qualitative researchers seek to gather more understanding from participants and are concerned with patterns of behaviors. According to Yin (2015), removing any potential biases is essential for qualitative researchers to ensure the highest level of objectivity with minimal potential for skewed data.

### **Methodology**

The following section details the method used to explore the lived experiences of employee engagement of 20 staff working within the Georgia university system.

Methodology is a detailed research process that includes steps to recruit participants, to obtain informed consent, conduct sampling methods, gather data, and analyze the data. For this study, the researcher used a qualitative phenomenological research method, specifically using a scripted questionnaire. The methodology was explained in sufficient detail to permit others to replicate the study, and the method should be clearly described to yield results that are as objective as possible (Moussakas, 1994).

Furthermore, the process of interviewing generates contextual accounts of each participant's outer and inner world, which comprise their experiences as they interpret them. When the participant and researcher are in dialogue, the answers may flow openly and honestly for the participant. The one-on-one setting gave a safer and confidential space for the participants. The study questionnaire was made up of 14 open-ended questions, all of which were about the lived experiences of employees in the workplace.

The interview questions were constructed to encourage meaningful answers from the participants based on the subject matter. The goal of asking the questions was to understand the participants' lived experiences in the areas of trust, commitment, and employee engagement (see Appendix C).

### **Participant Selection Logic**

The participants for this research were employees from a university in the state of Georgia. The number of participants interviewed was 20 staff members who have worked for a minimum five years within a department in the University system in the State of Georgia. Moustakas (1994) noted that 20 participants are a sufficient sample for a phenomenological research or until saturation occurs to develop themes in the research.

A requirement for conducting this research was not to harm the research participants and to certify this requirement; Maxwell (2013) explained that selecting individuals who can provide information that answers the research questions is an important consideration in qualitative selection decisions. The target population included staff employees who were Administrative assistants, custodial staff, and Computer support in the same department in the university. Based on the conceptual framework, from participant interviews and past research, three constructs were identified and reported in this study (1) Employees (E) (2) Employee Engagement (EE) (3) Disengagement (DIS). A demographic data questionnaire form (Appendix A) was collected to identify the age groups, the level of income, education levels, ethnic backgrounds, marital status, and sexual orientation, within the university to describe the population. The staff in each department in the university perform duties related to education ranging from the customer service support, administrative support, project management, teaching, operational support, and research. The volunteers who participated in the interview were members of any protected class. The selected volunteers were involved in a purposeful sample method and completed signed consent forms before conducting the interviews. The population that served as the source for the participants was approximately 224 people within one department in the university in the state of Georgia. The purposeful sampling method was appropriate for nonprobability sample and required saturation to the point of new themes emerged from the data (Yin, 2015). The researcher interviewed 20 participants who agreed to participate for the study. The transcripts gathered from the one-on-one interviews were validated through triangulation.



## **Instrumentation**

There were no specific research criteria for a specified instrument for this qualitative study (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). According to Schultze and Avital (2011), critical sampling involves selecting a case that will enable a researcher to learn about the phenomenon. The goal of qualitative research was to understand the experiences of others and ascertain how the different aspects of human behavior interact within an environment (Neuman, 2007). Information was collected about the problem from participants through interviews gathered in a textual, visual, or audio format (Schultze & Avital, 2011). A phenomenological design was appropriate because the purpose of the research was to report individual experiences of employee engagement within an academic institution. The phenomenological design differed substantially from ethnographic research; the first focused on people, claiming subjectivity as a source of knowledge, and the second focused on group phenomena.

The data collection instrument for this study was a digital tape recorder and notepad to take notes. The study included a set of 14 validated open-ended interview questions (Appendix C) from a previous qualitative study (Richards, 2013) to explore the lived experiences of employee engagement. The participants responded to the questions using personal experiences from working in a project management setting. Richards (2013) designed the interview instrument using a theoretical foundation of employee engagement and used validated questions in a 2-week pilot study. This researcher used Richards' (2013) questionnaire to serve as a model for this study.

Richards' (2013) questionnaire tool regarding work engagement is divided into three categories: 1) The perception of employee engagement; participant's understanding of engagement; 2) How employees relate to trust, the meaning of work, and satisfaction; participant's relationship between confidence and engagement; and 3) How retention and performance affect the results in an organization (participant's association between engagement and organizational performance). Therefore, the 14-item questionnaire was used as the instrument for this study to report the experiences of staff working in an academic organization. The researcher used the software NVivo 11 to code and analyzes the transcribed interviews from 20 participants.

### **Sampling and Sampling Procedures**

Sampling methods are used to obtain a sample representative of the target population. Because sampling involves selecting some of the elements in a target population to conduct a research study, purposeful sampling was used for this study (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The researcher interviewed 20 staff. Because the study was small, the researcher anticipated saturation would be achieved. Researchers explained that data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Walker, 2012). The researcher chose one out of the six departments in the university to collect data for this study. Permission was obtained from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), and the letter of approval is included in Appendix A.

### **Recruitment Procedures, Participation and Data Collection**

The researcher contacted 50 participants to collect the minimum responses required for this study. Once participants selected randomly from the list of employees, the participants were contacted in person by face-to-face interaction or by email. To ensure the protection of the rights of the participants in the study, the researcher adhered to the standards established by the Walden University IRB to guide the procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection. Participants' involvement in the study was voluntary, and they had the option to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Participants knew the responses were confidential.

The Executive Director, Office of Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) received a letter explaining the nature of the study. The letter was forwarded to gain authorization to conduct the study in the selected university. After the researcher received the official approval to conduct the study, the research began. Studies that involve human participants have to obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and the Federal before being conducted (Cseko & Tremaine, 2013). The Walden University Institutional Review Board and the Director of Human Resources at the selected department in the university gave permission to collect data. Qualitative data collection involves free information gathered in images and text through interviews, observation, questionnaires, documents, or materials such as audiotapes, videotapes, and photographs (Maxwell, 2013). Using general open-ended questions allowed the researcher to capture sufficient information about employee engagement.

The researcher conducted interviews one at a time to help explore the perception of engagement from the viewpoint of the staff. Moustakas (1994) noted that perception is the foundation of knowledge in a phenomenological study. Interviews allow study participants to offer responses not restricted by specific guidelines as quantitative research (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher adhered to the guidelines for the use of human subjects as outlined by the university. The researcher interviewed the agreed upon 20 participants for the study. The participants' names were not used during the data collection or at any other time during the research. The participants' interviews were conducted in person, face-to-face. The researcher transcribed data and followed up within 48 hours with the participant by email asking them to confirm their responses to allow for member checking.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The data analysis is an integral part of the research study and provided a review of the information. The analysis can vary in nature depending upon the purpose of the research (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2012). Data analysis and interpretation are two essential components of the research process (Zikmund et al., 2012). The NVivo software descriptive tool was used to analyze and report the data. The software was appropriate because it can highlight emerging themes and code the data to identify categories.

The responses to the interview questions were transcribed and analyzed using computer software NVivo 11. Also, the tool was used to interpret raw data in the analysis of both the audio recordings and the interview transcripts. Following the methods of

analysis, the next step for the responses from the interview transcripts of the participants were: group themes and experiences, label the code, and cluster the answers by themes. The next steps are examine the codes for relevance and analyze them for understanding, and describe the codes for understanding. Lastly, describe the codes using verbatim examples and define them for core searches using the alternative descriptions or explanations of experiences and describe the codes for participants using the understanding of experiences.

Analyzing the recurring themes helped define and understand how participants perceived employee engagement. NVivo 11 software was an appropriate tool to assess the strength and direct the relationships between the three constructs, and allows researchers to explore trends, develop themes to answer questions, manage, and categorize documents, survey, audio, videos, or web content for efficient and accurate analysis. The use of database management was an advantage to collect accurate data. I was able to more efficiently organize and analyze the collected data. Also, the primary benefit of using this software was the ability to manage large amounts of data.

### **Data Organization Technique**

The information remained on a laptop in encrypted, password-protected files while transcribing the interviews. The written transcript and recorded interviews became encrypted, password-protected files on a thumb drive. Both written and interview transcripts will remain stored in a locked office cabinet for five years after the completion of the study and will be destroyed immediately afterward using a shredder. Only the transcriptionist and the researcher interpreted the raw data and had access to the files, and

a transcriptionist signed a letter of confidentiality consent. Each participant had a code to protect his or her identity throughout the research. The codes for the participants consisted of a P for the participant and a number that indicated the order of the interview (P1, P2, P3, and P4).

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

LaBanca (2011) stated that trustworthiness is associated with qualitative research. Sinkovics, Penz, Ghauri, and Pervez (2008) also reported that qualitative data analysis is considered less rigorous and acknowledged the need to examine it in a systematic manner. They also indicated that to establish qualitative research as a viable basis for knowledge generation and dissemination, researchers are encouraged to organize, standardize, and coordinate observations, recordings, and inquiries (Sinkovics et al., 2008). Also, safety is implicit when reliability is confirmed (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Trustworthiness may be maintained when there are checks and balances throughout the study. Participants' responses were recorded and transcribed to confirm the accuracy of the verbiage on answers, and the participants reviewed the transcripts to allow for elaboration or correction of any information. Doing the cross check prevented any misinterpretation of data.

### **Validity**

A research design should allow an accurate interpretation of data to develop conclusions (Maxwell, 2013). Validity is concerned with whether the interview questionnaire measured what the researcher intended for it to measure. Different social scientists assign a variety of names to the concept of validity (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

The findings of a research study will have no legitimacy if the methods they are derived from lack legitimacy. In a qualitative study, it is imperative to evaluate how well the instrument measured what it was supposed to measure, but also, the internal and the external validity threats of the instrument (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

A possible threat to the internal validity of the study was the failure of the subjects to complete their interview questionnaires or to respond to any of the questions. The researcher attempted to avoid this by listening to and recording respondents as they answer questions. Regarding those interviewed any employees who were unable to understand the issues would have had the instrument explained more in depth to them.

The researcher further validated this study by utilizing triangulation.

Triangulation is a method that uses a combination of information sources, such as individuals or types of data, as evidence to support a premise (Maxwell, 2013). Also, Maxwell (2013) indicated that triangulation assists a researcher with developing a credible report because information originates from various sources. In the phenomenological study of engagement, triangulation may occur by linking interview questions closely to the theoretical situation and request that participants review transcripts to verify their accuracy. Each participant's interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. The researcher transcribed data after interviews within 48 hours of the interview, and sent an email attachment with the transcript to the participants asking them to confirm if the answers and their responses to the questions were reported adequately. Participant checking was implemented when the follow-up was completed by the researcher. If the participant did not respond back confirming the answers, the researcher

continued with the data results and made a comment that the participant did respond to follow up on interview questions.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is defined as the ability to generalize findings of the study that is beyond controlled parameters (Maxwell, 2013). According to Yin (2015) qualitative studies are used to develop theories that may be important to other situations under different circumstances, while qualitative research may not be able to provide the same level of generalizability. The individuals in this study comprised employees who had at least five years' experience in a department with the same supervisor. The participants' age, sex, or race did not limit the participants, which showed a variety in the selected population. In addition, threats to external validity include the inability to apply the results taken from the research of the wider environment, and the experiences of individuals in the larger environment differ from the participants in the study (Neuman, 2007). A detailed account of the interview perceptions and lived experiences provided improved context through the understanding of patterns related to employee engagement (Khan, 1992). There was a significant amount of data collected from the interviews. Which made the researcher constantly compared and contrasted the data often for consistency. The method of keeping analysis connected to the purpose and design by referring back to the purpose of the study was important, when conducting a study where there is limited prior research such as this study. Additionally, triangulation through multiple data sources, for instance prior qualitative studies, helped to establish



**Reliability**

A reliability test helps assess whether an instrument produces the same results repetitively under identical conditions during the research study. There is a lack of credibility when there is a divergence on the tool between observers or when the instrument produces different results under the identical conditions (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Richards (2013) initially determined the instrument's reliability for the measures of employee engagement and disengagement. The instrument used in a study must have a strong measurement validity and reliability to diminish both threats.

**Ethical Procedures**

Any research needs to meet the minimum of ethical standards. Study participants were entitled to a reasonable degree of care in protecting their identities. The chair of the project and Walden University IRB reviewed the research ethics of the project to meet the research questions and inquiry method. The researcher made every effort to follow the respect for human dignity that has been an underlying value for Walden University principles. Before beginning the study, the researcher asked the IRB to evaluate the safety of the research and the adequacy of the consent to be obtained from the research participants (DePoy & Gitlin, 2015). To show that this study has conformed to the highest level of ethical standards, the participant recruitment did not begin until the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study. The researcher made sure that the data collection process met ethical guidelines such as: participating in research was not coerced, informed consent, in which the researcher clearly notified participants that their involvement was voluntary, no harm, which required that

participants not be put in danger, confidentiality, guaranteeing that any information collected is kept confidential and eventually destroyed and lastly anonymity was placed, making sure that respect for human dignity was paramount in the quality improvement for this research.

Federal regulations mandated the study involved human participants was approved by an IRB before was conducted (Cseko & Tremaine, 2013). I obtained Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB)'s approval before performing any data collection on September, 2017 (Approval #09—18-17-0198727). The Walden Institutional Review Board's (IRB) role is to protect the safety and privacy of participants. Concerns about privacy and confidentiality of participants' information were addressed in the informed consent the participant signed, stating their protection, anonymity, intended use and security of the research data, and retention and destruction of the data. All participants' data and information were kept confidential to ensure the participants safety, by having all documentation and data has been stored and protected by me. The data was anonymous during the data analysis phase and the other data remain confidential and stored in a password protected file for a period of five years.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 included detailed information about the methodology of this study. The chapter outlined the research methods that were utilized. Chapter 3 presented instrument development, an assessment of the reliability and validity of the instrument, and the data collection and analysis procedures, and trustworthiness as well. A discussion of the different interrelated components of the research design and its sequential nature was

included. The research design included the sampling strategy and the recruitment procedures.

A discussion of threats to validity was included in this chapter. The purpose of Chapter 4 presented the data and findings from interviews and to discuss the data analysis. Chapter 4 contained a detailed explanation of the NVivo 11 software tool, which the researcher used to analyze the data. Also, Chapter 4 included the results analysis. Finally, Chapter 5 included all the significant findings, interpretations, and conclusions of the study. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to the implications of social change for the study and recommendations of actions and future research are included at the end of the chapter. The results will be available to all interest groups for use towards positive social change in the business, university in the US and global.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to report the lived experiences of 20 full-time employees lived experiences at the university in the state of Georgia to understand the perception of employee engagement in their workplace. Twenty full-time employees were randomly selected from one specified department in the university. The employees had worked in the same department for 5 years or more and their manager also worked in the department 5 years or more. All 20 of the participants agreed to participate voluntarily. Chapter 4 presents findings of the study through data collected using the phenomenological method. Further, this study allowed the researcher to use an interview questionnaire that served as the tool through which data was collected.

This section was followed by the ethical procedures and strategies to maintain trustworthiness for the participants. The results of this qualitative study revealed that the personal engagement theory and social exchange theory provided a conceptual foundation that offered a basis of bidirectional transaction which specified that when something is given, something is returned, illustrating that engagement is a reciprocal relationship between employer and employee. In addition, the results showed that employee engagement was low in the workplace because of the lack of communication, trust, and respect for the employees from the managers and supervisors. This research study could help managers and supervisors understand how to engage the staff members so the culture of the organization could lead to a stronger work environment.

Moreover, this qualitative analysis allowed the researcher to capture the impromptu perspectives and lived experiences of 20 employees working within one Georgia academic institution regarding employee engagement. Understanding the lived experiences of employees may assist leaders in resolving disengagement issues that negatively influence employees' loyalty and organizational commitment (Ram & Prabhakar, 2011). In addition, strategies may developed such as incentives or competition that can positively influence higher productivity, customer loyalty, and employee retention (Zhang, Avery, Bergsteiner, & Moore, 2014). The study consisted of two research questions developed to identify strategies that may increase the knowledge of employee engagement at a Georgia academic institution. The results of the interviews provided information that was critical in answering the following research questions:

*RQ1:* What are the lived experiences of Georgia school system employees regarding employee engagement?

*RQ2:* What factors do staff employees identify as the greatest influence on employee engagement?

The five themes specific to this study were incentives, increased morale, increased confidence and reverence of management, reward-based performance, and organizational productivity, which may be consistent or inconsistent with previous literature.

### **Research Setting**

This research was conducted in a natural setting using interviews to gain the viewpoints of participants employed at a four-year research academic institution in Georgia regarding employee engagement. Moreover, the university was a setting to

employ a diverse population of faculty, students, and staff. There were 224 staff employees eligible to participate in this study. The researcher served as an instrument of data collection in this study with the responsibility of gathering information focused on the meaning of participants' responses. Purposive sampling was the selection technique for finding participants for this study, which enabled the researcher to ensure more control over the sample. Patton (2015) further asserted that in phenomenological studies, it is fundamental for all participants to have experienced the occurrence being researched.

In a qualitative phenomenological study, a sample size of a minimum of 20 participants is consistent with an effective study (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The research setting was the Georgia University where the participants worked. There were a sample of 20 employees. The location of each participant varied based on their choice where to conduct the interview. During participation in the study, participants did not experience any personal or organizational conditions that influenced their involvement with the research or study results.

### **Demographics of Study Participants**

The study participants' age demographics were 15% 50 or over, 50% between the ages of 40 and 49, and 35% between the ages of 29 and 39. The gender of study members was 75% female and 25% male. High school graduates were 25%, those with Associate's degrees comprised 10%, those with Bachelor's degrees were 35%, and those with Master's degrees encompassed 30% of study participants. Sixty percent of study participants had been employed in their position for five to 10 years, while 35% averaged between 11 and 15 years, while 5% had served in their position for 20 years or more.

Furthermore, 95% of study participants worked in the College of Engineering, with the remaining 5% employed in the Facilities department. The study participants were from a diverse population with multiple job titles that included 50% who were employed in administration, 20% working in human resources, 20% in information technology, and 10% in custodial services. Table 1 illustrates the demographics of each study participant, which included age range, gender, and education level, number of years in current job, department, and position.

Table 1. Demographics of Study Participants

*Demographics of Study Participants*

Participants	Age Range	Gender	Education Level	Yrs. in job	Department	Position
1	40-49	Female	Master's	5-10	Engineering	Administrative
2	29-39	Female	High School	5-10	Facilities	Custodial
3	40-49	Female	Bachelor's	5-10	Engineering	Administrative
4	40-49	Female	Master's	11-15	Engineering	Administrative
5	29-39	Male	Associate's	5-10	Engineering	Information Technology
6	29-39	Male	Bachelor's	5-10	Engineering	Information Technology
7	40-49	Male	Associate's	16-20	Engineering	Custodial
8	50 or over	Female	High School	5-10	Engineering	Human Resources
9	40-49	Female	Master's	11-15	Engineering	Administrative
10	40-49	Female	High School	5-10	Engineering	Administrative
11	29-39	Female	Bachelor's	5-10	Engineering	Administrative
12	40-49	Female	Bachelor's	11-15	Engineering	Administrative
13	29-39	Female	Bachelors	5-10	Engineering	Human Resources
14	40-49	Female	Bachelor's	11-15	Engineering	Human Resources
15	40-49	Male	Master's	11-15	Engineering	Information Technology
16	29-39	Female	High School	5-10	Engineering	Administrative
17	40-49	Female	Bachelor's	5-10	Engineering	Administrative
18	50 or over	Female	High School	11-15	Engineering	Human Resources
19	29-39	Male	Master's	5-10	Engineering	Information Technology
20	50 or over	Female	Master's	11-15	Engineering	Administrative

The solicitation of study members was initiated with a request to the Institutional Research & Enterprise Data Management Department at the academic institution. Data collection began upon approval from the IRB to conduct the study, which was initiated with contact with each participant. The research was explained, and an informed consent form was provided for the participants to sign, which indicated proof of voluntary participation in the study. Participants were randomly identified as P1, P2, and P3 up to P20. The participants' and employers' names were not revealed to preserve privacy; all responses were coded and analyzed using NVivo 11 software.

### **Data Collection**

This study consisted of the face-to-face interviews of 20 employees working at a Georgia academic institution utilizing a qualitative interview questionnaire consisting of 14 validated open-ended questions. The researcher specifically obtained approval and utilized the interview questionnaire (Appendix B) from a 2013 empirical study conducted by Dr. Wayne Richards, Jr., which was designed using a theoretical foundation of employee engagement. Specifically, the data collected from participants in Dr. Richards study were the result of questions using personal experiences while working in a project management setting. Data collected for the purposes of this study, explored the lived experiences of participants regarding employee engagement while working at an academic institution.

The researcher ensured protections of the participant's rights were strictly followed, as established by Walden University's IRB, in respects to procedures for



recruitment, participation, and data collection. Participation in the study was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time without consequence. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that participants understood responses to the interview questions, along with personal identity and that of employer were confidential.

Upon randomly selecting potential participants for the study, members were contacted in person or via email to coordinate the interview session. A consent form was provided to each research participant to sign prior to the interview, with signature specifying voluntary participation in the study. Specifically, data collection from study participants was conducted from October 23, 2017 through October 31, 2017, individually at the participant's workplace, in a private setting. Each participant's responses were recorded utilizing a digital tape recorder and a notepad for note taking, along with data being transcribed by the researcher to confirm the accuracy of responses.

Furthermore, participants were provided the opportunity to review transcripts within 48 hours for elaboration or correction of any interview responses to eliminate the misinterpretation of data. Consequently, all procedures for data collection was followed without deviation or variation as discussed, outlined, and presented in Chapter Three. The interview questions were designed to encourage meaningful responses from the participants based on the phenomena being investigated. Moreover, responses to the interview questions were intended to represent the lived experiences of employee perspectives regarding engagement in the workplace. Coincidentally, during data collection, there were some instances where participant's responses to interview questions were similar, which was attributed to information presented during recent

organizational training related to employee engagement that study participants utilized in their responses to the questions during the research interview. However, no unusual circumstances were encountered in data collection.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis process involved the review of gathered by listening to audio, and transcribe transcripts to have the relevant and significant information. (Rodham, Fox, & Doran, 2015). Analyzing qualitative data was considered to be as rigorous as the statistical analysis of quantitative data (Samkin & Schneider, 2008). Consequently, methods exist to ensure that performing an analysis of qualitative data; two or more researchers would arrive at similar conclusions (Samkin & Schneider, 2008).

Furthermore, the analysis of qualitative data can produce an objectively equitable and coherent explanation of the phenomenon under examination (Samkin & Schneider, 2008). The analysis involved the capture of general information and reduced down to more specific themes and categories (Neale, 2016). For this phenomenological study, the researcher used an open coding approach, which allowed an analytic process through which data collected were divided into codes and categories, while being analyzed for commonalities that could reflect themes. The process of open coding assisted in the sorting of data so the individual experiences could be uniformed in a categorical manner (Silver & Lewins, 2014). Analysis began with organizing and preparing the data collected and transcribed from the interviews with study participants. Next, the researcher reviewed all data to determine the participants' general ideas, tone, depth, and credibility, along with the use of information. When conducting a detailed analysis, the coding

process begins by organizing data into segments of text before bringing meaning to the information (Rodham, Fox, & Doran, 2015).

Specifically, the researcher searched for commonalities and counted the number of times a theme occurred from the interviewees' responses. Further, the researcher developed a list of topics after reviewing each transcribed interview, clustered similar topics in columns, and grouped and classified them into codes using descriptive wording to organize the data for preliminary analysis. Moreover, the researcher approached the analysis of data by bracketing and phenomenological reduction, evaluating data with openness to whatever themes emerged and accepted the phenomenon (Yin, 2015). Themes were extracted based on the occurrence of grouped data as required in phenomenological studies (Neale, 2016).

#### Evidence of Trustworthiness

Lisoski (2009) asserted trustworthiness in qualitative research depends largely on researcher proficiency, which involves investigation and listening skills, attentiveness in capturing descriptive data obtained through data collection methods; and consistency in the coding of data. Furthermore, trustworthiness related to qualitative studies refers to the demonstration of evidence for sound outcomes, particularly when arguments made are based on results (LaBanca, 2011). Specifically, Sinkovics, Penz, Ghauri, and Pervez (2008) argued that qualitative data should be examined in a systematic manner since analysis is considered less arduous. To establish qualitative research as a viable basis of knowledge generation and dissemination, researchers are encouraged to organize, standardize, and coordinate observations, recordings, and inquiries (Sinkovics, Penz,

Ghuri, & Pervez, 2008). Moreover, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability have been accepted by many qualitative researchers as essential in establishing trustworthiness (Lisoski, 2009).

### **Credibility**

Credibility is referred to as an evaluation of whether research findings represent a reliable conceptual interpretation of data drawn from participants (Sinkovics et al., 2008). When addressing credibility, researchers attempt to establish a true picture of the phenomenon under analysis (Lisoski, 2009). Furthermore, Sinkovics et al. (2008) indicated that credibility focuses on establishing a match between constructed realities of respondents and those represented by the researcher. Triangulation, which involved using different sources such as interviews, focus groups, and observations to answer research questions, as well as data collection, served as a strategy to strengthen a study and improve credibility (Patton, 2015).

Because this phenomenological study involved in-depth interviews using open-ended questions to gather an abundance of data from the lived experiences of 20 employees working at a Georgia academic institution, the following strategies were used to enhance credibility: (1) Participants selected from various age ranges, gender, education levels, number of years in current job, department, and position, using random purposeful sampling, which may negate researcher bias in the selection of participants to build a rational justification for themes; (2) Clarification of biases the researcher brings to the study, which creates an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers; and (3) Provide adequate descriptions of data that may transport readers to the research

setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences (Patton, 2015).

Credibility, which is comparable to quantitative research's concept of internal validity that seeks to ensure a study measures or tests the intended, is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness (Patton, 2015).

### **Transferability**

Transferability or its equivalent in quantitative research's, external validity, refers to the extent in which findings of a study can be generalized or applied to a wider population (Maxwell, 2013). In qualitative studies, transferability is primarily the responsibility of individuals performing the generalizing (Maxwell, 2013). Since the findings of qualitative research studies are generally specific to a small number of research environments and participants, it is challenging to exhibit how they are applicable to other situations and populations (Yin, 2015). In addition, Cooper and Schindler (2014) asserted that it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure sufficient background information related to the study is provided to enable readers to make the transfer.

Moreover, the qualitative researcher is able to improve transferability by comprehensively describing the research context and assumptions central to the research (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The value of qualitative inquiry rests in the specific descriptions and themes developed, making particularity, rather than generalizability, one of its central attributes (Patton, 2015). To enhance transferability, the researcher carefully chose participants who all have potentially experienced the phenomenon in question to forge a common understanding (Yin, 2015).

### **Dependability**

When addressing dependability, or reliability, its quantitative comparison, researchers employ techniques to demonstrate if the study were repeatable and consistent in the same context, using identical methods, with the same participants, the results would be similar (Patton, 2015). To address dependability more directly, Cooper and Schindler (2014) indicated processes within the study should be reported in detail, enabling a future researcher to repeat the investigation, but not necessarily to gain similar outcomes. More specifically, a detailed analysis allowed readers to assess the extent to which proper research practices have been followed in order to develop a thorough understanding of methods used and their effectiveness (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). To ensure dependability for this study, the researcher obtained permission to utilize a scripted interview questionnaire from a 2013 empirical study conducted by Dr. Wayne Richards, Jr. (2013). Moreover, the responses of study participants were clustered into meaningful units to form themes and coded using NVivo 11 software.

### **Conformability**

The qualitative researcher's equal concern to objectivity approve the study's conclusion in a quantitative study is referred to as conformability (Gordon & Patterson, 2013). An essential assumption of qualitative research is the tendency that each researcher brings a unique perspective to the study (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Researchers ensure to the degree possible, that the study's findings are the result of experiences and ideas of participants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of researchers by allowing participants to verify accuracy (Hartman, 2013).

Conversely, a key principle for conformability is the degree to which the researcher recognized his or her own biases. During this study, bracketing was utilized during data analysis as the first step in phenomenological reduction, where the researcher sets aside, as much as humanly imaginable, all preconceived experiences to best understand the experiences of participants in the study (Yin, 2015). Moreover, the researcher was able to record procedures for checking and rechecking data throughout the research.

### Results of Study

The research study was thoroughly introduced and the format of interviews explained to each participant. In addition, the researcher explained her role in the data collection process and the benefits received serving as participants in this phenomenological study. Details of the informed consent was thoroughly emphasized, which provided each participant the option of being free to refuse to answer any of the questions that may make them uncomfortable and able to withdraw from the interview or study at any time.

In an effort to protect identity of participants and their employers, no questions on the interview questionnaire required a response revealing such information. In addition, the researcher created a transcript from the tape-recorded interview sessions to ensure the accuracy of responses in order to avoid misinterpretation. Moreover, the researcher quoted participants extensively, following the principles of phenomenology (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The participant's definition and perception of employee engagement was derived from Questions 1 and 12 of the interview questionnaire.

In addition, the age range, gender, education level, number of years in current job, department, and position of participants were documented to confirm that supervisors, managers, presidents, or vice-presidents were not included in the study since the research was based on the perceptions of staff, not leaders within the respondent's work department. Questions 2 through 11, 13, and 14 provided data obtained from participant responses to questions regarding experiences and perspectives of employee engagement, which allowed the researcher to analyze themes that emerged from the lived experiences of 20 employees working at a Georgia academic institution.

### **Theme Analysis: Research Question 1**

The results for Research Question 1, what are the lived experiences of Georgia school system employees regarding employee engagement are separated by responses below? They were generated from the responses of twenty study participants to Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11 on the interview questionnaire. The responses were transcribed to Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11 from which each theme was developed: the NVivo 11 program allowed the use of color-coding categories and charts creating the source of word frequency that coded to nodes, and the following codes surfaced 19 of the 160 responses from participants included Organizational Interest, Recognition, Self-motivation, Service to client, which resulted in categories that included: Motivation, Accountability for growth and success, and achieving results which resulted in Incentives emerging as a Theme 1.

Additionally, the level of happiness and passion for work were codes that surfaced on 12 occasions resulting in the love of job/fully engaged and job satisfaction to develop as



categories, whereby Increased Morale emerged as Theme 2. Furthermore, positive work environment and enhanced engagement resulting from decreased micro-management were codes that developed 14 times, along with categories that included increased confidence in management and enhanced engagement from increased confidence in management, supported Increased Confidence and Reverence of Management that emerged as Theme 3. All codes and categories were examined, and themes acknowledged for *Research Question 1*, resulting from participants' responses as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. Theme Analysis: Research Question 1

*Theme Analysis: Research Question 1*

Codes	Categories	Themes
Organizational Interest Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation</li> <li>• Accountability for Growth and Success</li> </ul>	Incentives
Self-Motivation Service to Client	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation</li> <li>• Achieving Results</li> </ul>	
Level of Happiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fully Engaged/Love of Job</li> </ul>	Increased Morale
Passion for Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job Satisfaction</li> </ul>	
Positive Work Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased Confidence in Management</li> </ul>	Increased Confidence & Reverence of Management
Enhanced Engagement from Decreased Micro- Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced Engagement from Increased Confidence in Management</li> </ul>	

Research Question 1: *What are the lived experiences of Georgia school system employees regarding employee engagement?*

**Theme 1: Incentives**

The participant's responses from interviews revealed experiences consistent with the following codes associated with Incentives: (1) Organizational interest; (2) Recognition; (3) Self-motivation; and (4) Service to client. Three participants (15%) indicated how the level of interest in what they were working on within the organization enhanced or lessened the degree of engagement. Moreover, six study participants (30%) shared how the importance of recognition through incentives and rewards were necessary to maintain an adequate level of engagement.

Furthermore, being compensated and/or rewarded in the form of a raise or promotion for their efforts were paramount as a means of recognition in preventing them from becoming disengaged. Coincidentally, self-motivation was instrumental for six participants (30%) in pushing themselves when things become challenging in order to maintain a consistent work ethic, remaining enthusiastic and positive while seeking additional opportunities that will promote engagement. Another critical factor that enhanced the engagement of four study members (20%) was their role in being able to provide service to clients and the appreciation customers' exhibit from the services rendered. There are some examples from the research in each of category to illustrate the themes and how they were discussed.

Question 2 asked in your role, what keeps you fully engaged in your tasks? The transcribed responses of Participants 1, 10, 13, and 20 were specifically related to Theme 1: Incentives. Respondents (3 out of 20) Fifteen percent cited being motivated and being able to motivate co-workers to deliver a work product beyond expectations in the

performance of their duties, led to them being fully engaged. P1 stated “In my role, incentives, interest, and being fortunate enough to have a job keeps me fully engaged in my tasks. P10 shared, “What keeps me fully engaged in my tasks is my level of interest in what I am working on or having a goal to reach with an incentive at the end of the task.” P13, responded, “I am motivated to get the job done. I understand that no matter how small or grand of a task, what I do is vital and valuable to the organization. A huge part of my responsibilities involves provided reporting for leadership. Assigning purpose to these tasks keeps me motivated to get things done. I am also more engaged when I am involved in work that is outside my normal day to day.” And finally, P20, with enthusiasm in the voice said “In my role what keeps me fully engage is the willingness to perform beyond expectations, and trying to motivate my co-workers to be fully engaged to help make the organization a success.” Each of the participants responded positively to this theme.

Question 3 asked, in your role, how and why do employees become disengaged in their task? This question was to understand the disengagement level of the participant in their work task. The transcribed responses of Participants 3, 6, 10, 14, 19, and 20 were precisely associated with Theme 1: Incentives. Fifteen percent of participants (3 out of 20) indicated that not being recognized, rewarded, or appreciated for their efforts was paramount to being engaged. Specifically, P20 asserted, “Employees become disengage when they feel as though they are not being treated fair and being rewarded for the work they strive to do with excellence. Whether that is being rewarded with a raise or a promotion; sometimes a little recognition will do.” An additional 15% of participants (3

out of 20) raised concerns about the inconsistency of management in providing the needed direction and information to successfully perform duties, which directly affected their level of interest, resulting in them becoming disengaged. Respondents who identified with this theme stated that “employees become disengaged when they are not recognized, compensated, and/or rewarded for their efforts.” (P3). Further, P6 indicated, people become disengaged because they get tired when the managers are inconsistent and give wrong information. Some people feel they are not paid enough.” P14, expressed, “employees tend to become disengaged when they feel unimportant, when they don’t respect their boss and fellow employees, or when they feel like they don’t have a purpose or duty in the workplace.”

Question 4 asked, how do you remain motivated in your current role? The question is posed to receive feedback regarding the internal and external factors that positively influence the employee at work. The transcribed responses of Participants 1, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, and 20 were particularly linked to Theme 1: Incentives. Moreover, 40% of participants (8 out of 20) asserted that self-motivated indeed played a role in being engaged, which was instrumental in personal growth and success, setting personal goals, and contributing to the success of their department. Specifically, P10 emphasized, “I remain motivated by setting goals for myself and challenging myself to reach them.” Particularly, self-motivation was significant in participants maintaining a consistent work ethic that supports work-life balance and sharing their professional opinion to management, which contributes to an acceptable level of job engagement as fifteen percent of participants (3 out of 20) suggested. Participants expressed that their

motivation in the work role was reinforced by self-motivation “if I take on a role, I see that as a commitment to do the best that I can in my role. Even when things are not ideal, I still push myself. I believe that even when things are hard you have to do the right thing. The right thing is maintaining a consistent work ethic, being enthusiastic and positive in your role, seeking extra opportunities.” (P13) and that “I remain motivated by immersing myself in the environment that I am in. If I am at work, I only think about work and the tasks I need to complete and how to remain engaged. If I am at school, I concentrate on my schoolwork only and try to not to intertwine my work or personal life. And when I am with family and friends, I try not to worry about my school or work life” (P14). Each of these participants responded positively to the theme that self-motivation of their role, kept them engaged.

Question 7 asked, what gives your work meaning in your role? This particular question explored general feedback regarding factors that positively influence employees at work. The transcribed responses of Participants 1, 5, 6, 9, 16, 18, 19, and 20 were explicitly connected to Theme 1: Incentives. Coincidentally, four respondents (20%) emphasized that providing service to the client gave them a peace of mind and meaningful work, which was instrumental in their role that contributed to the level of engagement. Precisely, P20 stressed, “What gives my work meaning in my role is to be able to provide assistance to my customers and colleagues and that they show appreciation. I love helping.” Moreover, an additional four respondents (20%) stated that the ability to achieve results in the work they did provided meaning, along with, an appreciation of completing and achieving the tasks and goals assigned, which supported

engagement. P6 commented, “Knowing that what I do protects people, knowing that giving clients a piece of my mind and protecting the company from risk.” P16, stated, “The work I do gives meaning because of the help I give students. When I make them smile or say I am the best. That is good meaning.” These comments align the service to client and achieving results.

### **Theme 2: Increased Morale**

The responses from participant’s interviews uncovered experiences that were constant with the following codes associated with increased morale: (1) level of happiness; and (2) passion for work. The level of happiness was significant in augmenting the degree of employee engagement for 30% of respondents (6 out of 20). Particularly, the participants stressed that if they were not satisfied or happy; they would not be engaged and indicated the desire to seek employment elsewhere. Furthermore, the responses indicated that having a high level of happiness affects the intensity of their engagement and they would likely perform at a high level when fully engaged.

In addition, the participant’s love of their job was instrumental and contributed to the level of happiness they possessed which further impacted the degree of engagement. In addition, six study participants (30%) asserted that the passion for work was substantial in enhancing the degree of employee engagement. Specifically, the participants stressed how job satisfaction serves as a major element of employee engagement because of the love and passion associated with the job. They also emphasized if there is not a passion for what they do, engagement declines and the likelihood of them being dissatisfied exist. In addition, participants indicated that being

satisfied with your job increases the level of engagement, which allows them to successfully complete tasks and meet organizational requirements.

Question 5 asked, in your role, how does job satisfaction affect your engagement level? The purpose of this question was to gain an understanding what factors affect engagement in job satisfaction. The transcribed replies of Participants 1, 3, 8, 15, and 19 were clearly linked to Theme 2: Increased Morale. Overall, five participants (25%) emphasized how the level of happiness in addition to love of the job were influential in creating job satisfaction that had a huge impact on the engagement level, making them more likely to put forth their best effort. P3 and P8 alluded, if they do not like a job, they are not motivated to do it and will most likely not give it their best effort. Participant's responses supported that increased morale affects job satisfaction. "It affects it a lot when you are satisfied, it helps the morale." (P19). P1 stated, job satisfaction affects my engagement level greatly because I am doing what I love to do".

Question 6 asked how does your engagement level affect your decision to remain with the company? The recorded replies of Participants 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 17 showed a clear relationship with Theme 2: Increased Morale. Thirty percent of the interview participants (6 out of 20) responded that recognition of their work through self-motivation and achieving results by servicing clients help maintain a high level of engagement in the work place. P8 stated, "Knowing that what I am doing is appreciated and that the people I work with respect the job that I do." P17 shared, "my engagement level helps me remain with my company due to my service and passion for student

success.” P9 responded “my engagement level is high most of the time because I enjoy what I do and the students are always kind.”

Fifteen percent of respondents (3 out of 20) maintained that the level of interest where they in the department they worked could decrease or increase their level of engagement. Six out of twenty participants (30%) viewed this emerging theme as important for incentives in the form of monetary and promotions, which was positively associated with the Increased Morale theme.

### **Theme 3: Increased Confidence & Reverence of Management**

The responses from interviews revealed experiences of study members that supported the following codes associated with increased confidence and reverence of management: (1) positive work environment; and (2) enhanced engagement from decreased micro-management. Eleven study participants (55%) acknowledged that when leadership was instrumental in creating a positive work environment by offering support, employee autonomy, being approachable, and enforcing company rules, this developed an organizational culture that increased confidence in management and fostered engagement. Additionally, when employees knew leaders cared and took measurable and actionable steps for improvement, they in turn were willing to support the company, which decreased the level of disengagement.

Two participants (10%) agreed that a decreased micro-management leadership approach negatively affected the level of trust and respect an employee has for organization leadership which is the foundation of confidence in management and employee engagement. Furthermore, participants indicated relationships should evolve



into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments, along with respect, which is vital in the level of confidence employees, have in management. Moreover, participants revealed, the lack of trust and respect in leaders is a major factor that results in disengagement, which causes employees to feel distant, unvalued, or detached from the team.

Question 8 asked, how would you describe the role of leadership in employee engagement? The documented responses of Participants 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 17, and 20 showed a clear relationship with Theme 3: Increased Confidence & Reverence of Management. Specifically, 20% of responses (4 out of 20) proved that when leadership sets the tone/culture within an organization, employees are confident the employer cares, which in turn improves the level of commitment and engagement, whereby leading to an efficient and effective work environment. In particular, P17 maintained, “leadership in my company provides an environment and culture for positive engagement.”

Furthermore, when leadership is setting the example by demonstrating engagement, 15% of participants (P8, P9, and 10), indicated the team will feed from their commitment and demonstrate high levels of motivation and engagement in all aspects of the job. Seven out of twenty participants responded positively to this theme.

Question 11 asked how does trust and respect in the organization and leadership affect employee engagement? The transcribed responses of Participants 1, 4, 6, 10, 13, and 17 presented a clear relationship with Theme 3: Increased Confidence & Reverence of Management. Specifically, P1 highlighted that trust and respect of leadership decreases the desire for micro-management, which lessens employee confidence in leaders. Consequently, 30% of the participants (6 out of 20) stressed how trust and

respect of managers enhances engagement which enriches effort through love of the job. In particular, 10% of respondents (P4 and P10), acknowledged how the lack of trust and respect for leaders destroys teamwork and leads to disengaged employees, which is not in the best interest of the organization. Overall, the participants' responses related with Research Question 1 revealed the following themes: (a) incentives, (b) increased morale, and (c) increased confidence and reverence of management, which were explored individually to provide simplicity. All responses were coded and analyzed using NVivo 11 software.

### **Theme Analysis: Research Question 2**

The results for Research Question 2, What factors do staff employees identify as the greatest influence on employee engagement?, were generated from the responses of twenty study participants to Questions 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 13, and 14 on the interview questionnaire. The responses were transcribed to Questions 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 13, and 14 from which each theme was developed, the codes that surfaced 14 of the 160 responses from participants were organizational interest, recognition, and service to client, which resulted into categories that included: motivation, and achieving results that permitted incentives to emerge as Theme 1a. Additionally, employee feedback and dissatisfaction were codes that appeared on 14 occasions resulting in organizational support/training and negative feelings to surface as categories, where reward-based performance developed as Theme 4. Consequently, organizational relationships and positive inputs were codes that developed 17 times, resulting in the category, organizational performance, which supported organizational productivity surfacing as Theme 5. All codes and categories

were examined, and themes acknowledged for *Research Question 2*, resulting from participants' responses as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3. Theme Analysis: Research Question 2

*Theme Analysis: Research Question 2*

Codes	Categories	Themes
Organizational Interest	• Motivation	Incentives
Recognition	• Motivation	
Service to Client	• Achieving Results	
Employee Feedback	• Organizational Support/Training	Reward-based Performance
Dissatisfaction	• Negative Feelings	
Organizational Relationships	• Organizational Performance	Organizational Productivity
Positive Inputs	• Organizational Performance	

**Theme 1a: Incentives**

The participants' replies from interviews disclosed experiences constant with the following codes associated with incentives: (1) organizational interest; (2) recognition; and (3) service to client. Three participants (15%) pointed out how the level of interest in their work within the organization improved or diminished the degree of engagement. Furthermore, six study participants (30%) communicated that the importance of recognition through incentives and rewards were necessary to sustain a sufficient level of engagement. Likewise, being compensated and/or rewarded in the form of a raise or promotion for their work efforts were vital as a means of recognition in precluding them from becoming disengaged. An additional element that boosted the engagement of four

study members (20%) was being able to provide service to clients and the gratitude customers' exhibit from the services received.

Question 2 asked, in your role, what keeps you fully engaged in your tasks? The transcribed responses of Participants 1, 10, 13, and 20 were precisely related to Theme 1a: Incentives. Two participants (10%) indicated how having an interest in what you are doing plays an instrumental role in keeping them fully engaged. Precisely, P1 asserted, "In my role, incentives, interest, and being fortunate enough to have a job keeps me fully engaged in my tasks" which illustrates how essential incentives are in employee engagement. In addition, (2 out of 20) respondents (10%) maintained that being motivated and having the ability to motivate co-workers to deliver a work product beyond expectations in the performance of their duties, led to them being fully engaged. In essence, P13 and P20 (10%) acknowledged that motivation is an essential element in maintaining a level of engagement that results in the willingness to perform above and beyond expectations.

Question 3 asked, in your role, how and why do employees become disengaged in their task? The transcribed responses of Participants 3, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, 19, and 20 were specifically associated with Theme 1a: Incentives. Twenty percent of participants (4 out of 20) shared that being recognized, compensated, appreciated, and rewarded were crucial factors that contribute to an employee's level of engagement. Precisely, P3 and P8 (10%) maintained, "Employees become disengaged when they are not recognized, compensated, and/or rewarded for their efforts" while P19 and P20 (10%) summarized the fact that increased pay via a raise or promotion can go a long way in terms of

preventing an employee from becoming disengaged. Further, 10% (2 out of 20) participants pointed out that employees experience disengagement due to the inconsistency of management in the show of respect towards employees along with equipping them with the needed information and resources needed to do the job. For instance, P6 maintained, “People become disengaged because they get tired when the managers are inconsistent and give wrong information.”

An additional 10% of participants (2 out of 20) believed the lack of motivation contributed to employees becoming disengaged resulting from the working being mundane, the lack of ownership of the work being performed, and not being adequately trained to do the job. One respondent indicated, “I believe that employees can become disengaged in their task due to lack of motivation or lack of respect and/or appreciation that they may feel they do not receive from higher management” (P11). These comments categorized as motivation contributed significantly to their disengagement.

Question 7 asked, what gives your work meaning in your role? The transcribed responses of Participants 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 16, 18, and 20 were explicitly linked to Theme 1a: Incentives. Fifteen percent of study members (3 out of 20) stressed how “service to the client” served as an incentive to them remaining engaged in their work. P16 embodied the concept of service to client in which the respondent indicted, “The work I do gives meaning because of the help I give students. When I make them smile or say I am the best. That is good meaning.” In addition, P20 stated, “What gives my work meaning in my role is to be able to provide assistance to my customers and colleagues and that they show appreciation. I love helping” which further emphasized the role of

“service to the client” in employee engagement. Achieving results was also paramount in contributing to this theme, whereby four respondents (20%) believed that task accomplishment was contributory in being engaged. For example, P10 acknowledged, “Being appreciated for my hard work and seeing positive results from what I have accomplished, gives my work meaning.” Moreover, 30% of participants (6 out of 20) cited how being appreciated for your work was essential in giving work meaning, which was a contributing factor in employee engagement. In particular, P7 and P8 specified that being appreciated or acknowledged by coworkers and managers was essential in giving meaning to the work they perform, a supporting element to this theme.

#### **Theme 4: Reward-based Performance**

The responses from interviews allowed participants to share information persistent with the following codes associated with reward-based performance: (1) employee feedback; and (2) dissatisfaction. Five participants (25%) believed employers that accept and respond to employee feedback better understand the importance of organizational support, along with being more considerate of training requirements, which is an essential aspect in sustaining and improving engagement. The study members further asserted that if employees are able to provide opinions regarding company matters and what they feel can be done more effectively, the information can result in leadership taking actionable steps that benefit the level of engagement. In assessing employee’s views regarding dissatisfaction, nine participants (45%) emphasized it leads to complaints, strife, division, and a toxic work environment, which usually results in disengagement. Consequently, study members indicated dissatisfied

employees affect team dynamics and breeds a culture of employees with negative feeling that often disrupts and even destroy the functionality of teams. Furthermore, research participants considered employees with negative feelings about the organization to have a huge effect and influence on organizational tone and morale of the work environment, which derails engagement.

Question 9 asked, how do you believe employees can be reengaged? The transcribed responses of Participants 1, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 were definitely linked to Theme 4: Reward-based Performance. Employee feedback was a fundamental aspect for 15% (3 out of 20) respondents who suggested surveys are effective methods in capturing opinions about the company, allowing employees the opportunity to offer ideas they can foster reengagement. P16 specifically expressed, “I think if supervisors listen to staff about how to make the department run more smoothly or at least meet staff halfway on work flexibility and support staff with training.” Additionally, P13 and P14 communicated that company-wide surveys and allowing employees to speak their minds occasionally would be beneficial in promoting reengagement, which was instrumental in supporting this theme. The opportunity to receive training was an important factor for 20% of participants (4 out of 20) as a strategy in reengaging employees. P1 and P11 (10%) suggested that training could play a role in influencing the reengagement of employees. Moreover, P12 and P15 (10%) clearly thought that training played an instrumental role in ways they believed employees can be reengaged. Twenty-five percent of Respondents (5 out of 20) contended that incentives were essential in promoting the process of reengaging employees that had become

disengaged. Explicitly, P1, P5, P9, P10, and P17 (25% of respondents) concluded that incentives, by means of bonuses, promotions, raises, and services, were significant in reengaging employees, which supports the Reward-based Performance theme. A respondent said, incentives and training can greatly influence the effectiveness of reengaging employees” (P1). P5 articulated, “Incentives and bonuses to re-engage employees that have recently become disengaged”. Additionally, P9 felt “they can be reengaged if they are given fair treatment for promotions and raises.”

Question 10 asked what effect and influence do disengaged employees have in the organization? The transcribed responses of Participants 1, 3, 6, 8, 13, 15, 16, 18, and 19 were positively associated to Theme 4: Reward-based Performance. Employee dissatisfaction was mentioned by two participants (10%) as an effect and influence in the organization resulting from disengaged employees. P3 and P8 mentioned exclusively that disengaged workers create strife and division within the organization due to their level of personal dissatisfaction. In addition, fifteen percent of participants (3 out of 20) shared how the negative effects that result from disengaged employees disrupts the tone and morale within the workplace. P6 and P15 indicated, disengagement can distract employees and result in negative feelings causing them to become disengaged and the quality of work suffers, which serves as a provision supporting this theme. Twenty percent of participants (4 out of 20) responded that low performance from employees is also a result of disengaged employees. P18 proclaimed that the effect of disengaged employees on the organization is generally low productivity. Moreover, P19 asserted that



due to the negative feelings associated with disengaged employees, their quality of work suffers, which reinforces the Reward-based Performance theme.

### **Theme 5: Organizational Productivity**

The interview responses permitted study members to provide evidence persistent with the following codes associated with organizational productivity: (1) organizational relationships; and (2) positive inputs. Twelve participants (60%) specifically linked organizational relationships (that exist between employee and employer) as instrumental in positive engagement which correlates with improved organizational performance. Furthermore, the study participants indicated that this direct correlation between employee engagement and positive organizational performance resulting from organizational relationships is often the result of happy employees that typically perform at higher levels when fully engaged.

Consequently, participants believed employee performance without engagement results in a lack of focus and concern regarding the consistency of task execution needed to ensure positive organizational performance, along with consistent follow through and successful completion of tasks to support productivity. The results of positive inputs were contributory to productivity resulting from employee engagement for 25% of study members (5 out of 20). The participants emphasized that engaged employees are more likely to increase their productivity, resulting from positive inputs, because they enjoy what they do, which shows in their performance. Precisely, the results of study member interviews revealed that the level of engagement has a profound effect on inputs, which

result in either, high or low productivity, consequently affecting overall organizational performance.

Question 13 asked, how would you describe the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance? The transcribed responses of Participants 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 14 were clearly linked to Theme 5: Organizational Productivity. Three participants (15%) proclaimed there is a direct relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance. Overall, P3, P6, and P8 (15% of Respondents) recognized the correlation between engagement and performance because engaged employees are typically happy, which results in better performance. Ten percent of Respondents (2 out of 20) recognized that if employees are not engaged, their overall performance is curtailed due to a lack of focus and does not result in positive outputs.

Two participants (10%) responded that increased productivity describes the relationship between positive employee engagement and organizational performance. For instance, P9 and P10 pointed out that if employees are engaged, productivity increases, which positively aligns with the Organizational Productivity theme. P3, directly stated, “There is a direct correlation between employee engagement and organizational performance because engaged employees are most often happy employees and happy employees usually perform better”. “If the company have high level of employee engagement from staff they will excel in customer loyalty and productivity increases” (P9.) Participant’s responses supported the need to have a positive employee and manager relationship.

Question 14 asked, what effect does employee engagement have on productivity? The transcribed responses of Participants 2, 4, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, and 18 were undoubtedly connected to Theme 5: Organizational Productivity. Specifically, 15% of Respondents (3 out of 20) implied that positive relationships within the organization fosters employee engagement that usually results in higher levels of productivity. Likewise, P2 shared that when employees are happy and enjoy their work, productivity is at an elevated level. P4 also emphasized that engaged employees are more likely to have an increased level of productivity because of relishing the work they are assigned. Moreover, five participants (25%) explained how positive or negative employee engagement has the ability to impact productivity, which depends how the individual embraces their job.

Specifically, P12, P14, and P16 (15% of Respondents) pointed out that employee engagement has a profound effect on productivity, whereby negative engagement could result in low productivity; while positive engagement may foster higher levels of productivity, which is in direct correlation with the Organizational Productivity theme. As one respondent clearly stated “When people are happy at work and enjoy what they are doing then productivity is high” (P2). Further, P4, expressed “Employees who are engaged in the organization are more likely to increase their productivity, they enjoy what they are doing, and it shows in their work performance.

The responses related with Research Question 2 surfaced the following themes: (1) incentives, (2) reward-based performance, and (3) organizational productivity, which were investigated separately to provide straightforwardness. All responses were coded and analyzed using NVivo 11 software. Research Question 2 was posed to bring out the

lived experiences regarding factors that gives the greatest influence on employee engagement in your organization. Specifically, the researcher developed a list of topics after reviewing each transcribed interview, clustered similar topics, grouped and classified each into codes using descriptive wording to organize the data for preliminary analysis. Furthermore, the researcher approached the analysis of data by bracketing and phenomenological reduction, effectively evaluating data with openness to each theme that emerged and accepted the phenomenon. Furthermore, each interview was transcribed manually and thoroughly reviewed to grasp a complete understanding of the responses prior to coding. The 140 responses from study participants were arranged by each research question from which codes were established. Overall, codes were formed, categories were examined, and themes acknowledged as indicated in Table 2 and Table 3 from participants' responses.

#### Theoretical Connection

The theoretical association formed from the results of this study provided insights by the bidirectional transaction meaning something is given, and something returned, which was consistent with the description of engagement as a two-way relationship between employer and employee, supporting the social exchange theory (Schuck & Wollard, 2013). Also, this study found some participants communicated an awareness that employee engagement was present as relationships evolved into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments when parties accepted specific "rules" of change (Schuck & Wollard, 2013). Furthermore, some participants recognized that engagement was existent resulting from the receipt of economic and socio-emotional resources from their

organization, which is prevalent in the social exchange theory (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2012). This study further generated results that provided a theoretical foundation of the social exchange theory that served as fundamental conceptual paradigms required in understanding workplace behavior (Doherty, 2010).

For instance, elements of the social exchange theory highlighted when several participants indicated the level of job satisfaction, incentives, compensation, rewards, and appreciation affects their degree of engagement. Besides, the receipt of trust, respect, and support from management as well as the organization was paramount in affecting the level of engagement for several other study participants. Also, specific study members pointed out that the level of autonomy and opportunities for training and development reciprocated by employees showing higher levels of engagement, which associated with the social exchange theory. The notions of social exchange emphasize employees can repay their organization through engagement and they often choose to engage themselves in contrasting degrees as a means to respond to the resources they receive from their organization (Pedrycz, Russo & Succi, 2011; Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010).

#### Summary

Chapter 4 reported the results of this study, which focused on the lived experiences of staff employees working at a Georgia academic institution regarding employee engagement from the viewpoint of employees in academia. This phenomenological approach utilized tape-recorded scripted interviews as the means of data collection. The participants shared opened and honest experiences that presented

their perspectives on employee engagement. The researcher tape-recorded, responses transcribed notes, and data analyzed.

Furthermore, the data were coded, classified, themes identified, and results summarized in narrative form. The study's findings and data analysis yielded a total of five themes. The following themes emerging for Research Question 1 *What are the lived experiences of Georgia school system employees regarding employee engagement?* Included: incentives, increased morale, and increased confidence and reverence in management, which were prevalent during in-depth interviews. This theme was essential to the employee and managers to understand the perspectives of an employee's engagement in the workplace. The themes that surfaced for Research Question 2 *What factors do staff employees identify as the greatest influence on employee engagement ?* Which consisted of incentives, reward-based performance, and organizational productivity. The need for incentives and reward based performance exposed the behaviors an employee required from their managers and the company. The findings reflected an apparent connection to the literature reviews and theoretical framework, which indicated the need for engagement. In Chapter 5, the researcher interprets the findings from the analyzed data. Chapter 5 served as the concluding chapter, which consisted of a discussion and interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, implications for positive social change are before the conclusion of the study.

## Chapter 5: Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

This qualitative study explored employee engagement from the viewpoint of employees through the lived experiences of Georgia school system employees regarding employee engagement. This phenomenological research used the recorded interviews with 20 staff members at a university located in the state of Georgia to understand how they perceived the concept of engagement. The purpose of this study was to learn more about what employees think about their level of employee engagement and productivity. The staff were required to have worked at least 5 years full-time in the same department.

The phenomenological approach was appropriate because the study involved exploring a phenomenon to understand employee perceptions regarding workplace engagement. The nature of this study was constructed using a qualitative design to understand human behavior based on the opinions of related individuals through employing a purposeful sampling method to collect data. Specifically, the use of a phenomenological study provided a deeper understanding of employee engagement and the concept's underlying structure through the emergence of themes from the lived experiences of participants.

The study results revealed that employee engagement was present as relationships between employees and managers developed over time into trustworthy, loyal, and shared commitments. . Findings gathered from the analysis of the data highlighted five main themes. The first three themes for RQ1 are incentives, increased morale, and increased confidence and reverence of management from the participants

who answered the interview questions. The themes reward-based performance and organizational productivity apply to RQ2. Moreover, the themes reflect previous literature. This study built on research that has previously identified the importance of employee engagement with employees and managers and that lack of engagement leads to a significant loss in organization productivity.

To gather the data required, 20 participants were purposefully selected. Participants were then asked to sit one on one with the researcher and answer 14 questions. Participants were comprised of employees selected from one university in the state of Georgia in the United States who have worked at least 5 years full-time in the same department. The data were collected in one-on-one interviews.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

There were several interpretations recognized and documented from the findings of this phenomenological study. These interpretations presented clarity to the analyzed and collected data. The interpretations of findings are presented with each research question.

#### **Research Question 1**

*RQ1:* What are the lived experiences of Georgia school system employees regarding employee engagement?

The findings for RQ1 revealed experiences consistent with organizational interest, recognition, self-motivation, and service to the client, which supported the theme incentives. Explicitly, the findings specified how 30% of the participants shared how important recognition is through incentives and rewards are necessary to maintain an



adequate level engagement. There were 15% of employees indicated depending on the task they were doing in the workplace enhanced or lessened the degree of engagement, which was consistent with employees becoming connected with their tasks, whether in group settings or individually resulting in the completion of tasks through a personal connection with the person and task (Kahn, 1990).

Additionally, recognition through incentives and rewards was consistent with Mone et al. (2011), which revealed employee engagement came from a framework for building commitment based on inspiring, rewarding, and involving employees in organizational actions. Further, Tilman et al. (2011) supported the importance of recognition through incentives and rewards that showed employees desire jobs that will provide them with a feeling of accomplishment, as well as a sense that compensation matches their services. Moreover, Bakker and Demerouti (2008) supported the importance of incentives and rewards, which indicated vital rewards that include feeling valued and involved, along with opportunities to develop in their jobs, and the extent to which the organization demonstrates care for its employees, intrinsically and extrinsically.

Participants in this study revealed that motivation was instrumental in maintaining a consistent work ethic, enthusiasm, and a positive attitude that will promote engagement

Increased morale surfaced as a theme supported by participant responses linked to level of happiness and passion for work, which was instrumental in augmenting the degree of employee engagement. Study participants further stressed that if they were not satisfied or happy, engagement was nonexistent, which resulted in the desire to seek

employment elsewhere. Additionally, study members indicated that a high level of happiness influences the intensity of their engagement, which would likely result in a high level of performance. Shuck and Rose (2013) affirmed that actively disengaged employees are unhappy at work and act out their unhappiness in the workplace through deviant workplace behaviors. In the findings, 25% of the participants stated that if they do not like their job and are not motivated, they will most likely not give their best effort and 30% of the participants stated in their job they would not be satisfied and will seek employment elsewhere which is consistent with the findings of this study as it relates to the theme increased morale.

Subsequently, the findings of this study associated with increased morale suggest that having a passion for work enhances the level of employee engagement, which results in job satisfaction and from having a love and passion for the job. James et al. (2011) emphasized that employees who have a passion for their work feel connected and more often fully engaged. There were five participants stated their engagement level is high because they are passionate and love the job, which helps with the morale which supports the findings related to the increased morale theme.

Increased confidence and reverence of management was also a theme that emerged. The findings augmented when leaders of the organization worked to create a positive work environment by providing support and employee autonomy, being approachable, and enforcing company rules. These actions by leadership helped in developing an organizational culture that fostered employee engagement. Mosadeghrad and Ansarian (2014) concluded that poor management and ineffective communications

are significant challenges in maintaining employee engagement. Moreover, participants in this study agreed that the level of trust and respect an employee has for organizational leadership is essential in employee engagement. Adler (2012) indicated engagement based on trust, respect, and commitment corroborate the findings.

The findings of RQ1 include incentives, increased morale, and increased confidence as themes that surfaced from the data collected.

### **Research Question 2**

*RQ2:* What factors do staff employees identify as the greatest influence on employee engagement?

The findings for RQ2 uncovered participant experiences related to organizational interest, recognition, and service to the client, that supported the theme associated with incentives. Kahn (1990) revealed how employees were personally connected with their daily tasks. The findings of this study also identified how the level of interest in what employee worked on enhanced engagement, which illustrates the consistency of results.

The research findings associated with incentives further illustrated that recognition through incentives and rewards aligned with the study conducted by Mone et al. (2011), which disclosed that employee engagement was shaped from a framework for building commitment based on rewarding, employees. Furthermore, the importance of recognition through incentives and rewards was supported by Tilman, Smith, and Tilman (2011) which stressed that employees desire jobs that provide them with a sense of accomplishment, as well as a compensation matching their services. Bakker and Demerouti (2008) study on employee engagement also supported the importance of

incentives and rewards that specified fundamental rewards include feeling valued and involved, along with opportunities to develop in their jobs, and the extent to which the organization demonstrates intrinsic and extrinsic consideration for its employees.

Service-to-the-client is an additional aspect that fosters engagement which is essential to the incentives theme. Participants communicated how the level of engagement increased from their role of being able to provide service to clients along with the show of appreciation from customers. Similarly, Schuck and Wollard (2013) emphasized how an engaged employee is an integral part in the development of positive customer relationships, which corroborates the findings related with this study.

Reward-based performance emerged as a theme maintained by participant responses linked to employee feedback and dissatisfaction. The findings revealed employers that accept and respond to employee feedback appreciate the importance of organizational support, along with the need for training, which is an essential aspect of sustaining and improving engagement. Schuck and Wollard (2013) study results substantiate this finding, which implied organizations have a responsibility to train employees and build a meaningful workplace. Dissatisfaction is an aspect necessary in the performance that leads to complaints, conflict, division, and a toxic work environment, which usually results in disengagement. Eversole, Venneberg, and Crowder (2012) proclaimed there is a definite relationship between the level of employee engagement and employee's feeling of satisfaction, which leads to performance beyond management's expectations. Organizational productivity serves as a theme that surfaced from study participants that centered on organizational relationships and positive inputs.

In particular, organizational relationships are seen instrumental in the positive engagement which correlates with improved organizational performance. Kataria, Garg, and Rastogi (2012) stated that engaged employees experience more significant work and organizational attachment. These attributes are helpful approaches toward improved engagement and relationships with co-workers, resulting in reduced absenteeism, and compliance with organization policies, practices, and procedures.

Moreover, participants emphasized that engaged employees be more likely to increase their productivity, resulting from favorable inputs, because they enjoy what they do, and that shows up in their performance. This aspect of organizational productivity is in direct correlation with the results of Gruman and Saks (2014) which found a high level of engagement in energized and optimistic employees that are highly motivated and focused on organizational goals and results in positive inputs and organizational attachment. The finding revealed that the level of engagement has a profound effect on positive inputs, which result in high or low productivity, subsequently influencing organizational productivity. The findings of Research Question 2 included incentives, reward-based performance, and organizational productivity as themes that surfaced from the data gathered. These results illustrate an obvious connection to the literature reviews and conceptual framework, which exhibits consistency with the findings associated with previous literature.

### **Limitations of the Study**

These following limitations were present during this study. One limitation of the study was that the population only included one academic school in the United States.

Another limitation included the fact that all participants were asked to be open and forthcoming with the disclosure of information regarding their work situation and experiences within the organization. Some of the participants received the same training on the subject, whereby the possibility exists that similarities in responses may surface. An additional limitation was the fact that the study participants included only one set of employees based at a single organization and consisted of only non-managerial employees, so the responses did not reflect perceptions of the organization as a whole.

The data from the study did not capture the lived experiences of individuals from other institutions. As such, the population was not representative of other geographical areas. Although the phenomenological study was not a wide enough to generalize results to all work settings, populations, and universities, it did include individuals who had a range of experience with the current organization and were of both genders. The phenomenon of employee engagement became clearer especially narrowing the research particularly to a specific organization and group of individuals, which provided the opportunity to address a gap in research. During this study, the results revealed that an adequate level of employee engagement could yield positive results and increase organizational productivity.

### **Recommendations**

This research study was conducted to address the identified gap in the literature regarding engagement in academia lived experiences influence their perception of working with management in the organization. The study was conducted with a sample of 20 full-time staff in a university setting located in the state of Georgia. All participants

were employed as full-time staff and had a minimum of five years 'experience working with the same manager and department. Specifically, participants' years of working in the same department ranged between five and eighteen years. The participants were five male and fifteen female. Within the sample, six participants had six or more years working with the same manager, and nine participants had worked five years. The staff contributed important insight into their experiences and perceptions concerning engagement in the workplace, and the effect that these experiences and perceptions had on their relationship with managers' involvement and work achievement among their department.

Given the participants in this study were employed as full-time staff from one academic institution, further research could address the limitations of this study by examining how the issue of employee engagement is experienced in other academic institutions throughout the state of Georgia. This study could provide a broader understanding of the types of leadership styles and involvement strategies managers use to produce an optimally engaged staff within the organization. Based on the participant requirement of this study, employees had a minimum of five years of working in the same department.

Further research could be conducted with staff participants having only one year of full-time employment. A research study of this sort may provide insight into the perceptions of one year full-time employees before they gain additional years of experience with the managers in the workplace. In addition, future studies could focus on a more diverse sample of participants than represented in this study. For example, this

could include faculty and post-docs within the university. Research in this area could provide the perspectives of faculty who work with managers and staff whose interaction is limited. Furthermore, a phenomenological study conducted with managers as participants would provide insight into the managerial perspective on employee engagement. Managerial perceptions regarding employee engagement in the workplace could be vital in aiding understanding of what managers believe their role should be in the high engagement achievement of their staff. This study could also provide an insight into the types of support and resources that are given to managers, in assisting with having a highly engaged staff, as it relates to academic policies and guidelines.

Opportunities for enhancing employee engagement in the workplace include five specific insights for leadership. Which include the importance of (1) building trust; (2) providing training, mentoring, and continuous learning for leaders; (3) creating policy or guidelines for employee engagement; (4) empowering workers; and (5) allowing flexible work schedules. The insights are helpful for recommending step organizational leaders can take to increase employee engagement in the workplace.

### **Importance of Building Trust**

To increase employee engagement, a leader should build trust among employees which is a perception of justice and associated with leader credibility Kamalian, Yaghoubi and Moloudi, 2010). According to Baker (2009), “Good times make life delightful, but good times do not build trust. That privilege is reserved for times when individual deliver on promises, despite the change, uncertainty, and chaos” (p. 12).



Participants confirmed the importance of building trust and defined it as a fundamental building block of an honest leader and worker relationships.

Trusting the leader was interpreted as experiencing fairness, receiving support, and experiencing mutual exchanges of ideas along with open communication without fear of criticism or repercussions. Maintaining employee engagement is dependent on building trust which associates with safety and satisfaction. Participants described disengagement as a product of broken promises, dishonesty, betrayal, and disappointment.

### **Leader Training, Mentoring, and Continuous Learning**

Schuck and Herd (2012) determined leadership training could positively affect all factors of leadership. After leaders completed leadership training, workers reported an increase in job satisfaction because of changes in the leader's behavior. Positive outcomes exist for leaders who participate in training. Furthermore, changing the leader's behavior influences both the workers and organization (Manzoor, 2012). Employees are an integral part of the organization.

Participant responses to the current engagement study support the theory that leadership training and mentoring is needed to encourage employee engagement. Furthermore, participants suggested that adopting leadership training and peer leader mentoring as an on-going process would assist leaders with evaluating and evolving leadership style and behaviors. Leaders should model desired behaviors and demonstrate engagement and commitment to motivate others. A leader should be willing to modify his

or her leadership style by using feedback to demonstrate they are continuously learning and committed to improving employee engagement.

### **Creating Policy or Guidelines for Employee Engagement**

Similar to other business agreements, employee engagement is a reciprocal contract between leaders and workers (Kamalian, Yaghoubi, & Moloudi, 2010). Participants in the current engagement study agreed self-motivation, personal commitment, and leader contribution are necessary for maintaining employee engagement. Developing leader and worker policies or guidelines may help leaders understand employee engagement and expectations. The current study results revealed that employees want to do their best work and contribute to the success of the company. The general recommendations included organizational changes that can improve employee engagement. Recommendations for leadership include aligning leader actions, performance behaviors, and conduct with suggestions to develop and improve employee engagement. According to Adler (2012), “engagement is driven by both ‘micro-level’ elements (personal growth, perceptions of supervisor, performance feedback) and ‘macro level’ elements (company leadership, honest communication, belief in future company success)” (p. 15). Participants identified recommendations that align with the findings of Kamalian, Yaghoubi, and Moloudi (2010). For example, participant recommendations included creating a policy of what engagement means to the company and employee. The rationale for developing policy was to improve communication to assist in determining whether employees and leaders have the same understanding of employee engagement.

Strategies to promote employee engagement may include. (1) Providing a voice for workers; (2) encouraging trust and respect; (3) promoting communication and collaboration; (4) providing support and guidance; (5) being fair and equitable, providing opportunities for growth, learning, rewards, and advancement; and (6) encouraging disengaged employees to re-engage. Strategy development is a starting point for addressing employee engagement. Taking action is the essential component of achieving change. Investing in human capital through effective strategies is one of the most critical investments organizational leaders can make (Adler, 2012).

### **Recommendations for Additional Studies**

Understanding engagement means developing studies to find a process and measure (Baaker, 2011). One recommendation is to conduct a phenomenological study on engagement with larger sample size, from a variety of organizational setting that can be generalized to the population. Although the number of participants was appropriate for the current qualitative study on engagement, increasing the number of participants in future studies may help determine a more consistent definition of employee engagement. Employee engagement is a construct that has significance in many other settings such as psychology, education, and healthcare (Baaker, 2011). A further study in other industries may result in a definition that may apply across disciplines.

The current qualitative study revealed various opinions and may vary, whereas not all responses correctly align with the study framework. Conducting future research that expands the parameters of the study would capture additional insights. Some examples of future studies to further the knowledge of employee engagement include

qualitative studies in psychology to help determine engagement level and how fully engaged individuals may contribute to their family and community. Qualitative studies in education could explore the perceptions and commitment of educators who may enhance the process of effective communication.

### **Implications**

Several factors emerged from the study. Reflecting strong implications that trigger employee engagement. The study results revealed that employee engagement was positive as relationships evolve into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments. Furthermore, the findings recognized that employee engagement was positively present during the receipt of economic and socio-emotional resources from their organization, an implicit aspect of the social exchange theory (Schuck & Wollard, 2013). A consistent theme that surfaced in both research questions from the responses of participants was incentives and associated with organizational interest, recognition, motivation, service to the client.

Participants implied that the level of interest in their work within the organization, importance of recognition through incentives and rewards, along with motivation when things become challenging, and providing service to clients was instrumental in enhancing or lessening the degree of engagement. Tilman et al. (2011) confirms the importance of recognition through incentives and rewards and asserted employees want jobs that will provide a feeling of accomplishment, in addition to, compensation that matches their services. Participants stressed the impact job satisfaction plays as a significant component of employee engagement that linked to increased

morale. Participants also emphasized if there is not a passion for what they do, engagement declines and the likelihood of dissatisfaction exist in the workplace. Also, participants indicated that being satisfied with individual job increases the level of engagement, which allows them to complete tasks and meet organizational requirements. Furthermore, James et al. (2011) emphasized when employees have a passion for their work, they are more often fully engaged, which supports the findings related to the increased morale theme. Several participants indicated they are passionate about the work for the department and students gave them high engagement in the workplace.

Further implications suggest that leadership plays a crucial role in creating a positive work environment through support, autonomy, welcoming, which develops into an organizational culture that increases confidence in management and fosters engagement. Additionally, the results suggest that when employees knew leaders cared and took steps for improvement, they, in turn, were willing to support the company, which increased the level of disengagement. Specifically, a micro-management leadership approach negatively tends to be a concern that affected the level of trust and respect an employee has for organization leadership which is the foundation of employee engagement. Mosadeghrad and Ansarian (2014) established that poor management is a significant challenge in maintaining employee engagement. As a result, dissatisfied employees affect team dynamics and breeds a culture of employees with negative feelings which often disrupts and even destroy the functionality of teams that adversely affects engagement.

Schuck and Wollard (2013) confirmed employers that foster a culture of employee feedback are positioned to provide the essential support that is essential to sustaining and improving engagement. Many study members indicated that if employees can provide opinions regarding company matters and provide solutions to work more efficiently, the feedback can result in leadership taking actionable steps that benefit engagement.

Overwhelmingly, participants linked organizational relationships that existed between employee and employer as contributory in positive employee engagement which correlates with improved organizational performance. Additionally, the study indicated this direct relationship is often the result of happy employees who characteristically performed at higher levels when fully engaged. Moreover, having a high level of happiness affects the intensity of employee engagement and the likelihood they would perform at an extraordinary level when fully engaged. Also, the employee's love for the job was influential in contributing to the level of happiness possessed which impacts the degree of engagement. Kataria, Garg, and Rastogi (2012) supported the claim which asserted that engaged employees experience greater organizational attachment as the study results indicate.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Positive social change may have a contribution from this study on an organizational level by identifying and maintaining effective methods that foster employee engagement. Since organizations are social systems, having concern for employees is an approach to improving engagement. The concept of employee

engagement is rapidly becoming an essential aspect of the workplace (Welch, 2011). By understanding the importance of employee engagement to organizations, it is critical that all stakeholders be involved in promoting the participation and involvement of employees (Handa & Gulati, 2014). Furthermore, it is essential for managers to promote engagement, because disengagement is central to the lack of commitment and motivation of workers (Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012). The following are additional approaches that may foster employee engagement within academic organizations in the state of Georgia: Organizations should increase its commitment and allocation of resources through time, money, and support in training employees and supervisors in promoting engagement methods. Employers that accept and respond to employee feedback better understand the importance of organizational support, in addition to being more understanding of training requirements, which is an essential trait in sustaining and improving engagement.

Leaders should be trained to regularly address employee commitment to reduce turnover, along with creating methods to discourage employees from becoming disengaged. Working relationships should evolve into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments, along with respect, which is vital to the level of confidence employees have in leaders. The absence of trust and respect in leaders is a significant factor that results in disengagement, causing employees to feel distant, unwanted, and unvalued. Recognition via incentives and rewards are essential in maintaining an adequate level of engagement. Being compensated and rewarded in the form of a salary increase or promotion is essential in preventing them from becoming disengaged. Reward and retain

engaged, willing, and productive workers, which will reduce the financial burden of employee turnover.

Foster active participation to augment job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which is positively related to employee engagement. The passion for work is significant in enhancing employee engagement. Job satisfaction serves as a significant element of employee engagement because of the love and passion for the job. Having job satisfaction increases the level of engagement, which allows the successful completion of tasks to meet organizational requirements.

The findings of this research study should contribute to positive social change within academic organizations, by specifically helping university system employees identify methods to improve and problems associated with engagement. An understanding of employee engagement as it relates to the lived experiences of employees in a university system adds to the body of knowledge regarding this phenomenon. Overall, this research could prove useful for leaders in the academic institutions, business organizations, in addition to communities who could benefit from this study by utilizing the findings defined by lived experiences of employees to gain an enhanced understanding of employee engagement.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored the lived experiences of Georgia school system employees regarding employee engagement. The results of this study were essential in allowing the researcher to determine if commonalities ensued that explored the phenomenon to understand employee perceptions regarding workplace engagement. Which yielded the



following five themes: (1) incentives, (2) increased morale, (3) increased confidence and reverence of management, (4) reward-based performance, and (5) organizational productivity. As a result of this study, the logical connections study offered insights that revealed the social exchange theory provided a theoretical foundation offering a source of bidirectional transaction that indicates explicitly a two-way win, which illustrated consistency that engagement is a reciprocal relationship between employer and employee. Furthermore, the results asserted that employee engagement was present as relationships progress over time into trusting, loyal, and mutual obligations.

Additionally, the findings acknowledged that employee engagement was existent resulting from the receipt of economic and socio-emotional resources from the organization, which is an established characteristic of the social exchange theory. Moreover, this qualitative analysis allowed the researcher to capture the unrehearsed viewpoints from the lived experiences of 20 employees working within a Georgia academic institution regarding the perspectives of employee engagement. The study consisted of two research questions developed to identify strategies that may increase the knowledge of employee engagement at a Georgia academic institution. This research was essential in confirming that the findings reflect a distinct relationship to the literature reviews and theoretical framework. Also, the findings of this study were instrumental in narrowing a research gap by reporting the effect of employee engagement which may create a better understanding of academic organizations to enhance employee engagement in the workplace. Moreover, keeping employees engaged in an academic institution may create a positive effect on numerous areas of operations.

## References

- Adler, S. (2012). Review of work engagement: A handbook of essential theory and research. *Personnel Psychology*, 65, 204–207. doi:10.1111/j.1744-6570.2011.01242\_2.x
- Aertsen, T., Jaspaert, K., & Van Gorp, B. (2013). From theory to practice: A crisis simulation exercise. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 76(3), 322-338. doi:10.1177/1080569913482575
- American Society for Training and Development. (2012). *State of the industry report. ASTDs annual review of U.S. and international trends in workplace learning and performance*. Washington, DC:
- Albrecht, S. L., Bakker, A. B., Gruman, J. A., Macey, W. H., & Saks, A. M. (2015). Employee engagement, human resource management practices and competitive advantage: An integrated approach. *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance*, 2(1), 7-35.
- Anitha, J. (2014). Determinants of employee engagement and their impact on employee performance. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*. 63(3) p. 308.
- Ariani, D. W. (2013). The relationship between employee engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, and counterproductive work behavior. *International Journal of Business Administration*, 4(2), 46.

- Aron, A., Lewandowski Jr, G. W., Mashek, D., & Aron, E. N. (2013). The self-expansion model of motivation and cognition in close relationships. (Eds.), Simpson, A. Campbell, L, *The Oxford handbook of close relationships* (pp. 90-115). New York, NY: Oxford University press
- Bakker, A. (2011). An evidence-based model of work engagement. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 20, 265–269. doi:10.1177/0963721411414534
- Bakker, A.B, Albrecht, S., & Leiter, M. (2011). Key questions regarding work engagement. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 20, 4-28. doi:10.1080/1359432X.2010.485352
- Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Lieke, L. (2012). Work engagement, performance, and active learning: The role of conscientiousness. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 80(2), 555-564.
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2008). Towards a model of work engagement. *Career Development International*, 13(3), 209-223.
- Baldoni, J. (2015), Mindful leaders have moxie. *Leader to Leader*, 2015(75) pp..31-36.: doi.org/10.1002/ltl.20163
- Baumruk, R. (2006). Why managers are crucial to increasing engagement: Identifying steps managers can take to engage their workforce. *Strategic HR Review*, 5(2), 24-27. doi:10.1108/14754390680000863
- Bell, R. L., & Martin, J. S. (2012). The relevance of scientific management and equity theory in everyday managerial communication situations. *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*, 13(3).

- Bhatnagar, J. (2012). Management of innovation: Role of psychological empowerment, work engagement, and turnover intention in the Indian context. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23, 928–951.  
doi:10.1080/09585192.2012.651313
- Bhuvanaiah, T., & Raya, R. P. (2015). Mechanism of improved performance: Intrinsic motivation and employee engagement. *SCMS Journal of Indian Management*, 12(4), 92-97.
- Biswas, S., & Bhatnagar, J. (2013). Mediator analysis of employee engagement: role of perceived organizational support, PO fit, organizational commitment and job satisfaction. *Vikalpa*, 38(1), 27-40.
- Blanchard, A. L., Welbourne, J., Gilmore, D., & Bullock, A. (2009). Followership styles and employee attachment to the organization. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal*, 12(2), 111-131.
- Bledow, R. Schmitt, A., Frese, M., & Kühnel, J. (2011). The affective shift model of work engagement. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96, 1246–1257.  
doi:10.1037/a0024532
- Blume, b. D., Baldwin, t. T., & Ryan, k. C. (2013). Communication apprehension: A barrier to students' leadership, adaptability, and multicultural appreciation. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 12(2), 158-172.  
doi:10.5465/amle.2011.0127

- Boh, W. F., & Wong, S. S. (2013). Organizational climate and perceived manager effectiveness: influencing perceived usefulness of knowledge sharing mechanisms. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 14(3), 122.
- Borrego, M., & Bernhard, J. (2011). The emergence of engineering education research as an internationally connected field of inquiry. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 100(1), 14–47. doi:10.1002/j.2168-9830.2011.tb00003.x
- Cardus, M. (2013). The five levers of employee engagement. *The Journal for Quality and Participation*, 36(2), 28-31.
- Chaudary, P. (2012). Effects of employees' motivation on organizational performance-A case study. *International Journal of Research in Economics & Social Sciences*, 2(9).
- Christensen, L. B., & Johnson, B. (2014). *Educational research, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (5th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Conteh, C. (2016). Rethinking accountability in complex and horizontal network delivery systems. *Can Public Admin*, 59: 224–244. doi:10.1111/capa.12168
- Cooper, D. R., & Schindler, P. S. (2014). *Business research methods (12th ed.)*. New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- Crabtree, S. (2013). *Worldwide, 13% of Employees are engaged at work*. Verfügbar unter Gallup World: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/165269/worldwide-employees-engaged-work.aspx> [Abrufdatum 20.07. 2014].

- Crawford, E. R., LePine, J. A., & Rich, B. L. (2010). Linking job demands and resources to employee engagement and burnout: A theoretical extension and meta-analytic test. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 95*, 834–848. doi:10.1037/a0019364
- Crawford, E. R., Rich, B. L., Buckman, B., & Bergeron, J. (2014). The antecedents and drivers of employee engagement. *Employee engagement in theory and practice, 57-81*.
- Cseko, G. C., & Tremaine, W. J. (2013). The role of the institutional review board in the oversight of the ethical aspects of human studies research. *Nutrition in Clinical Practice, 0884533612474042*.
- Dasgupta, S., Suar, D., & Singh, S. (2014). Managerial communication practices and employees' attitudes and behaviours: A qualitative study. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 19(3)*, 287-302.
- De Vries, R. E., Bakker-Pieper, A., & Oostenveld, W. (2010). Leadership = communication? The relations of leaders' communication styles with leadership styles, knowledge sharing and leadership outcomes. *Journal of Business & Psychology, 25(3)*, 367-380. doi:10.1007/s10869-009-9140-2
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Self-determination theory: A macro theory of human motivation, development, and health. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne, 49(3)*, 182.
- DePoy, E., & Gitlin, L. N. (2015). *Introduction to research: Understanding and applying multiple strategies*. Elsevier Health Sciences.

- Doherty, R. (2010). Making employee engagement an end-to-end practice. *Strategic HR Review*, 9(3), 32–37. doi:10.1108/14754391011040055
- Dollard, M. F., & Bakker, A. B. (2010). Psychosocial safety climate as a precursor to conducive work environments, psychological health problems, and employee engagement. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 83, 579–599. doi:10.1348/096317909X470690
- Edhlund, B., & McDougall, A. (2012). *NVivo 11 essentials*. Lulu. com.
- Elçi, M., & Alpan, L. (2010). The impact of perceived organizational ethical climate on work satisfaction. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 84(3), 297-311. doi:10.1007/s10551-008-97090
- Englander, M. (2012). The interview: Data collection in descriptive phenomenological human scientific research. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 43(1), 13-35.
- Erickson, S. L., Weber, M., & Segovia, J. (2011). Using communication theory to Analyze Corporate Reporting Strategies. *Journal of Business Communication*, 48(2), 207-223. doi:10.1177/0021943611399728
- Eversole, B. A., Venneberg, D. L., & Crowder, C. L. (2012). *Creating a flexible organizational culture to attract and retain talented workers across generations*. Advances in Developing Human Resources, doi: 10.1177/1523422312455612
- Frels, R. K., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2013). Administering quantitative instruments with qualitative interviews: A mixed research approach. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 91, 184–194. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.2013. 00085.x

- Gallup. (2013). *State of the American workplace: 2008–2010*. Gallup Management Journal.
- Gavino, M. C., Wayne, S. J., & Erdogan, B. (2012). Discretionary and transactional human resource practices and employee outcomes: The role of perceived organizational support. *Human Resource Management, 51*(5), 665-686.
- Gibson, C. B., & McDaniel, D. M. (2010). Moving beyond conventional wisdom advancements in cross-cultural theories of leadership, conflict, and teams. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 5*, 450–462.  
doi:10.1177/1745691610375560
- Glavas, A. (2012). Employee engagement and sustainability: A model for implementing meaningfulness at and in work. *Journal of Corporate Citizenship, 2012*(46), 13–29. doi:10.9774/GLEAF.4700.2012.su.00003
- Glavas, A., & Godwin, L. N. (2013). Is the perception of ‘goodness’ good enough? Exploring the relationship between perceived corporate social responsibility and employee organizational identification. *Journal of Business Ethics, 114*(1), 15-27.
- Ghosh, P., Satyawadi, R., Prasad Joshi, J., & Shadman, M. (2013). Who stays with you? Factors predicting employees' intention to stay. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 21*(3), 288-312. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJOA>
- Grant, D. & Marshak, R. J. (2011). Toward a discourse-centered understanding of organizational change. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 47*, 204–235. doi: 10.1177/0021886310397612



- Gruman, J. A., & Saks, A. M. (2011). Performance management and employee engagement. *Human Resource Management Review*, 21, 123–136. doi: 10.1016/j.hrmr.2010.09.004
- Haider, N., Ahmad, N., Farooq, O., Rasheed, I., & Parveen, S. (2014). The role of organizational resources and environment in organizational performance and customer loyalty; service climate as mediator: A study of telecommunication Sector of Pakistan.
- Hakanen, J. J., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2012). Do burnout and work engagement predict depressive symptoms and life satisfaction? A three-wave seven-year prospective study. *Journal of affective disorders*, 141(2), 415-424. View opposite of engagement (p. 2)
- Handa, M., & Gulati, A. (2014). Employee engagement: does individual personality matter. *Journal of Management Research*, 14(1), 57.
- Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., Asplund, J. W., Killham, E. A., & Agrawal, S. (2010). Causal impact of employee work perceptions on the bottom line of organizations. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5, 378–389. doi:10.1177/1745691610374589
- Hartman, T. (2013). Strong Multiplicity: An interpretive lens in the analysis of qualitative interview narratives. *Qualitative Research*, 15, 281-295. doi:10.1177/1468794112473493
- Heathfield, S. M. (2015). What is human resource development? Retrieved 2015

- Hewitt, A. (2015). 2012 Trends in global employee engagement. *Aon Corporation*.  
Retrieved [http://www.aon.com/unitedkingdom/attachments/trp/Trends-in-Global-Employee-Engagement-Report-2015\\_EMEA.pdf](http://www.aon.com/unitedkingdom/attachments/trp/Trends-in-Global-Employee-Engagement-Report-2015_EMEA.pdf)
- James, J. B., McKechnie, S., & Swanberg, J. (2011). Predicting employee engagement in an age-diverse retail workforce. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 32, 173–196. doi:10.1002/job.681
- Josefy, M., Kuban, S., Ireland, R. D., & Hitt, M. A. (2015). All things great and small: organizational size, boundaries of the firm, and a changing environment. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 9(1), 715-802.
- Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33, 692–724.  
doi:10.2307/256287
- Kahn, W. A. (1992). To be fully there: Psychological presence at work. *Human Relations*, 45(4), 321-349. doi: 10.1177/001872679204500402
- Kamalian, A. R., Yaghoubi, N. M., & Moloudi, J. (2010). Survey of relationship between organizational justice and empowerment (A case study). *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*, 24(2), 165-171.
- Karanges, E., Johnston, K., Beatson, A., & Lings, I. (2015). The influence of internal communication on employee engagement: A pilot study. *Public Relations Review*, 41(1), 129-131.

- Kataria, A., Garg, P., & Rastogi, R. (2012). Employee engagement and organizational effectiveness: The role of organizational citizenship behavior. *International Journal of Business Insights & Transformation*, 6, 102–113.
- Keyton, J., Caputo, J., Ford, E., Fu, R., Leibowitz, S. A., Liu, T., & Wu, C. (2013). Investigating Verbal Workplace Communication Behaviors. *Journal of Business Communication*, 50(2), 152-169. doi:10.1177/0021943612474990
- Khan, K. U., Farooq, S. U., & Ullah, M. I. (2010). The relationship between rewards and employee motivation in commercial banks of Pakistan. *Research Journal of International Studies*, 14, 37-52.
- Kilfedder, C. & Litchfield, P. (2014). Wellbeing as a business priority. *Wellbeing*. 6:2:10:1–30. doi: 10.1002/9781118539415.wbwell045
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2011). *The five practices of exemplary leadership*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Krishnan, S. G., & Wesley, J. R. (2013) A Study on impact of employee communication on employee engagement level. *International Research Journal of Business and Management*, 6(12), 54-64.
- LaBanca, F. (2011). Online dynamic asynchronous audit strategy for reflexivity in the qualitative paradigm. *The Qualitative Report*, 16(4), 1160-1171
- Lee, Y. K., Kim, S., Son, M. H., & Kim, M. S. (2015). Linking Organizational Justice to Job Performance: Evidence from the Restaurant Industry in East Asia. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 20(sup1), 1527-1544.

- Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2016). *Practical research: Planning and design* (8th ed.). Harlow, England: Prentice Hall.
- Lisoski, E. (2009), "Organizational change dynamics in transforming from mass production to a lean thinking model: an explanatory case study", PhD dissertation (Publication No. AAT 3387844), available from dissertations and theses: full text, Capella University, Minneapolis, MN (accessed July 24, 2010)
- Ludwig, T. D., & Frazier, C. B. (2012). Employee engagement and organizational behavior management. *Journal of Organizational Behavior Management*, 32(1), 75–82. doi:10.1080/01608061.2011.619439
- Mahal, P. (2010). Organizational Culture and Organizational Climate as a Determinant of Motivation. *IUP Journal of Management Research*, 8(10), 38-51.
- Malik, M. E., Ghafoor, M. M., & Naseer, S. (2011). Organizational effectiveness: a case study of telecommunication and banking sector of Pakistan. *Far East Journal of Psychology and Business*, 2(1), 37-48.
- Manzoor, Q. A. (2012). Impact of employee motivation on organizational effectiveness. *Business Management and Strategy*, 3(1), 1.
- Markos, S., & Sridevi, M. S. (2010). Employee engagement: The key to improving performance. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 5(12). Retrieved from <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ijbm/article/viewFile/6745/6332>
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2014). *Designing qualitative research*. Sage publications. Thousand Oaks, CA.

- Martins, A., Donald Ah, P., & Martins, I. (2013). Communication and leadership - dialectical tensions in virtual communities of practice. *Management* (1820-0222), (68), 23-30. doi: 10.7595/management.fon.2013.0021
- Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Toward a psychology of being*. New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Sage publications. Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Mendes, F., & Stander, M. W. (2011). Positive organization: The role of leader behavior in work engagement and retention. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 37(1), 1-13.
- Messarra, L. C. (2014). Religious diversity at work: The perceptual effects of religious discrimination on employee engagement and commitment. *Contemporary Management Research*, 10(1), 59
- Mills, N. (2012). The corporatization of higher education. *Dissent*, 59(4), 6-9.
- Momeni, M., Anvari, M. R. A., Kalali, N. S., Raoofi, Z., & Zarrineh, A. (2010). *The effect of personality on happiness: A study in the University of Tehran*. Retrieved from <http://wbiconpro.com/432-Reza.pdf>
- Mone, E., Eisinger, C., Guggenheim, K., Price, B., & Stine, C. (2011). Performance management at the wheel: Driving employee engagement in organizations. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 26, 205–212. doi:10.1007/s10869-011-9222-9

- Mosadeghrad, A. M., & Ansarian, M. (2014). Why do organisational change programmes fail? *International Journal of Strategic Change Management*, 5(3), 189-218.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE publications.
- Neale, J. (2016). Iterative categorization (IC): a systematic technique for analysing qualitative data. *Addiction*, 111(6), 1096–1106. doi:10.1111/add.13314
- Neuman, W. L. (2007). *Social research methods* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Newman, D. A., & Harrison, D. A. (2008). Been there, bottled that: Are state and behavioral work engagement new and useful construct “wines”? *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 1, 31–35. doi:10.1111/j.1754-9434.2007.00003.x
- Niessen, C., Binnewies, C., & Rank, J. (2010). Disengagement in work-role transitions. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 83, 695–715. doi:10.1348/096317909X470717
- Nimon, K., Zigarmi, D., Houson, D., Witt, D., & Diehl, J. (2011). The work cognition inventory: Initial evidence of construct validity. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 22(1), 7-35.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Leech, N. L., & Collins, K. M. T. (2010). Innovative data collection strategies in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(3), 696-726.  
Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/578480539?accountid=34899>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Pedrycz, W., Russo, B., & Succi, G. (2011). A model of job satisfaction for collaborative development processes. *Journal of Systems and Software*, 84, 739–752. doi: 10.016/j.jss.2010.12.018
- Pepe, M. (2010). The impact of extrinsic motivational dissatisfiers on employee level of job satisfaction and commitment resulting in the intent to turnover. *Journal of Business & Economics Research*, 8, 99–107.
- Petty, N. J., Thomson, O. P., & Stew, G. (2012). Ready for a paradigm shift? Part 2: Introducing qualitative research methodologies and methods. *Manual therapy*, 17(5), 378-384.
- Randhawa, G., & Kaur, K. (2014). Organizational climate and its correlates. *Journal of Management Research (09725814)*, 14(1), 25-40.
- Rich, B. L., Lepine, J. A., & Crawford, E. R. (2010). Job engagement: Antecedents and effects on job performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53, 617–635. doi: 10.5465/AMJ.2010.51468988
- Richards, W. K. (2013). *Exploring increased productivity through employee engagement*. (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Digital Dissertations database. (ATT 3602356)
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M., & Ormston, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. London: Sage Publications.

- Robertson, I. T., & Cooper, C. L. (2010). Full engagement: The integration of employee engagement and psychological well-being. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *31*, 324–336. doi:10.1108/01437731011043348
- Rodham, K., Fox, F., & Doran, N. (2015). Exploring analytical trustworthiness and the process of reaching consensus in interpretative phenomenological analysis: lost in transcription. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *18*(1), 59–71. doi:10.1080/13645579.2013.852368
- Ruslan, R., Islam, M.A., & Noor, I.M. (2014). The relationship between psychological meaningfulness and employee engagement: Moderating effect of age and gender. *Journal of Asian Scientific Research*, *4*, 711-722. Retrieved from <http://www.aessweb.com>
- Rutherford, A. (2010). Get by with a little help from my friends: A recent history of charitable organizations in economic theory. *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, *17*(4), 1031-1046.
- Sakovska, M. (2013). *Importance of employee engagement in business environment measuring the engagement level of administrative personnel in VUC Aarhus and detecting factors requiring improvement* (Master's Thesis, Computer Science Dept. Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark).
- Saks, A.M., & Gruman, J.A. (2014). What do we really know about employee engagement? *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, *25*(2), 155-182. doi:10.1002/hrdq.21187



- Samkin, G., & Schneider, A. (2008). Adding scientific rigor to qualitative data analysis: An illustrative example. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, 5(3), 207-238. doi: 10.1108/11766090810910227
- Schaufeli, W. B., & Salanova, M. A. R. I. S. A. (2014). Burnout, boredom and engagement at the workplace. *People at work: An introduction to contemporary work psychology*, 293-320.
- Schaufeli, W. B., & Taris, T. W. (2014). A critical review of the Job Demands-Resources Model: Implications for improving work and health. In *bridging occupational, organizational and public health* (pp. 43-68). Springer Netherlands.
- Schuck, M. B., & Wollard, K. K. (2013). A historical perspective of employee engagement: An emerging definition.
- Schultze, U., & Avital, M. (2011). Designing interviews to generate rich data for information systems research. *Information and Organization*, 21, 1-16. doi: 10.1016/j.infoandorg.2010.11.001
- Scotti, D. J., & Harmon, J. (2014). Linkages between organization climate and work outcomes: Perceptual differences among health service professionals as a function of customer contact intensity. *Journal of Health & Human Services Administration*, 36(4), 417-459.
- Sharma, B. R., Mohapatra, M., & Rai, S. (2013). Organizational Commitment as a Measure of Managerial Motivation Search for its Predictors in a Multinational Organization. doi: 10.1177/0258042X13509735
- Sherrod, A. (2011). *Beginning DirectX 11 game programming*. Cengage Learning.

- Shuck, B., & Herd, A. M. (2012). Employee engagement and leadership: Exploring the convergence of two frameworks and implications for leadership development in HRD. *Human Resource Development Review, 11*, 156–181. doi:10.1177/1534484312438211
- Shuck, B., Ghosh, R., Zigarmi, D., & Nimon, K. (2013). The jingle jangle of employee engagement further exploration of the emerging construct and implications for workplace learning and performance. *Human Resource Development Review, 12*(1), 11-35. doi: 10.1177/1534484312463921
- Shuck, B., & Reio, T. G. (2014). Employee engagement and well-being a moderation model and implications for practice. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 21*(1), 43-58.
- Shuck, B., Reio, T., & Rocco, T. (2011). Employee engagement: An examination of antecedent and outcome variables. *Human Resource Development International, 14*, 427–445. doi:10.1080/13678868.2011.601587
- Shuck, B., & Rose, K. (2013). Reframing employee engagement within the context of meaning and purpose: Implications for HRD. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 15*, 341–355. doi:10.1177/1523422313503235
- Silver, C., & Lewins, A. (2014). *Using Software in Qualitative Research: A Step-by-Step Guide* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Singh, V. P. (2012). Language and Body Language. *Advances in BioResearch, 3*(2).
- Singh, P., & Loncar, N. (2010). Pay satisfaction, job satisfaction and turnover intent. *Relations Industrielles, 65*, 470–490. doi:10.7202/044892ar

- Sinkovics, R. R., Penz, E., Ghauri, E., & Pervez, N. G. (2008). Enhancing the trustworthiness of qualitative research in international business. *Management International Review*, *48*(6), 689-713
- Skarzauskiene, A. (2010). Managing complexity: Systems thinking as a catalyst of the organization performance. *Measuring Business Excellence*, *14*(4), 49–64. doi:10.1108/13683041011093758
- Society for Human Resource Management (2012). *Employee engagement and commitment: A guide to understanding, measuring and increasing engagement in your organization*. Alexandria, VA: SHRM Foundation.
- Soieb, A., Othman, J., & D'Silva, J. L. (2013). The effects of perceived leadership styles and organizational citizenship behavior on employee engagement: The mediating role of conflict management. *International Journal of Business and Management*, *8*(8), 91–99. doi:10.5539/ijbm.v8n8p91
- Sriram, P. (2014). *The Art of Leadership Communication*. *Leadership Excellence*, *31*(4)
- Storey, J., Ulrich, D., Welbourne, T. M., & Wright, P. M. (2009). Employee engagement. *The Routledge Companion to Strategic Human Resource Management*, 299.
- Tilman, C. J., Smith, F. A., & Tilman, W. R. (2011). Work locus of control and the multidimensionality of job satisfaction. *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communication and Conflict*, *14*(2), 107–125.
- Truss, C., Shantz, A., Soane, E., Alfes, K., & Delbridge, R. (2013). Employee engagement, organizational performance and individual well-being: exploring the

evidence, developing the theory. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24(14), 2657-2669.

Turkyilmaz, A., Akman, G., Ozkan, C., & Pastuszak, Z. (2011). Empirical study of public sector employee loyalty and satisfaction. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 111(5), 675-696. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02635571111137250>

Valentin, M. A., Valentin, C. C., & Nafukho, F. M. (2015). The engagement continuum model using corporate social responsibility as an intervention for sustained employee engagement: Research leading practice. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 39(3), 182-202. [doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-01-2014-0007](http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-01-2014-0007)

Van De Voorde, K. K., Van Veldhoven, M. M., & Paauwe, J. J. (2010). Time precedence in the relationship between organizational climate and organizational performance: a cross-lagged study at the business unit level. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 21(10), 1712-1732. [doi:10.1080/09585192.2010.500491](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2010.500491)

Vanpoucke, E., & Vereecke, A. (2010). The predictive value of behavioral characteristics on the success of strategic alliances. *International Journal of Production Research*, 48, 6715-6738. [doi:10.1080/00207540903307623](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00207540903307623)

Van Rooy, D. L., Whitman, D. S., Hart, D., & Caleo, S. (2011). Measuring employee engagement during a financial downturn: Business imperative or nuisance. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 26(2), 147-152.

- Vesty, G., Sridharan, V. G., Northcott, D., & Dellaportas, S. (2016). Burnout among university accounting educators in Australia and New Zealand: determinants and implications. *Accounting & Finance*.
- Wagstaff, M. F., Collela, A., Triana, M. D. C., Smith, A. N., & Watkins, M. B. (2015). Subordinates' perceptions of supervisor paternalism: a scale development. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 30(6), 659-674.
- Walumbwa, F. O., Hartnell, C. A., & Oke, A. (2010). Servant leadership, procedural justice climate, service climate, employee attitudes, and organizational citizenship behavior: a cross-level investigation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(3), 517.
- Wang, D.-S., & Hsieh, C.-C. (2013). The effect of authentic leadership on employee trust and employee engagement. *Social Behavior & Personality*, 41, 613–624.  
doi:10.2224/sbp.2013.41.4.613.
- Watson, T. (2012). Global Workforce Study: Engagement at risk: driving strong performance in a volatile global environment. Retrieved from:  
<http://towerswatson.com/assets/pdf/2012-towers-watson-global-workforce-study.pdf>.
- Weiss, H. & Rupp, D. (2011). Experiencing work: An essay on a person-centric work psychology. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 4, 83–97.  
doi:10.1111/j.1754-9434.2010.01302.x
- Welbourne, T. M. (2007). Employee engagement: Beyond the fad and into the executive suite. *Leader to Leader*, 2007(44), 45-51.

- Welch, M. (2011). The evolution of the employee engagement concept: Communication implications. *Corporate Communications, 16*, 328–346.  
doi:10.1108/13563281111186968
- White, B. (2011). *Employee engagement report 2011: Beyond the numbers: A practical approach for individuals, managers, and executives*. Princeton, NJ: Blessing White Research.
- Whittington, J., & Galpin, T. (2010). The engagement factor: Building a high commitment organization in a low-commitment world. *Journal of Business Strategy, 31*(5), 14–24. doi:10.1108/02756661011076282.
- Xanthopoulou, D., Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2012). A diary study on the happy worker: How job resources relate to positive emotions and personal resources. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 21*(4), 489-517.
- Yazdani, B. O., Yaghoubi, N. M., & Giri, E. S. P. (2011). Factors affecting the empowerment of employees. *European Journal of Social Sciences, 20*(2), 267-274.
- Yin, R. K. (2015). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. Guilford Publications.
- Yudhvir, M., & Sunita, M. (2012). Employee's motivation: Theories and perspectives. *Asian Journal of Multidimensional Research, 1*(2), 56-64.
- Yukl, G. (2012). Effective leadership behaviors: What we know and what questions need more attention? *The Academy of Management Perspectives*, amp-2012.

- Zhang, R., Liu, X., Wang, H., & Shen, L. (2011). Service climate and employee service performance: exploring the moderating role of job stress and organizational identification. *Service Industries Journal*, 31(14), 2355-2372.  
doi:10.1080/02642069.2010.503873
- Zhang, T., C. Avery, G., Bergsteiner, H., & More, E. (2014). The relationship between leadership paradigms and employee engagement. *Journal of Global Responsibility*, 5(1), 4-21. Doi:10.1108/JGR-02-2014-0006
- Zikmund, W., Babin, B., Carr, J., & Griffin, M. (2012). Business research methods: Cengage Learning. *H4 B*.

Appendix A: Letter Granting Permission to Conduct the Study in the Georgia State  
University System

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for speaking with me and providing instructions on receiving IRB approval. I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at your institution. I am currently enrolled in the College of Management Program at Walden University. I have been granted approval from Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the study entitled, "Employee Engagement from the Viewpoint of Employees in Academia," a phenomenological study that is from the lived experiences of staff in the workplace. (Approval Letter attached)

I hope that the school administration will allow me to recruit staff people from the school to complete a one on one interview questions (copy attached) with me. Interested staff, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form (copy attached) to be signed and returned to the researcher at the beginning of the interview process. If approval is granted, the participants will complete the interview in a quiet setting of their choice and time. The meeting should take no longer than 60 minutes. The participant's name in this study will remain entirely confidential. Should this study be published, only results will be documented. No cost will be incurred by either the school or individual participants.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have. You may contact me at my email address [stephanie.merrick@waldenu.edu](mailto:stephanie.merrick@waldenu.edu)

If you agree, kindly acknowledge your approval or a signed letter of permission on the Institute letterhead acknowledging your authority.

Sincerely,  
Stephanie Giles Merrick  
Walden University- College of Management

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print your name and title here      Signature

10/2/17  
Date

Research Associate  
Office of Research Integrity & Assurance  
Georgia Institute of Technology



## Appendix B: Letter Granting Permission to use Interview Questions

██████████, Program Manager External Programs at Raytheon

---

I modeled my question after hers, my committee suggested rewrite the question and cite her in order to pass through IRB because ██████████ did not respond to me.

With that being said I'll give you permission to use my questionnaire.

Sent from LinkedIn for iPhone

<http://lnkd.in/ios>

## Appendix C: Interview Questions and Demographic Data

- Q1: How do you define employee engagement?
- Q2: In your role, what keeps you fully engaged in your tasks?
- Q3: In your role, how and why do employees become disengaged in their task?
- Q4: How do you remain motivated in your current role?
- Q5: In your role, how does job satisfaction affect your engagement level?
- Q6: How does your engagement level affect your decision to remain with the company?
- Q7: What gives your work meaning in your role?
- Q8: How would you describe the role of leadership in employee engagement?
- Q9: How do you believe employees can be reengaged?
- Q10: What effect and influence do disengaged employees have in the Organization?
- Q11: How does trust and respect in the organization and leadership affect employee engagement?
- Q12: What is your perception of employee engagement?
- Q13: How would you describe the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance?
- Q14: What effect does employee engagement have on productivity?

## Demographic Data

## 1. Age

- 18-28  40-49  
 29-39  50 or over

## 2. Sex

- a. Male  c. Transgender  
 b. Female

## 3. Education Level

- a. High School  d. Master's  
 b. Associate's  e. Doctorate  
 c. Bachelor's  f. Other, please specify

## 4. Number of Years in current Job

- a. 5-10  c. 16-20  
 b. 11-15  d. 21 or over

## 5. Which is your department in the college?

- a. College of Management  c. Facilities  
 b. College of Engineering  d. Auxiliary

## 6. Which position are you occupying in your department?

- a. Administrative Assistant  d. Auxiliary  
 b. IT Technology  e. Human Resources  
 c. Custodial staff  f. other (specify)

## Appendix D: Confidentiality Agreement-Transcriptionist

Between [REDACTED] (Transcriptionist)

AND: Stephanie Giles Merrick (Researcher)

WHEREAS:

The transcriptionist has agreed with Stephanie Giles Merrick permitting access to particular research participants' names and opinions; and that the agreement includes security and confidentiality restricting the access for 'purposes authorized by Stephanie Giles-Merrick.

I promise to abide by the following terms and conditions:

- I. I will not use copy or future access the information to which I have been granted access and asked to transcribe.
2. I will at all times treat as confidential all information related to the recording of the research data and will not permit the publication, release or disclosure of the same.

For this agreement, Information related to research participants, includes, but not limited to:

- i. the individual's name, or email address
- ii. the individual's opinions, as presented for this research project

Signature of the transcriptionist [REDACTED]

Date: 11/1/2017