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Strategies for Managing Employee Self-Expression in the Workplace

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2019

Abstract

Strategies for Managing Employee Self-Expression in the Workplace

by

Heather Cavise

MHRM, Manhattanville University, 2001

BS, University of Delaware, 1997

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

March 2019

Abstract

The evidence shows that 50% to 70% of higher education employees in the United States are disengaged in the workplace. Some higher education institutions are negatively affected by imposing strict guidelines restricting employees' freedom of self-expression in the workplace. Using Herzberg's 2-factor theory of motivation as the conceptual framework, the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies used by higher education institution leaders to manage workplace self-expression without negatively affecting motivation and work productivity. The population was 9 leaders from 3 higher education institutions in central and northern New Jersey. Data collection was conducted through semistructured interviews and review of institutional data and information. Data were analyzed using inductive coding, and member checking was used to ensure credibility. Three themes emerged: workplace environment, management relationships, and barriers in the workplace. The study findings revealed that the policies implemented in higher education institutions to restrict self-expression in the workplace did not have a negative effect on employee motivation and work productivity. Leaders in higher education institutions might apply these findings to develop an enriched workplace environment, which could improve employee retention rates. The implications for positive social change include the potential to increase economic contributions of the students who receive the education delivered by engaged higher education employees, and the subsequent increased tax base resulting from increased earnings.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The alignment of strategy, structure, and management systems is beneficial for business in both coordinating activities and motivating employees (Silverman, 2015). Strategy relates to making successful choices, and successes in organizational social responsibility are no different. U.S. organizations are competing with companies globally and should have the personnel equipped and prepared to work effectively with others. Certain businesses such as educational institutions have veered toward criteria that meet goals without being contingent on applicant identity but abilities (Ekwoaba, Ikeije, & Ufoma, 2015). Business leaders have begun to recognize that diverse cultural teams have the ability to deliver products to market before competitors (Lichter, 2013). As more and more businesses become virtual, therefore limiting face-to-face interactions, the more freedom employees should have with self-expression.

Background of the Problem

The workplace is where many adults devote significant portions of their waking lives, but it is also where civil liberties, including freedom of speech, are significantly constrained. Clearly, self-expression is powerful, providing people with a type of identity and character, distinguishing us from one another in a world desperate to categorize and label. Many employers impose strict guidelines on employee appearance, dress, and grooming for legitimate reasons. These rules protect the businesses' public image, promote a productive work environment, define a culture, comply with health and safety standards, and even prevent claims of unlawful harassment (Roberts, 2012). However,

businesses should be hesitant to establish too many requirements for fear of encroaching on employees' freedom to express themselves, resulting in lower productivity.

Problem Statement

When employers restrict employees' workplace self-expression, work productivity and motivation decline (Ostapenko, 2015). Reduced employee motivation resulting from restricted employees' workplace self-expression reduces work productivity by 50% to 70% (Cable, Gino, & Staats, 2013). The general business problem that I addressed in this study is that some higher education institutions are negatively affected by imposing strict guidelines that restrict employees' freedom to express themselves in the workplace. The specific business problem that I addressed in this study is that some higher education institution business leaders lack strategies to manage workplace self-expression without negatively affecting work productivity.

Purpose Statement

My purpose in this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies used by higher education institution business leaders to manage workplace self-expression without negatively affecting work productivity. Managers and executives from three higher education institutions located in central and northern New Jersey participated in the interviews. Organizations that are more flexible with employee workplace self-expression guidelines may have a more motivated workforce, and increased productivity, which will have a positive social and economic influence on communities. Businesses employing motivated, productive employees may be more profitable, resulting in increased tax revenue and employment, thereby reducing the need for worker economic

assistance. This may enable local governments to allocate scarce financial resources to other programs, thereby benefiting the community.

Nature of the Study

Researchers use the qualitative research method to explore the *what, how,* and *why* pertaining to the phenomenon (Bernard, 2010). Because my purpose in this study was to explore strategies that business leaders use to manage workplace self-expression in the workplace without negatively affecting work productivity, the qualitative method was appropriate for this study. Researchers use the quantitative method to examine relationships among variables, or to compare group differences (Yin, 2014). Therefore, the quantitative method was not appropriate because I did not examine relationships among variables. Finally, the mixed-methods methodology is appropriate when the researcher chooses to combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Yin, 2014). Therefore, the mixed method was not appropriate for this study because there was no quantitative component for this study.

The case study design is used when researchers want to explore a case, bounded in time and place, for the purposes of generating insights from interviews and observations conducted in real-life settings (Campbell, 2014). Therefore, the case study design was appropriate for exploring strategies leaders use to manage employee workplace freedom of expression without negatively impacting business results. Researchers use phenomenological designs to explore the meanings of participants' real-life experiences and perceptions regarding a phenomenon (Bernard, 2010). Therefore, the phenomenological design was not appropriate because exploring experiences and

perceptions was not my intent in this study. The ethnographic design is a design that researchers use to explore groups' cultures in real-life settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Therefore, the ethnographic design was not appropriate, as the intent for my study was not to explore groups' cultures.

Research Question

The primary research question was: What strategies do higher education business leaders use to manage employee freedom of expression without negatively affecting business results?

Interview Questions

1. What part of the business strategy prompted you to develop and implement policies and procedures around self-expression in the workplace?

2. What specific policies have you implemented regarding self-expression in the workplace?

3. What specific types of employee self-expression do your organizational policies limit in the workplace and how does it relate to the business strategy?

4. What impact have you observed on work productivity and motivation since restricting self-expression in the workplace?

5. What strategies have you considered to increase productivity and motivation while keeping the rules in place?

6. What feedback, if any, did you solicit from employees concerning policies restricting self-expression in the workplace prior to implementing a policy?

7. What were key obstacles to implementing successful policies for restricting self-expression in the workplace and how did they affect the strategy?

8. How did you address the obstacles?

9. What other topics that we did not cover in our discussion would you like to discuss that may contribute to my understanding of the strategies you utilize to manage self-expression in the workplace without negatively impacting work productivity?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework I chose for my study is the Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) motivation hygiene theory, or two-factor theory from 1964. The Herzberg theory classifies and addresses variables that affect job satisfaction, job dissatisfaction, employee turnover, and retention. Herzberg proposed that most factors that contribute to job satisfaction are motivators, and most factors that contribute to job dissatisfaction are hygiene elements. Motivators include: achievement, recognition, the satisfaction of the work itself, responsibility, and opportunities for advancement and growth. Hygiene factors include: company policy, general management and supervision, working relations relationship with supervisors, status, security, and working conditions. Herzberg described hygiene factors as dissatisfiers because their absence or inadequacy leads to dissatisfaction at work. Herzberg collected data by interviewing accountants and engineers to understand employee motivators and determine which motivators provide employees with job satisfaction. The motivation factors found to most affect job satisfaction were personal growth and self-achievement, while the hygiene factors found

to most affect job dissatisfaction were work-related relationships, work conditions, and pay (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Herzberg's theory informed my study because management must determine when more job satisfaction is needed, and when less job dissatisfaction is needed. Because my purpose in this study was to explore strategies used to manage workplace self-expression without negatively affecting work productivity, the framework developed by Herzberg provided an appropriate lens through which to explore issues in the workplace that can cause job satisfaction, and those that can cause dissatisfaction. By exploring workplace self-expression through the lens of motivators and hygiene factors, the researcher identified strategies for managing workplace self-expression without sacrificing work productivity.

Operational Definitions

Business culture: A style of business operations within a company that determines how different levels of staff communicate with one another as well as how employees deal with clients and customers.

Employee motivation: Using both tangible and non-tangible rewards to keep employees enthusiastic, loyal and interested in continual improvement.

Ethical leadership: The demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement and decision making (Jung & Kim, 2016). Jung and Kim (2016) addressed ethical leadership from a

social learning perspective and suggested followers will eventually behave similarly to their leader through imitation and observational learning.

Employee productivity: An assessment of the efficiency of a worker or group of workers.

Job satisfaction: Job satisfaction is the level of contentment employees feel about their work, which can affect performance. Job satisfaction can be influenced by a person's ability to complete required tasks, the level of communication in an organization, and the way management treats employees (Siengthai & Pila-Ngarm, 2016).

Leadership strategy: A manager's potential to express a strategic vision for the organization, or a part of the organization, and to motivate and persuade others to acquire that vision.

Self-expression: A display of individuality whether it's through words, clothing, hairstyle, or art forms such as writing and drawing.

Sense of community: The essence of community involving a deeper sense of connection among people, including support, freedom of expression, and genuine caring (Garrett, Spreitzer, & Bacevice, 2014).

Work intentions: A set of goal representations formed as a result of an appraisal process designed to meet an individual's needs and wants stemming from a sense of employee well-being

Workplace: The location at which an employee provides work for an employer where many adults devote significant portions of their waking lives.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are factors potentially influential to a study for which the researcher has no hard data, might not ever know, and can not or do not intend to control for (Wargo, 2015). The assumptions of this study were that participants answered the interview questions in an honest and candid manner, the inclusion criteria of the sample was appropriate and, therefore, assured that the participants have all experienced the same or similar phenomenon of the study, and that participants had a sincere interest in participating in the research and did not have any other motives, such as impressing their job supervisor because they agreed to be in the study. The assumptions of this study were that leadership is encroaching on employee's freedom of expression through the enforcement of strict guidelines. As a result, employees lack the motivation, productivity, and culture that enables and organization to strive. If business leaders implemented less intrusive guidelines, employees would be more motivated and productive in the workplace.

Limitations

Limitations refer to unknown conditions or factors that could bias the responses of the participants or the number of participants may not be enough from which to adequately draw conclusions (Wargo, 2015). In qualitative studies, the researcher will want the numbers of participants to reach a level at which saturation of the data is achieved and no new data or meaning units are being discovered. The limitations of this study were whether or not all or only some employees are less motivated and productive

and whether or not workplace culture is affected. This study was limited on exactly what aspects of the business guidelines are affecting employee's freedom of self-expression. This study may not identify what guidelines leaders need to be more lenient on to improve the overall business culture.

Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries that are set by the researcher in order to control the range of the study (Simon & Goes, 2013). These delimitations are created before any research is carried out to reduce the amount of time or effort spent in unnecessary or unrelated areas to the overall study. For this study, business leaders understood the potential and the talent of the employees, ensured the difference that employees bring to the workplace, and valued the employees as integral to organizational success. The workplace should be better so the employees can have better teamwork, find solutions for problems, enhanced job responsibility, a group mission, challenges, routine work, and self confidence among workers. Organizations will thrive through business leaders ensuring employee organizational commitment, improved productivity, greater efficiency, retaining best talent and motivating the employees to give their best.

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Significance of the Study

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The findings of this study provide an understanding of the strategy's leaders use to manage workplace self-expression, while increasing employee motivation, thereby potentially increasing work productivity. The research findings provide practical benefits to both business and society.

Contribution to Business Practice

My focus in this study was with the organizational need to balance workplace self-expression and work productivity. Organizations that allow workplace self-expression may have a more satisfied, motivated workforce through satisfaction of the need to seek self-expression (Kovač, 2016). This increased level of motivation may lead to increased work productivity, resulting in increased business profitability.

Implications for Social Change

At an individual level, freedom of expression is vital to the development, dignity, and fulfillment of every person (Cable et al., 2013). Individuals may gain an understanding of their surroundings and the wider world through the free exchange of ideas and information. The ability to exchange ideas and information freely enables individuals to better integrate with society. At the societal level, employees who are allowed increased self-expression at work may be more motivated and productive, increasing business profitability, and, subsequently, expanding the tax base and employment level of the community. The increased tax revenue and employment may reduce dependence on economic assistance, thereby increasing the ability of government agencies to allocate scarce financial resources to other programs benefiting the community.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Implementing workplace policies that foster happiness may increase employee productivity thereby increasing the company's wealth. Freedom over how employees work is one of the things that top employees' value. Creating an environment where

social recognition is encouraged can be a cost-effective way to boost morale (Mandhanya, 2015). The above considerations influenced my search for scholarly guidance in pursuing the understanding of this research topic.

The workforce in 2018 is increasingly diverse in terms of personal characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, national origin, religion, gender identity, and sexual orientation. The business case for diversity suggests that such diversity in the workplace will lead to lower costs or higher revenues, improving the bottom line. Not surprisingly, employers have considered the economic benefits of adding lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender-supportive policies, including sexual orientation and gender-identity nondiscrimination policies and domestic partner benefits policies.

In the process of reviewing literature for this study, I encapsulated mainly scholarly works from peer-reviewed journals, books, applicable seminal research, and any additional sources that brought value to this study. The sources in which I searched for literature included the ProQuest, Science Direct, Business Source Complete, and ABI/Inform Complete databases. Catchwords and phrases for literature search emanated from the verbiage in the problem statement, purpose statement, and the research question. Keywords included *business culture, employee motivation, ethical leadership, employee productivity, job satisfaction, leadership strategy, self-expression, sense of community, work intentions*, and other terms that emerged in the process of searching the aforementioned terms. Table 1 includes the reference tracker.

Table 1

Reference Tracker

Item	Number	Percentage
Number of sources in the entire proposal.	146	100
Number of sources in the entire proposal that are peer-reviewed and the percentage.	129	88
Number of sources in the entire proposal that are current and the percentage.	134	92
Number of sources that are in the literature review.	110	75% of total
Of the sources used in the literature review, the number that are peer-reviewed and the percentage?	110	100
Of the sources used in the literature review, the number that are current and the percentage?	102	93

Under the doctrine of employment-at-will, an employer can fire an employee for any reason or no reason at all (Perkins, 2014). Some employers use the threat of termination power to control the private lives of their employees (Wilner & Alves, 2017). Employers that respect employee rights generally outperform competitors that abuse employees. Individuals are increasingly looking for meaning in their lives and, given the

amount of time spent at work, employees often look to the workplace as a source of meaning. Purpose in business is a growing trend that might shift our way of thinking about employee engagement (Chungyalpa & Karishma, 2016). There is a competitive advantage to be gained by companies who make social purpose an end-goal, by those who play a larger role in addressing social concerns (Mackey & Sisodia, 2013).

Research findings showed placing an emphasis on purpose rather than profits generates business confidence, drives investment, and creates long-term success (Deloitte, 2014). Evidence shows business is good for companies where corporate social responsibility is present, employee engagement is high, and personal values are connected to work (Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014). Corporate social responsibility is an important aspect of purpose-driven organizations and is key to fulfilling a sense of meaning for employees. Individual leaders strongly influence employees' self-expression (Aguinis et al., 2016).

Many Americans, particularly Millennials, would be comfortable seeing police officers, doctors, bankers, and presidential candidates with tattoos, and most Americans would be comfortable with primary school teachers, coaches, pediatricians, caregivers, and camp counselors having visible tattoos (Foltz, 2014). Despite some employers' objections to tattoos, there are no laws against employers regulating the way employees dress, the visibility of their tattoos, and their overall ways of self-expression. Limiting self-expression in the workplace can result in a lack of engagement, which reduces employee productivity and, ultimately, profits. Every interaction with an employee has

the potential to influence his or her engagement and inspire discretionary effort (Aktar & Pangil, 2017).

Many organizations control what people can have at their desks. Employers dictate how many photographs people can display, whether they can use a water bottle, and how many items they can place on their desks (Van der Walt & de Klerk, 2014). Dress codes work well in private high schools but are unnecessary at work (Ryan & Phillips, 2015). Organizations that hire professionals expect these professionals will dress professionally (Hebert, 2015). When someone crosses the line, the manager needs to have the skill to address the issue directly. Otherwise, employee motivation decreases because management is too inept to handle sensitive subjects effectively.

According to Herzberg et al. (1959), hygiene factors are those job factors that are essential for existence of motivation in the workplace. These factors do not lead to positive satisfaction for long-term. However, the absence of these factors leads to dissatisfaction. The hygiene factors symbolize the physiological needs which the individuals wanted and expected to be fulfilled. Company policies should not be too rigid. These policies should be fair and clear, and should include flexible working hours, dress code, breaks, vacation, and more.

Herzberg et al. (1959) suggested that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are not opposites: the opposite of job satisfaction is no job satisfaction, and the opposite of job dissatisfaction is no job dissatisfaction (Chu & Kuo, 2015). Herzberg's two-factor theory best explains the process of motivating employees. The theory also indicates that achievement and company policy have significant impact on the overall level of

employee job satisfaction, suggesting that leaders need to focus more on these factors to better motivate employees (Sankar, 2015). Herzberg's ideas related strongly to modern ethical management and social responsibility.

Herzberg's theory is based on the deceptively simple idea that motivation can be dichotomized into hygiene factors and is often referred to as a two-need system (Herzberg et al., 1959). These two separate needs are the need to avoid unpleasantness and discomfort and the need for personal development. A shortage of the factors that positively encourage employees will cause employees to focus on other, non-job-related hygiene factors (Herzberg et al., 1959). Herzberg divided the factors of motivation into two categories called hygiene factors and motivation factors. The hygiene factors can demotivate or cause dissatisfaction if they are not present, but do not often create satisfaction when they are present. However, motivation factors do motivate or create satisfaction and are rarely the cause of dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Herzberg et al. (1959) used motivation-hygiene theory to establish how job satisfaction and dissatisfaction operate separately from one another. The motivation-hygiene theory differentiates among motivating and hygiene influences in the workplace (Herzberg et al., 1959). A lack of motivators leads to over concentration on hygiene factors, which are those negative factors that can be seen and therefore form the basis of objection and unease. Hygiene factors leads to dissatisfaction with a job because of the need to avoid anxiety or stress. Anxiety and stresses are referred to as hygiene factors because they can be avoided or prevented using hygienic methods. Attention to

these hygiene factors prevents dissatisfaction but does not necessarily provide positive motivation.

Hygiene factors are also often referred to as dissatisfiers. Dissatisfiers are concerned with factors associated with the job itself but are not directly a part of it. Factors which will often act as dissatisfiers include: perceived differences with others, job security, working conditions, the quality of management, organizational policy, administration, and interpersonal relations (Hansen et al., 2014). The dissatisfiers are hygiene factors in the sense that they are factors required to avoid dissatisfaction and stop workers unhappiness, but do not create satisfaction in themselves. They can be avoided by using hygienic methods to prevent them (Herzberg et al., 1959).

According to the Herzberg theory, fundamental satisfaction can be obtained from the work itself. The theory draws attention to job design and makes leaders aware that problems of motivation may not necessarily be directly associated with the work. Problems can often be external to the job. Leaders' understanding that factors which demotivate workers may often be related to matters other than the work itself, can lead to improved motivation, greater job satisfaction, and improved organizational performance by the entire workforce (Brdulak, Senkus, & Senkus, 2017). Understanding individual goals, coupled with wider skills and abilities, can lead to greater opportunities. Individuals are valuable to organizations and can acquire new skills useful in the future. Improving skills, opportunities and increasing employee knowledge will, in the longer term, increase the value of an organization's human assets. Most important, improving

skills, opportunities and increasing employee knowledge can lead to greater staff

commitment, understanding and loyalty.

Business Culture

Company vision, values, norms, systems, symbols, language, assumptions, and

beliefs all contribute to business culture. While one cannot see or touch a culture, culture

is present in the actions, behaviors, and approaches of the members of an organization

(Lueneburger, 2014). From hiring practices to how people work, make decisions, resolve

differences of opinions, and navigate change, the culture defines the unwritten but real

rules of behavior. Work is one of the main activities of most adults, and the study of the

psychological benefits of work can improve our understanding of adult well-being and

happiness. Several workplace characteristics have been shown to reduce stress and

increase global well-being. A positive psychological climate in the workplace should be

defined as the presence of supportive management, role clarity, contribution, recognition,

self-expression, and challenge (Hagler, Hamby, Grych, & Banyard, 2016).

In the future, companies will be operating within a new business culture in which

value creation depends as much on social and environment issues as on economic ones.

Companies will need to ensure their own sustainability based on the values of their

employees (Davis & Boulet, 2016). Diverse external pressures are adding to the

challenges facing business: the economic slowdown makes the future for business less

certain than during economic growth; customers' expectations are becoming ever more

demanding thereby increasing the burden to find new sources of potential differentiation;

and changing preferences between work and leisure are among many forces altering the

shape of the potential workforce (Ioanid, 2016). Stakeholders are showing growing interest in businesses' performance and their rights and responsibilities with regard to their employees.

Globalization, offshore outsourcing, global value chain, and global division of labor have led the businesses of 2018 to internationalize their activities; therefore, cultural diversity becomes an important issue in managing contemporary worldwide workplaces. As a result of the internationalization of business activities, business leaders must take fully utilize the potential capabilities of a multicultural workforce to achieve organizational effectiveness (Sultana, Rashid, Mohiuddin, & Huda, 2013). To address this situation, the impact of cross-cultural diversity management on organizational effectiveness and competitive advantage in an organization needs to be understood.

Findings from research conducted by Sabharwal (2014) indicated a significant and positive correlation of effective cultural diversity management practices on competitive advantages and organizational effectiveness. The management of cultural diversity can have a positive influence on factors like human capital, innovation capital, and organization. In addition, marketing actions can also be identified through the management of cultural diversity which would reflect a positive impact on customer equity and capital investors. Given the focal role of business leaders in the managerial revolution shaping American political economy, management historians are well placed in the social sciences to analyze the motives, aims, methods and effects of business managers (Bruce, 2015).

Hilliker (2012) hypothesized that there is a stigma attached to individuals with tattoos in the workplace in comparison to non-tattooed employees. Previous research has looked at the attitudes toward tattooed individuals based on style, gender, and size, yet little research has been conducted to understand the attitudes toward people with tattoos in the workplace (Hilliker, 2012). Researchers have sought to determine whether stigmas are placed on individuals with tattoos. To do so, the appropriateness of tattoos in various white and blue collar professions was measured. In addition, the size and visibility of the tattoos were factors in determining attitudes. A key marketing challenge is how to balance employees' individual rights to self-expression and at the same time cater to consumers' expectations regarding appearance of staff (Baumann, Timming, & Gollan, 2016).

Although tattoos are becoming more socially acceptable, different traits are still being associated with tattoos. Various personality and physical characteristics of individuals with tattoos were addressed to understand if character is being judged based on body ink. Overall, the results of this study indicated no differences in attitudes toward individuals with tattoos in the workplace compared to non-tattooed employees (Hilliker, 2012). However, the perceived personal traits of tattooed and non-tattooed individuals may vary within organizations.

Socialization has focused on acculturating new employees such that they develop pride in their new organization and internalize its values (Cable et al., 2013). Case study findings have shown that the initial stage of socialization leads to more effective employment relationships when socialization primarily encourages newcomers to express

their personal identities (Cable et al., 2013). In a field experiment carried out in a large business process outsourcing company in India, the researchers found that initial socialization focused on personal identity led to greater customer satisfaction and employee retention after 6 months than socialization that focused on organizational identity or the organization's traditional approach, which focused primarily on skills training. Research has found that individuals working temporarily as part of a research team were more engaged and satisfied with their work, performed their tasks more effectively, and were less likely to quit when initial socialization focused on personal identity rather than on organizational identity or a control condition (Schuh et al., 2016).

Many American workers can be fired for these expressions. For example, a factory worker is fired because her boss dislikes the political bumper sticker on her car in the parking lot and another worker is fired after refusing to display an American flag at his workstation (Barry, 2007). A flight attendant is grounded because her airline does not like what she's writing in her personal blog (Barry, 2007). In *Speechless*, Barry (2007) confronts the state of free speech in the American workplace. Barry showed how employers and courts are eroding workers' abilities to express themselves on and off the job, with damaging consequences for individuals, their employers, and civil society as a whole. The study conducted by Barry (2007) defends free speech in and around the workplace. Barry argued that the experience of liberty in a free society, as well as in life, in general, depends in part on the experience of liberty at work (Barry, 2007).

Workplace spirituality can be associated with work intentions, and whether ethical leadership served as a mediator of the relationship between workplace spirituality

and work intentions. Workplace spirituality is positioned as a construct that might positively affect employee work intentions, and consequently success of the organization and employee well-being. In order to obtain an improved understanding of behavior at work, employees should be studied from physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. Although the physical and psychological dimensions of individuals at work have been studied extensively, the spiritual dimension has been neglected for many years. The objective of the research by Van der Walt and de Klerk (2014) was to determine the relationship between workplace spirituality and a positive attitude related to work, that is, job satisfaction. A cross-sectional study was conducted with a sample of 600 white-collar workers, chosen from two organizations in different industries in South Africa. The research results indicated a positive relationship between workplace spirituality and job satisfaction. These findings deepen the understanding of personal spirituality, organizational spirituality, and job satisfaction. To survive in the 21st century, organizations need to be spiritually based, which, in turn, will lead to workers being satisfied with their entire work experience.

Previous research findings indicated stigmas can produce feelings of fear, isolation, and discrimination, and that negative stigma has been and still is, associated with tattooing (Martin & Dula, 2010). Due to the rise in tattoo popularity, the Martin Stigma against Tattoos Survey (MSATS) was created as a method to analyze stigma against tattooed individuals. The survey was administered to 210 undergraduate students along with a Big Five personality measure and subjected to factor analysis and preliminary evaluation of validity (Martin & Dula, 2010). Results supported a single

factor solution and the 17-item measure demonstrated a high level of internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha = .92. Items with face validity and significant differences between tattooed and non-tattooed participants on MSATS scores provided initial evidence of construct validity. Perhaps dispelling one myth underlying stigma, no significant differences were found in the GPA of tattooed versus non-tattooed college students.

Basic psychological processes create a tendency to judge based on appearance, and much stigma has historically been attached to tattoo recipients who tend to be seen as socially deviant. Non-conformists were the target of more negative stigma, especially when there was a drive for a quick conclusion on the part of the perceiver. Historical attitudes toward tattooing in North America have been varied and have usually been related to issues of social class. As increasingly diverse groups of people get tattoos, popular perceptions are often discordant with the individual meanings behind tattoos. Still, tattooing is often seen as a negative behavior. Martin and Dula (2010) have several theories that explain the increase of tattooing as a projection of Jungian psychological elements, which used to be projected onto holy symbols, onto the self as a manifestation of self-expression coinciding with a decline in traditional religious adherence and that tattoos produce a feeling of power or control over oneself and reflect self-concept.

Change is coming that has little to do with globalization or technology (Eschleman, Bowling, & LaHuis, 2015). The coming change is a human one, and the effects on organizational values and culture will be dramatic. Stated succinctly, the Millennials have arrived. The Millennials have been described as globally aware, socially inept, technologically sophisticated, needy, narcissistic, team-oriented, optimistic, lacking

in work ethic, multi-tasking geniuses, ambitious, and curious. Leadership approaches best align with values, desires, and development, developing core competencies for leaders of all generations (Malbasic, Rey, & Potocan, 2014). Creating ways to integrate and accommodate these new employees or to inject into the entire workforce additional diversity and confliction resolution training is not the answer. These approaches all deal with the situation as if the organization will always be the center of the universe. The integration and accommodation of employees requires transition, not integration, and may provide some insight into what leaders can expect from Millennials as they begin to assert themselves in the years to come (Dannar, 2013).

As a society becomes wealthier and develops a more self-expression values orientation, it also starts to place a higher level of importance on quality of life, both social and environmental, for oneself and others (Van Quaquebeke, Graf, Kerschreiter, Schuh, & Dick, 2014). Societal emphasis on self-expression values also implies higher expectations of and pressures upon business cultures to enhance the social and environmental interests of their communities (Ralston et al., 2015). As such, a higher level of self-expression values is associated with more pro-social and pro-environmental concerns. The determinants of employee engagement connote a healthy working atmosphere that reflects on the social impact created by the organization (Anitha, 2014).

Employee Motivation

More than ever before, organizations need to continually adapt to remain viable. A company's ability to adapt is made possible by employees who are forward-thinking and capable of proactively implementing innovative ideas and solutions (Ruggiero,

2015). To hire and retain this type of employee, many organizations have embraced innovative workspace formats to promote collaboration and creativity, as well as technology tools to improve communication and enable flexible work schedules (Dyer, Godfrey, Jensen, & Bryce, 2016). Organizations now realize that to succeed, they need personnel who are willing and able to break from established employee conventions. From infancy, we are conditioned to accept and adopt conventions for behavior that blaze a path to a functioning society (Wallace, 2016). Conventions serve as signals along the trail that give us clarity and keep us safe but can also eliminate the need for individuality and creativity. Conventions in the workplace, including protocols for leadership, career management, and employee behavior, have undergone a dramatic makeover in recent decades (Northouse, 2016). In many cases, employees are encouraged to take the unconventional path and offer an original perspective. As a result, standing out has become the new fitting in (Wallace, 2016).

Employee motivation in the workplace is the process leaders use to get their employees to deliver high producing results. For success in the difficult workplace environment of 2018, leaders need to have a strong understanding of how to create long lasting performance and morale (Benn, Teo, & Martin, 2015). Many leaders do not have a strong enough understanding and think they understand how to create employee motivation in the workplace. Findings of a study conducted by Zurlo, Pes, and Capasso (2016) highlighted specific coping strategies and dimensions of job satisfaction buffering the negative effects of several job stressors.

Employers who cannot keep their best employees engaged, cannot keep their best employees. While this should be common sense, employee engagement is not common enough. Companies need to have rules, but the rules do not have to be foolish and lazy attempts at creating order. If companies can rethink their policies and remove or alter those rules that are unnecessary or demoralizing, employees are expected to have a more enjoyable and productive time at work. The arrival of new generations of professionals in organizations has the potential to promote challenges to the policies and practices related to the management of people (Reis & Braga, 2016). Preferences and employee motivations concerning work may be different for each generation and would require adjustments in people management practices.

In order to develop effective management strategies, employers should understand that organizational behavior (i.e., employees' behavior) is a consequence of their attitude towards their work, and that their needs and wants could control their behavior (Burma, 2014). Employers should develop an approach to motivate employees to perform their best for the organization, as motivation can manipulate the performance or behavior of the individual. Motivating an individual in their work is one of the crucial functions of people management. Work motivation can be understood with a distinction between personality and situational factors (Brdulak et al., 2017).

With such a rapid moving economy, a shortage of qualified workers, and plentiful business opportunities, the topic of motivating employees has become extremely important to the employer, as motivation has a great impact on the way employees

perform in an organization. If employees do not enjoy their work, the resulting employee motivation will affect the success of the organization's goals (Pollock, 2015).

Researchers argue that employees' perceptions of their company's social responsibility behaviors are more important than organizational reality in determining organizational identification (Loi, Chan, & Lam, 2014). After defining perceived corporate social responsibility (PCSR), researchers postulated how PCSR affects organizational identification when perception and reality are aligned or misaligned (Glavis & Godwin, 2013). Past researchers proposed theories for understanding and organizing existing evidence, and for pointing the way to new research problems. These theories help organize the evidence on choice of self-expression in relation to job satisfaction and motivation for effective work performance. As companies seek to become more socially responsible for both altruistic and economic reasons, they are affecting not only wider society but also the individuals who work within their walls (Melián-González, Bulchand-Gidumal, & González López-Valcárcel, 2015).

For the first time in history, organizations in 2018 have a workforce composed of four distinct generations of employees. Millennials are the latest and potentially largest generational group to enter the workforce. Organizations are struggling to recruit and retain talent from the millennial generation. The authors of the 2015 Deloitte study examined the factors influencing Millennials' workplace motivation. Findings showed millennial workers are motivated by basic needs and the desire for belonging and seek actualization through challenging and meaningful work (Calk & Patrick, 2017). However, the millennial generation is very diverse with respect to their motivating

factors. To be effective in 2018, organizations must be able to identify with a multi-generational workforce with varying beliefs, work ethics, lifestyles, values, attitudes, and expectations hopes of better understanding the generation gaps. This will empower organizations to think strategically and implement best practices to retain, manage, and utilize each distinct generation's talents (Zupan, Kase, Raskovic, Yao, & Wang, 2015). Some research findings indicate Millennials are quicker to change jobs, and organizations experience great difficulty motivating and retaining millennial employees who exert tremendous pressure for radical change in how organizations function (Griffin, Bryant, & Koerber, 2015). The application of management practices and policies leads to improved human resource outcomes which in turn lead to improved employee motivation.

Employee Productivity

Employee productivity is an assessment of the efficiency of a worker or group of workers. Because much of the success of any organization relies upon the productivity of its workforce, employee productivity is an important consideration for businesses. A happy employee is a productive employee (Westover, Westover, & Westover, 2010). Strong leaders create a company culture that makes employees feel as if they are an important part of the business (Lueneburger, 2014). Productive workplaces exist when employees are encouraged to express their opinions, and their input is sought before making important organizational decisions. Developing this workplace environment requires supportive leadership and empowering employees with information and resources that will help them make important decisions about their jobs (Sabharwal, 2014).

Resick, Hargis, Shao, and Dust (2013) affirmed that clothing affects employees' behavior. As employees are allowed to dress more comfortably, their confidence and productivity will increase. Senior leaders need to recognize that reverting to corporate dress would be a step backward that would hurt employee productivity.

Employee performance describes outcomes achieved and accomplishments made at work (Hassan, 2016). Performance refers to keeping up plans while aiming for the results. Although performance evaluation is the heart of performance management, the performance of an individual or an organization depends significantly on all organizational policies, practices, and design features of an organization (Anitha, 2014). Employee engagement is one of the key determinants fostering high levels of employee performance (Medlin & Green, 2014).

Meaningful work can yield benefits for organizations and lead to positive work outcomes such as satisfied, engaged and committed employees, individual and organizational fulfilment, employee productivity, retention and loyalty (Geldenhuys et al., 2014). Leaders must rethink ways of improving employee productivity and performance at work, due to the diverse, and in some instances escalating, needs of employees to uphold their interest in and enjoyment of working. Failed socialization reverts leaders back to where they started after months of investment trying to recruit new employees (Cable et al., 2013). Conversely, successful socialization results in employee productivity and committed employees who are excited to come to work and proud of their role in helping their organization succeed. Researchers has found large and valuable changes in employees' quality and retention when organizations made relatively small

investments in socialization practices that focus on newcomers' personal identities (Iqbal & Hashmi, 2015). When organizations find a way to use the tension to differentiate themselves to employees as a great place to invest their energies, they appear to have a line on sustained competitive advantage.

Existing perspectives of organizational alignment and employee engagement to better understand the alignment-engagement linkages to individual performance is an underexplored area of inquiry in human resource development (HRD; Alagaraja & Schuck, 2015). The analysis of the alignment and engagement lead to the development of an exploratory conceptual model. The conceptual model expounds on the organizational alignment–employee engagement linkages and their impact on individual performance. Innovation is a crucial driver for economic growth (Voegtlin & Greenwood, 2016). An increasing number of firms are recognizing product innovation as an essential business imperative (Sattayaraksa & Boon-itt, 2015). In light of the growing importance of product innovation, researchers have tried to keep up with practices by identifying key antecedents that could drive product innovation practices.

Recent study findings indicated that nurses with tattoos are viewed less favorably than nurses without tattoos, regardless of gender (Boultinghouse, 2016). Older adults are more likely to negatively evaluate nurses with tattoos than young adults. Researchers have proven that male nurses with tattoos are perceived the same as male nurses without tattoos across all ages, but female nurses with tattoos were perceived to be less kind and less trustworthy than female nurses without tattoos across all ages. There is an overall decreasing stigma of visible tattoos as well as the implications of the results for males

and females with tattoos. Boultinghouse (2016) found that a growing number of males and females of all age groups, especially young adults, are making the decisions to obtain tattoos. Boultinghouse's findings also showed that some individuals still associate tattoos with negativity and, therefore, associate tattooed men and women with more negative traits than non-tattooed men and women. The results of a study conducted by Mas-Machuca, Berbegal-Mirabent, and Alegre (2016) on organizational pride indicated a significant and positive relationship between pride and job satisfaction. Organizational pride is referred to as the provision of a positive, encouraging work environment, which requires high social identification with the company (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016).

The purpose of the building workplace trust is to gain insights into the role of collaboration, leadership, and trust in achieving key business outcomes. Al Mehrzi and Singh (2016) clarified the correlation between trust and both revenue and profit growth; how trust operates in work relationships; and the impact of overall employee engagement in the workplace. Segments investigated include degrees of employee engagement, business priorities, the financial performance of the organizations surveyed, and these organizations' varying trust levels. Al Mehrzi and Singh explored trust among leaders, direct reports, virtual and non-virtual workers, and peer groups. The relationship between financial success with a level of trust and strong leadership behaviors exhibited within companies has been matched by increases in leadership, collaboration, and trust, and therefore some improvement can be achieved. Leadership collaboration combined with employee engagement builds key business outcomes (Al Mehrzi & Singh, 2016).

Researchers have explored a causal mechanism through which high-performance work systems contribute to performance outcomes (Newman, Nielsen, & Miao, 2015). Newman et al. (2015) proposed high-performance work systems can improve organizational performance by strengthening relationships among employees who perform distinct functions, a pathway that is expected to be particularly important in settings characterized by highly interdependent work. In a nine-hospital study of patient care, Newman et al. identified high-performance work practices that positively predict the strength of relational coordination among doctors, nurses, physical therapists, social workers, and case managers, in turn predicting quality and efficiency outcomes for their patients. Relational coordination mediates the association between these high-performance work practices and outcomes, suggesting a relational pathway through which high-performance work systems work.

The results of a study conducted by Waribugo and Dan-Jumbo (2017) indicated moderate and positive correlations among the dimensions of ethical culture and employee productivity. Moreover, employee's intention to stay slightly moderated the relationship between the two variables, suggesting positive ethical culture enhances employee productivity, and therefore should be encouraged. Wang and Bowling (2016) compared general and work-specific measures of personality as predictors of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Results indicated that work-specific personality yielded significant incremental relationships with OCB even after general personality is controlled. Finally, regression analyses showed the incremental variance predicted by work-specific personality decreased as the degree of between-subject variability and

within-subject inconsistency increased. Overall, the results indicate there are benefits to considering the work-specific measure of personality in the prediction of OCB.

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is a value-driven form of leadership that affects the self-concept and beliefs of employees (Mayer et al., 2009). Ethical leadership behavior helps employees see their job as more meaningful, which translates into showing increased motivation, effort, and productive behavior (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). When employees perceive their leaders as acting ethically, employees tend to exhibit enhanced engagement in terms of feeling more vigor, dedication, and interest at work. In turn, these more engaged employees show more personal initiative and less counterproductive behavior. Ethical leadership behaviors that managers can learn to use more effectively include: communicating relevant values and ethical guidelines, modeling ethical behavior, encouraging ethical practices, holding subordinates accountable for ethical practices, and opposing unethical practices. Most people prefer to work for organizations that are socially responsible and have ethical leaders. Leaders who encourage ethical and empowering practices may benefit society by developing organizations that are more socially responsible (Hassan, Mahsud, Yukl, & Prussia, 2013).

In every business, leaders are the key driving force of the business, because they can be the ones to drive their employees, and the decisions the employees make that will affect the organization. Recent research findings indicated ethical leaders are the ones who use their social power to represent the best interests of their organization and employees, set a personal and professional example of ethically appropriate conduct, and

actively manage ethical behavior (Resick et al., 2013). Leaders should support their

colleagues by mentoring, exuding empowerment behaviors, and doing team building

(Hassan et al., 2013). Moreover, leaders should put their employee's welfare at the top of

the list. According to Hanaysha (2016), an increase in employee productivity leads to

better organizational performance and competitiveness of the organization.

The organization can gain in reputation from good ethical leadership, which may

lead to more customers. With ethical leadership, the workplace will be healthier because

the employees feel the leader is doing the right things and the trust between leaders and

employees improves employees' productivity. Good leaders ensure everyone is involved

in the interest of the culture and organization to build the community. Ethical leaders

contribute to helping the employees achieve their goals by behaving fairly, justly and

ethically through appropriate conduct. These behaviors will lead the organization

fostering a strong infrastructure and performance by establishing the ethical culture

(Ostapenko, 2015).

Building organizational commitment among employees is one of the important

factors for ensuring organizational effectiveness. This is because committed employees

can lead to favorable organizational outcomes (Chung, 2017). There should be a clear

and understandable ethical code of conduct for all employees. This should be made

available to all employees for them to know what they are expected to do at all time and

situations. Employee empowerment has significant positive effects on employee

productivity. Researchers have found through various studies useful implications for

policy makers to set out their strategies with regard to human resource factors in order to

enhance both employee productivity and organizational performance (Slocum, Lei, &

Buller, 2014).

Job Satisfaction

According to a study conducted by Pandey and Asthana (2017), there is a

significant connection between organizational policy and job satisfaction. Productivity

and creativity of an employee can be increased if he or she is satisfied. The findings of

the study suggest that the policy framers and managers have to think about inclusion of

the factors that affect job satisfaction to enhance their business (Pandey & Asthana,

2017). The study findings indicate that working condition, organizational policy and

strategies, promotion, job stress and compensation package are key factors of job

satisfaction. Employers should be careful in communicating HRM policies and practices

to their employees in order to minimize this incongruity that exists between perceived

employee obligation and its fulfillment because incongruity has a direct relationship with

the overall job satisfaction of the employees (Datta & Dutta, 2016).

There are economic, mechanical, and psychological aspects of work. An effective

work environment that encourages employee job satisfaction will ultimately influence the

growth of an organization as well as contribute to the growth of the economy. Internal

communication is important for building a culture of transparency between management

and employees and can engage employees in the organization's priorities (Mishra,

Boynton, & Mishra, 2014). Companies have to ensure that job satisfaction is high among

employees, which is a precondition for increasing productivity, responsiveness, quality,

and customer service. The more satisfied employees are, the more employees are

stimulated by a chain of positive actions which ends in improved organizational performance (Campbell, 2014). Profit and growth of organizations are stimulated directly by customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is a direct consequence of customer satisfaction which is heavily influenced by customer perceptions of the value of services they receive (Newman et al., 2015). Value is created by satisfied, loyal and productive employees. Employees who feel a sense of teamwork and common purpose, a strong commitment to communication, and managerial empowerment are most able, and willing, to deliver the results customers expect. Organizational productivity and efficiency are achieved through job satisfaction and attention to employees physical as well as socio emotional needs (Shantz, Alfes, & Latham, 2016).

Employee satisfaction can be related to psychological factors. Most researchers agree that employers benefit when employees have high levels of job satisfaction because job satisfaction among employees has been tied to increased productivity, creativity, and commitment to the employer (Liu, Zhang, Liao, Hao, & Mao 2016). Well communicated expectation, and sufficient resources increase employee' commitment to the organization which in turn improves job satisfaction (Medlin, Green, & Wright, 2016). Job satisfaction is key to improving both engagement and optimism and as a result commitment then improves job satisfaction. The impact on human resource outcomes appears to be from the management practices and policies to commitment to job satisfaction, employee engagement, and optimism (Singh & Kassa, 2016). Person-environment fit, taking personality into account, can promote job satisfaction. The satisfied worker is assumed to be generally more diligent and hence more productive. According to Masum, Azad, and

Beh (2015), some researchers have concluded that organizational culture and policy have a positive influence on the job satisfaction of the employees.

The results of a study conducted by Ijigu (2015) revealed that bundles of HRM practices mainly recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal and compensation package are positively related to employee job satisfaction. The study conducted by Sankar (2015) proves that job satisfaction is driven by several key factors which ought to be managed congruently: company policy and administration, technical supervision, interpersonal relation, salary, job security, working conditions, and status. Employee's retention through job satisfaction also attains benefits for organizations such as customer's satisfaction, better service, lower costs, lower price sensitivity, positive word-of-mouth, higher productivity and higher efficiency. Better understanding is needed in order to guide the design of HR policies, mostly in less managerial-oriented settings, like some public administrations. The focus of a study conducted by De Simone, Cicotto, Pinna, and Giustiniano (2016) was on work-related stress (WRS), public service motivation (PSM), work engagement, and job and life satisfaction in public administration. PSM is important not just to motivation but also to productivity, improved management practices, accountability, and trust in government, making PSM one of the major topics of investigation in public administration.

Self-Expression. Prior research displayed that people feel authentic when they express themselves (Yagil & Medler-Liraz, 2014). While choice is one act of self-expression, choice is certainly not the only means individuals can use to express themselves (Kokkoris & Kühnen, 2015). Although an estimated one-third of the United

States population has a tattoo, tattoos are still seen as a sign of deviance. The appearance

of the first tattoos in the United States was relegated to the bodies of the lower classes

and outcasts of society. Over the past few decades tattoos have appeared on the skin of

celebrity pop culture icons (Irwin, 2003). Since the 1990s, tattoos have changed from

deviant subcultures to the mainstream, and yet are still considered to be a mark of the

disfavored factions of society. The dominant culture continues to regard the bearers of

tattoos as social deviants, while at the same time appropriating tattoos for use as fashion

statements, beauty enhancements, and mechanisms for continued oppression. The studies

also examined tattoo placement and type in affecting the severity of arrest charges.

Numerous logistic regression models were utilized in this analysis and resulted in no

consistently significant association between tattoos (visibility, placement, or type) and

severity of offense charges. This provides evidence that the use of tattoos as a marker for

deviance does not appear to influence police behavior any differently than other

characteristics such as race.

There has been a significant increase in appearance-based discrimination claims

addressing makeup, dress codes, body weight, body art, and grooming in the past several

years. However, existing jurisprudence does not automatically prohibit appearance-based

discrimination in the workplace. A study by Perkins (2014) conferred the parameters of

existing discrimination laws and how employers should beware of plaintiffs' attempt to

bring non-cognizable appearance-based claims into the courtroom. Part I analyzed recent

appearance-based litigation, while Part II debated employment discrimination based on

grooming. The conclusion of the study discussed current litigation tactics of

characterizing unprotected appearance-based claims as violative of exiting discrimination statutes how employers can protect themselves from appearance-based claims. Dress codes, grooming requirements, and other policies to regulate appearance in the workplace are legally permitted as long as they are enforced in a non-discriminatory fashion (Ryan & Phillips, 2015). The courts must balance competing interests: the employer's interest in regulating the workplace and the employee's interest in self-expression and individual rights. Nevertheless, creative litigants are increasingly linking unprotected appearance-based claims to cognizable discrimination claims to circumvent the absence of legal remedies for appearance-based discrimination. Uncertainty as to the viability of appearance-based claims places employers in a risky position when making employment decisions. Employers have greater chance to avoid appearance-based claims if they institute clear appearance policies enforced in a non-discriminatory fashion.

Colored hair, piercings, and tattoos are sometimes viewed as forms of self-expression. Tattoo culture continues to rise among young people, but societal taboos may not change as quickly in the workplace (Joerges, 2017). Some public and private industries are becoming more open about the visibility of tattoos on employees. However, traditional industries like law still seem to maintain a strict policy against tattoos in the workplace. Despite some employers' objection to tattoos, there are no laws against employers regulating the way employees dress and the visibility of their tattoos. Employers with too-stringent grooming and dress-code requirements risk alienating talented employees and hurting employee morale. However, an employer may have

legitimate concerns that an employee's mode of self-expression will alienate or offend customers, raising potential business considerations.

Despite the large number of adults with tattoos or other forms of body art, stereotypes of individuals who have body modification thrive (Lane, 2017). Tattooed and pierced persons are viewed by some people as irresponsible, unprofessional, and less qualified than their untouched peers (Ellis, 2015). While body modifications are not protected under federal laws, prejudice and discrimination based on body art can have significant repercussions for individuals and their organizations. According to Ellis (2015), researchers wrestle with the impact prejudice and stigma have on modified employees and potential employees, considering self-esteem, performance, and other employee outcomes. Organizations need to discuss what they can do to promote a positive, compassionate, work environment for employees with body art.

Employers have wide latitude to establish dress and grooming policies under the law but should consider the underlying reasons for appearance requirements before implementing strict policies (Urban, 2013). Obviously not all positions require traditional business dress or involve interactions with customers or the public. This means strict grooming and dress policies, which prohibit all displays of tattoos and piercings, may be unnecessary, and perhaps demoralizing, to a growing segment of employees. The research conducted by Mayer (2013) demonstrated how a combination of economics, law, and philosophy can be used to provide deep insights into the world we live in.

In the United States, many people are instructed about the value of being yourself from a young age. Through the review of the theories, measurements, and research

behind the two constructs of authenticity and uniqueness, Mengers (2014) showed how being oneself does relate positively to well-being, even when doing so sets a person apart from others. Mengers also showed that humans have a desire to be authentic and doing so correlates with higher levels of life satisfaction and well-being. Mengers found that humans have sometimes competing needs to belong and be unique but that these can be jointly fulfilled by joining distinctive groups. Data supports the connection between authenticity and well-being, as well as the human desire to stand out from others. Individual openness and acceptance must be encouraged on a broader scale in order for individuals and societies to flourish (El Akremi, Gond, Swaen, De Roeck, & Igalens, 2015).

As the economy and job market improves, more employers are looking for ways to keep their employees from leaving for other jobs. More companies are relaxing policies to cater to millennial-age employees. While the struggle between young people and dress codes may seem like a long-running phenomenon, the size of this generation, as well as their much-researched desire to work for companies that align with their values, has many businesses rethinking their policies. Doctors, teachers, lawyers, brain surgeons, cops, firefighters, and grandmothers have tattoos. Leaders would be hard pressed to find a profession that does not have tattooed people, because body modifications are not limiting in any way shape or form. Many retailers are changing their dress code to allow appropriate visible tattoos, as well as a minimum amount of jewelry and piercings allowing small nose studs and larger earlobe piercings. "We want to build a company where self-expression, empowerment and inclusion are nurtured," a company executive

said in a letter to employees (McGregor, 2015, 2). Results of a study conducted by Albert, Reynolds, and Turan (2015) suggested that not only does social consensus determine whether an individual relies on ethical cognitions about the issue or perceptions of others, but also that an individual's view of self is an important moderator in these relationships.

Work Intentions. Despite the large number of adults with tattoos or other forms of body art, stereotypes of individuals who have body modification, most inaccurate, abound. Tattooed and pierced persons are viewed as irresponsible, unprofessional, and less qualified than their unmodified peers (Ellis, 2015). While body modifications are not protected under federal laws, prejudice and discrimination based on body art can have significant repercussions for individuals and their organizations. There are stereotypes surrounding body art which impact tattooed, pierced, and otherwise modified individuals. This impact of prejudice and stigma on modified employees and potential employees affects their self-esteem, performance, and more (Aquinas et al., 2016). Leaders in organizations should do more to support employees with body art to promote a positive, compassionate work environment maintain productivity and motivation. This includes created less restrictive policies related to forms of self-expression.

The increasing prevalence of unconventional appearance attributes (e.g., tattoos, piercings, unnatural hair color, alternative clothing) is a concern among employers as these appearance attributes are often viewed negatively (Jung & Kim, 2016). Body modifications (e.g., tattoos, piercings, and unnatural hair color) and other unconventional appearance attributes (e.g., hair style, clothing style) have been increasing in prevalence

and acceptance particularly among young adults (Karl, Peluchette, & Hall, 2016). This growing popularity has caused concern among employers who recognize that, traditionally, these have been associated with risky and deviant behavior, and customers may have negative views of these appearance attributes. In an increasingly liquid and uncertain society, some young people tattoo large extensions of their bodies searching for social recognition as different, authentic, and autonomous individuals and trying to maintain their core identity during transitional turning points (Ferreira, 2014). A study conducted by Karl et al. (2016) showed that consumers will base their perception of overall service quality on cues in the service environment and that the appearance of employees is a key part of that environment. By making inferences and applying stereotypes, consumers form impressions which become the basis for their expectations of the service experience.

There is a substantial body of research highlighting the benefits that satisfied employees can provide organizations (Pacheco & Webber, 2016). As a result, worker satisfaction has become an essential consideration for management, and one popular strategy employed by many organizations involves allowing employees to participate in job-related decisions. The theoretical literature indicates that one would expect employee participative decision making in the workplace (PDM) to increase job satisfaction via satisfying employees' higher-order needs and self-expression. Employing structural equation modeling, Pacheco and Webber (2016) found a positive association between these two variables. The researchers also identify three potential mechanisms via which PDM positively influences job satisfaction: increase in perceived significance of work

fulfills self-actualization and/or esteem needs; increased understanding of institution,

processes, and opportunities; and greater communication and performance feedback helps

guide employee growth and development.

Transition

Organizations cannot succeed in a sustained manner with only one in five

employees fully engaged and motivated, and one in five employees either dreading work

or wishing they could just stay at home instead. Employees need self-expression and self-

employment in their work lives as a matter of course (Salman, Aamir, Asif, & Khan,

2015). Sustainable business strategies must not only consider impact on shareholders,

consumers, the broader community, and the environment, but also consider the impact on

its employees, the actual workforce driving all of its activities. The reality is business is a

human enterprise (Lane & Maznevski, 2014). Individuals engaged in meaningful work at

a purpose-driven organization that fosters self-expression in the workplace, seem to have

characteristics that are desirable: employees are more engaged, committed, intrinsically

motivated, and show greater involvement in organizational citizenship. Companies that

actively support programs associated with corporate social responsibility are anticipated

to be successful, in large part because their employees feel their work matters (Dai &

Qin, 2016). There are competing theoretical rationales and mechanisms used to explain

the relation between leadership behaviors (e.g., consideration, initiating structure,

contingent rewards, and transformational leadership) and follower performance (e.g., task

performance and organizational citizenship behaviors) (Gottfredson & Aguinis, 2017).

In section 2, I describe the problem and purpose statement, identify the role of the researcher, describe the participant sample, and describe the research method and design. I discuss ethical considerations of the proposed study, and describe the tools and techniques used in data collection and analysis. In Section 3, I present the analysis, findings, and interpretation of the data from the study. I also discuss the application of the research to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, suggestions for social change, reflections, and concluding statements.

Section 2: The Project

According to the literature, performance of companies depends on the

commitment of employees. However, different interpretations of commitment exist. In

general, when commitment of the employees towards the company is high, this will have

a positive influence on the organization (Chung, 2017). Managers or leaders can have an

influence on the commitment and motivation among their employees (Rawat, Khugshal,

&, Chaubey, 2015). Managers have a great influence on their staff. They can influence

the commitment of employees to achieve the business objectives (Knies & Leisink,

2014). Strategy is a long-term direction to maintain an organization to stay forefront an

industry. As a result, organizations must continuously seek new and improved ways to

attract customers ahead of their competitors.

Employers need to look at the qualifications of the person, not their form of self-

expression, not what is on their skin or in their hair (Foster, 2016). Value judgments

concerning people that choose to self-express in the workplace should be avoided and

decisions to totally ban or implement strict guidelines on self-expression in the workplace

should be made only for sound business reasons. Employers do not want to risk losing

good employees so ideally there should be a balanced approach to the self-expression

issue. The issue that seems to drive most company policies on self-expression is the need

for their employees to appear professional. Employee professionalism is the desire of a

business and its people to be perceived as trustworthy, hardworking, service-oriented,

helpful, and reassuring (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015). To not allow self-expression in the

workplace is to assert that people are not any of those things.

Purpose Statement

My purpose in this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies used by higher education institution business leaders to manage workplace self-expression without negatively affecting work productivity. Managers and executives from three higher education institutions located in central and northern New Jersey participated in the interviews. Organizations that are more flexible with employee workplace self-expression guidelines may have a more motivated workforce, and increased productivity, which will have a positive social and economic effect on communities. Businesses employing motivated, productive employees may be more profitable, resulting in increased tax revenue and employment, thereby reducing the need for worker economic assistance. This may enable local governments to allocate scarce financial resources to other programs, thereby benefiting the community.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study (Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, & Sixsmith, 2013). I serve as a human resource professional for a higher education organization. I have over 20 years of experience as an exempt human resource professional. I am also a current member of the National Society for Human Resource Management. I believe that these experiences enhanced my awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity to the issues being addressed in this study and assisted me in working with the key participants. Although every effort was made to ensure objectivity, my personal bias may have shaped the way I viewed, understood, and interpreted the data that I collected. I

recognized the need to be open to the thoughts and opinions of others and to set aside my experiences in order to understand those of the participants in the study.

Using a semistructured interview protocol (see Appendix B) allowed me to explore particular themes or responses further. A researcher's interview protocol (see Appendix B) is an instrument of inquiry asking questions for specific information related to the aims of a study as well as an instrument for conversation about a particular topic (Patton, 2014). Researchers use an interview protocol (see Appendix B) to ensure consistency and minimize unexpected problems during the interview process (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Qualitative interviewing is an adventure in learning about strategies, cultural views, problems and solutions, and how practices are similar and different. Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences.

The *Belmont Report* is one of the leading works concerning ethics and health care research. Its primary purpose is to protect subjects and participants in clinical trials or research studies. I have respect for persons, beneficence, and justice; and the accompanying guidelines of informed consent, assessment of risk and benefit, and equity in the selection of subject, were influential in the framing and drafting of the regulations and guidance of all federal agencies: Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS; Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP), and Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Veterans Administration (VA), and the Departments of Defense, Justice, and Education. As a researcher, I applied the ethical standards of the *Belmont Report* to protect the rights of each participant, and treat all participants with respect. The research

was scientifically sound and conducted in a manner that protects the rights and safeguards the welfare of the participants.

Participants

I purposefully selected the participants (Bernard, 2013) from within three higher education institutions within northern and central New Jersey. The participants were selected from manager and leadership levels to obtain a sampling of data from both viewpoints. I conducted the study using semistructured interviewing techniques and asked open-ended questions of the participants about their unique expertise in their respective employment role and how their role may contribute to restriction of self-expression. An e-mail was sent to the prospective participants asking them whether they would be interested in participating in a research study about the relationship between employee self-expression in the workplace and business success. Each participant was contacted, and a convenient location and time was determined for the interview.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Qualitative data collection methods vary using unstructured or semi-structured techniques. Some common methods include focus groups (group discussions), individual interviews, and participation/observations. The benefits of the qualitative approach are that the information is richer and has a deeper insight into the phenomenon under study. Qualitative research is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem. Researchers use the quantitative method to examine relationships among variables, or to compare differences between groups (Yin, 2014).

The quantitative method was not appropriate because I did not examine relationships among variables, or differences between groups. The mixed-methods methodology is appropriate when the researcher chooses to combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Yin, 2014). The mixed-methods methodology was not appropriate for this study because this study did not contain a quantitative component. Based upon the purpose of this study, which was to explore strategies business leaders use to execute strict guidelines on employee freedom of expression in the workplace, the qualitative method was appropriate.

Research Design

Research design determines the study type, research question, hypotheses, variables, and data collection methods (Patton, 2014). There are several research designs available for qualitative researchers, including phenomenological, ethnographic, and case studies. Researchers use phenomenological designs to explore the meanings of participants' real-life experiences and perceptions regarding a phenomenon (Bernard, 2010). The phenomenological design was not appropriate because exploring experiences and perceptions was not the intent of my study. The ethnographic design is a design researchers use to explore groups' cultures in real-life settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The ethnographic design was not appropriate, as the intent for my study was not to explore groups' cultures. The case study design is used when researchers want to explore a case, bounded in time and place, for the purposes of generating insights from interviews and observations conducted in real-life settings (Campbell, 2014). The case study design

was appropriate to explore strategies managers use to manage employee workplace freedom of expression without negatively impacting business results.

Population and Sampling

Robust data collection involves following the defined sampling process, keeping the data in time order, noting comments and other contextual events, and recording non-responses (Patton, 2014). I used purposeful sampling to select the participants in leadership roles with at least 10 years of work experience. Purposeful sampling is necessary when seeking a population for this study. Yin (2014) stated that a researcher does not have to endure the strenuous randomization process of sampling procedure because the results cannot be generalized to a bigger population, and only analytical generalization can be conducted where a particular set of results is generalized to a broader theory.

The population was nine managers and leaders from three higher education institutions in northern and central New Jersey. I selected the institutions from the database of the National Society of Human Resource Management and the Chronicle of Higher Education. Contact information was collected for individuals holding various levels of positions within the institutions. According to Suri (2011), the likelihood of reaching data saturation is greater with a small sample size and precise interview questions. Hanson, Balmer, and Giardino (2011) suggested between three and 15 participants were sufficient to extensively explore a case study. Data saturation was reached when there was sufficient information to replicate the study, when no new

information was obtained, and when further coding was no longer feasible. Therefore, the sample size of nine participants was appropriate for this study.

Ethical Research

Research is a public trust that must be ethically conducted, trustworthy, and socially responsible if the results are to be valuable (Tatebe, 2015). When even one part of a research project is questionable or conducted unethically, the integrity of the entire project is called into question. Preserving the accuracy of research results is essential. Ethical data collection refers to collecting data in a way that does not harm or injure someone. Assigning and ensuring responsibility for collecting and maintaining data is one of the most important ethical considerations when conducting a research project (Sorsa, Kiikkala, & Åstedt-Kurki, 2015). A random approach may negate bias in the selection of participants (Kanyemba, Iwu, & Allen-Ile, 2015). There were no incentives for participating in the study.

I followed the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) guide to international research in the areas of data collection, participant recruitment, data analysis, and result dissemination (Walden University, 2015). Data collection and recruitment of participants for interviews occurred after receipt of IRB approval of my study. Data collection was accomplished using the process described in the Data Collection Technique section of this study. The interview questions are in Appendix A and the interview protocol is in Appendix B. The Walden University IRB approval number is 11-06-18-0658774 and expires on November 5, 2019.

As part of the consent process, the U.S. federal regulations require researchers to obtain legally effective informed consent from the subject or the subject's legally authorized representative (Tatebe, 2015). There are two parts to informed consent. The first part was the process of providing information to prospective subjects (Tatebe, 2015). The second part was documentation that the process took place and is a record of the subjects' agreement to take part in the study (Tatebe, 2015). Informed consent forms were used to provide information about the study, and, when signed, served as documentation of consent. Informed consent includes both the process of sharing information and documenting that the process took place. To confirm participant consent, all participants were required to reply to the informed consent email with the statement "I consent." To ensure that potential subjects could truly make informed decisions about whether to take part in research, issues of comprehension, language, and culture were considered in addition to the elements of information provided in the regulations. The regulations provide criteria for waiving any or all of the elements of information and the documentation of consent (Tatebe, 2015).

Fulfilling the ethical duty of confidentiality is essential to the trust relationship between researcher and participant, and to the integrity of the research project. Researchers must do their best to provide the utmost confidentiality of participant data. Some examples of practices that may be implemented to increase the level of confidentiality are to use study codes on data documents instead of recording identifying information, and keeping a separate document linking the study code to subjects' identifying information locked in a separate location, restricting access to this document,

encrypting identifiable data, and properly disposing, destroy, or delete study data and documents. I assigned unique codes to all participants for privacy and confidentiality of their personal data. These codes were used on any and all materials such as interview sheets and written notes.

Most ethics committees that review research protocols insist that potential research participants reserve unconditional or absolute right of withdrawal at any time and without giving any reason (Tatebe, 2015). All human subjects must voluntarily consent to research and be allowed to discontinue participation at any time. A participant was able to leave this research study at any time. Participants were not required to provide a reason for their withdrawal and may have communicated their intention to withdraw by written letter, telephone call, or email. The research involving human subjects will be valuable to society and provide a reasonably expected benefit proportionate to the burden requested of the research participant (Greenwood, 2016). Research participants were protected and safe. I did not exclude any population of people from the research unless there was an overwhelming reason to do so. The two most important ethical concepts in the peer review process are confidentiality and protection of intellectual property (Tatebe, 2015). The data will be maintained in a safe place for 5 years to protect the rights of participants.

Data Collection Instruments

As the researcher, I was the principal investigator of the research project and responsible for data collection design and physical data collection. I conducted the study using semistructured interviewing techniques and ask open-ended questions of the

participants about their unique expertise in their respective employment role and how

their role may contribute to restriction of self-expression. The data was collected via

phone interview. The research subjects were identified by code only. The data will be

stored electronically. Member checking was used as an instrument to help improve the

accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of the study. Member checking was

conducted by sending my interpretation of the data collected specific to the participants

for review and feedback after preliminary results from the data analysis.

Data Collection Technique

The data collection techniques used in this research were ethical and reliable. I

took ownership and responsibility of the collected data, and the data will be retained data

and not shared with colleagues and the public. Truthful data collection refers to data that,

once collected, are not manipulated or altered in any way that might impact or falsely

influence results. The data collection for this research will be secured and stored safely to

preserve the integrity and privacy of the data (Greenwood, 2016). The issue of data

sharing can be complicated by personal emotions, motives, obligations, and ownership.

Despite its complexities, data sharing is considered to be a hallmark of the scientific

community, particularly in academia (Tatebe, 2015).

The interview protocol (see Appendix B) was comprised of a four-phase process.

The four-phase process included ensuring interview questions aligned with research

questions, constructing an inquiry-based conversation, receiving feedback on interview

protocols, and piloting the interview protocol. This protocol method supports efforts to

strengthen the reliability of interview protocols used for qualitative research and thereby

contributes to improving the quality of data obtained from the research interviews
(Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

The data collection process began by obtaining permission from the Walden
University IRB. The responsibility of the IRB is to ensure research proposals comply
with existing laws, institutional policies and procedures, and accepted practices for
ethical protection of human subjects (Sheridan, Ross-Smith, & Lord, 2014). Once IRB
approval was obtained, the semistructured interview process began by contacting
potential participants concerning participation in the study. Participants who participated
were provided a copy of the informed consent form via email. Telephone interviews were
scheduled with participants that signed the informed consent form. Prior to
commencement of the semistructured interviews, I provided a brief description of the
interview process, and informed participants of their option to accept or decline
participation in the interview process.

I used a script as a prompt for me to share essential details about the study with
the study participants, and to guide the flow of communication during the interview
process. The interviews were semistructured (see Appendix B) in order to encourage
dialogue and allowed participants to provide insight to the research question for this
study. Upon completion of each interview, I thanked the participant for participating in
my study, and informed them that member checking may be needed at a later date. I
transcribed the verbatim interview responses upon completion of the interview sessions.

There are advantages and disadvantages to the semistructured interview process.
The advantages of semistructured interviews are: the potential for establishing

confidentiality with participants; the opportunity to articulate or rephrase questions that

participants find confusing; providing queues for when the researcher should probe, and

when an icebreaker might be needed; the ability for the researcher to maintain control of

the interview session; and, enable the researcher to thank the participant for participation,

as well as any additional information offered during the process (Irvine, Drew, &

Sainsbury, 2013). Disadvantages of the interview process include the possibility that

participants will not respond honestly to the questions (Johnston, 2014), and the interview

and transcription process can be time-consuming (Szolnoki & Hoffmann, 2013). Using

member checking strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings. Member checking was

accomplished by sending my interpretation of the data collected specific to the

participants for review and feedback after preliminary results from the data analysis.

Data Organization Technique

I conducted a qualitative case study using semistructured phone interviews to

collect data along with multiple scholarly peer-reviewed sources. Each interview

consisted of the same nine questions. The themes presented were employee motivation,

business culture, self-expression, and employee productivity. Keeping and using

reflective journals enables the researcher to make their experiences, opinions, thoughts,

and feelings visible and an acknowledge part of the research design, data generation,

analysis, and interpretation process (Greenwood, 2016). The main points were balanced,

divided logically into sub-points, and clearly related to the topic. The research was well

organized with an introduction, body, conclusion, and effective transitions. The

introduction included an effective attention-getter, statement of credibility, statement of

relevance, and the conclusion includes a summary and closure. All raw data will be stored securely for 5 years.

As a qualitative researcher, before the study began, I discussed with participants the approach that will be taken to protect privacy and maintain confidentiality, including providing them with an informed consent form. Selected participants were asked to conduct member checking to gauge the extent to which they felt privacy has been appropriately preserved. I discussed the interview parameters early in the project with all participants to specify what actions will be taken for appropriate use of project results.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data is a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modeling data with the goal of highlighting useful information, suggesting conclusions, and supporting decision making (Patton, 2014). The aim was to balance openness to a wide range of responses with the need to group these experiences. This openness enables a simultaneous investigation of the data from the interviews based on themes derived from the existing theory and research questions. For gathering data, I obeyed the principle of triangulation. I performed methodological data triangulation by collecting data from three sources; participant interviews, employee policies, and the institution websites. The use of employee policies, websites, and interview findings were essential to addressing the research question.

A detailed schema was necessary to generate for analyzing particular aspects and processes in restricting employee freedom of self-expression. The use of observation allowed considerable flexibility in this respect. This approach, referred to as thematic

network analysis, is used by researchers to use a more exploratory perspective to consider

and codes all the data, allowing for new impressions to shape the interpretation in

different and unexpected directions (Attride-Stirling, 2001). These nodes were then

linked further together in a number of emerging themes relevant to the population, role of

the participant, knowledge, communication and information use. Because qualitative

analysis relies on researchers' impressions, qualitative analysis must be systematic, and

researchers must report on their impressions in a structured and transparent form

(Greenwood, 2016). A code is a word or a short phrase that descriptively captures the

essence of elements of your material (e.g., a quotation) and is the first step in your data

reduction and interpretation (Patton, 2014).

Theme identification is one of the most fundamental tasks in qualitative research.

Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a

phenomenon and are associated to a specific research question. Thematic analysis (TA) is

a widely-used qualitative data analysis method (Padgett, 2017). The purpose of TA is to

identify patterns of meaning across a dataset that provide an answer to the research

question being addressed. Thematic analysis was used in this study.

Reliability and Validity

The most critical components for evaluating the quality of a research study are

validity and reliability (Bernard, 2013). Validity is defined as the extent to which a

concept is accurately measured. Reliability relates to the consistency of a measure. This

study focused on the research standards and components, the problem statement, and

promoting ethical standards. The elimination of bias on all parts was essential in order to remove any opportunities for error.

Reliability refers to the quality of research findings. The essence of reliability for qualitative research lies with consistency (Leung, 2015), and dependability of research findings which describes the consistency of the findings upon repeating the same inquiry within a similar context (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). Dependability can be achieved through the use of member checking, transcript review, and the use of protocols to confirm and validate participant study perspectives concerning the phenomenon (Jasper, Vaismoradi, Bondas, & Turunen, 2014).

Failure to reach data saturation has an impact on the quality of the research conducted and hampers content validity (Tatebe, 2015). Therefore, a researcher looks at this as the point at which no more data need to be collected. When the theory appears to be robust, with no gaps or unexplained phenomena, saturation has been achieved, and the resulting theory is more easily constructed. If the researcher does not attain data saturation, any resulting theory may be unbalanced, incomplete, and essentially untrustworthy (Leung, 2015). The research participants were selected so the resulting data helps to build and validate the emerging theory. I used a random sample because in using random sampling I randomly selected individuals that would not simply repeat what everyone else has said or who have no relationship to the emerging theory.

As the researcher, I have spent my career in the field related to this study, and therefore, I developed a thorough understanding of the themes and their interrelationships. To facilitate transferability, I provided enough detail of the context of

the fieldwork for the reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting. I also established an audit trail, which allowed any observer to trace the course of the research step-by-step via the decisions made, and procedures followed in order to demonstrate that the findings which emerge from the data were not my own predispositions. Yin (2014) recognized the importance of incorporating correct operational measures for the concepts being studied.

Transition and Summary

Humans play a vital role in the operation of a business. The human factor is crucial to business success. Employees are not just another input into the production of goods and services as they are not motivated solely by money, and employee behavior is linked to their attitudes. Accordingly, to improve the performance of the business, there is a need to understand how to manage and empower people or employees. In 2018, the employer should understand that managing people to succeed in a highly competitive global environment is important. The employer should develop an approach to motivate employees to perform their best for the organization, as motivation can manipulate the performance or behavior of the individual. Motivating an individual in their work is one of the crucial functions of people management.

Self-expression might be one, if not the most important way for people to connect, navigate, and grow with each other. In general, tattoos are becoming less taboo and more accepted. In time, employers will often care less about professional appearance and more about the work produced (Boultinghouse, 2015). Of course, the extent of self-

expression in the workplace will differ by company, clients and management. The goal of

self-expression guidelines is not to hinder the freedom of employees but uphold company

and brand image (Reis & Braga, 2016). Whether this expression is displayed by physical

appearance of practice, the workplace is becoming a reflection of global business.

Companies with strict anti-tattoo policies, strict dress codes and strict policies against

personalizing one's area of work are not a motivating factor for keeping young people at

their jobs (Urban, 2013). In 2018 the workplace is about customization, individuality, and

choice, and if the generation with experience and knowledge fails to provide mentoring,

the workplace will be an uncomfortable place to work for young hires. This

unpredictability can cause turnover which in turn will negatively impact a business and

will not foster a positive social and economic impact on the community. In Section 3, I

present the analysis, findings, and interpretation of the data from the study. I discuss the

application of the research to professional practice, implications for social change,

recommendations for action, suggestions for social change, reflections, and concluding

statements.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Section 3 consists of an introduction of the study, the purpose of the study, the central research question, and a presentation of the findings. In addition, this section encompasses the application to professional practice and the implications for social change. Section 3 further includes recommendations for more research on leaders imposing less restrictive policies on employee self-expression while maintaining employee motivation and work productivity in the workplace. In the reflections, I describe my experiences during this doctoral study journey. I conclude the study with a synopsis addressing the importance of implementing effective strategies when creating policies on self-expression in the workplace to improve employee productivity, therefore contributing to social change.

Introduction

My purpose in this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that I used by leaders from three higher education institutions to manage workplace self-expression without negatively affecting employee motivation and work productivity. This section includes research methods, design appropriateness review, a brief discussion of the population, and a presentation of the findings from data collection. Information obtained from this research will be significant in shaping the success of new policies regarding self-expression in the workplace that other higher education institutions are thinking about implementing.

The study was conducted using interviews with participants from three higher education institutions in central and northern New Jersey with key participants being

leaders of the organizations. The interviews had a specified time limit of approximately 60 minutes. All interviews were led with the help of previously prepared interview questions. Participants possessed experience implementing strategies to improve employee productivity; all participants (P1–P9) held leadership positions and have at least 10 years of work experience. Prior to the interviews, participants reviewed and signed consent forms. I used member checking to identify any areas of inaccuracy, and verify data credibility, validity, and transferability. After conducting the interviews, I found these leaders revealed that the policies being implemented in higher education institutions that restrict self-expression in the workplace are not having a negative influence on employee motivation and work productivity.

The study was deemed to be one of minimal risk to participants and the probability and extent of harm or discomfort was not greater than any ordinarily encountered in daily life, or during the act of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. Care was taken to ensure that the participants fully understood the nature of the study and the fact that participation was voluntary. A statement was made that confidentiality of recovered data will be maintained at all times, and identification of participants will not be available during or after the study. Codes were used to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. The coding consisted of the theoretical constructs raised during my review of the literature but was extended to include important concepts, themes, and other prominent features of the participants' experience. This analysis primarily consisted of looking for patterns and contrast within individual interviews, as

well as comparing the interviews with each other and the theoretical basis developed from the literature.

Because policies being implemented to restrict workplace self-expression in the subject higher education institutions are not having a negative effect on employee motivation and work productivity, these case study findings are reinforced by the conceptual consideration of Herzberg's hygiene factors. These hygiene factors will enhance employee dissatisfaction if not fulfilled (Herzberg et al., 1959). Three themes emerged from the analysis of the data: managing relationships, barriers in the workplace, and the workplace environment. As a result of the analysis of the themes, I have made several recommendations related to leadership strategies.

Presentation of Findings

The overarching research question for this qualitative descriptive study was: What strategies do higher education business leaders use to manage employee freedom of expression without negatively affecting business results? The study sample was nine business leaders from three higher education institutions in New Jersey who had implemented effective strategies to engage their employees. The data emanated from semistructured interviews with the participants that I transcribed, and review of the employee policies of the three subject higher education institutions. The interview findings show that the policies being implemented in higher education institutions that restrict self-expression in the workplace are not having a negative impact on employee motivation, work productivity, and ultimately business results. When employees are

motivated it leads to positive employee productivity and as a result leads to positive business productivity (see Figure 1).
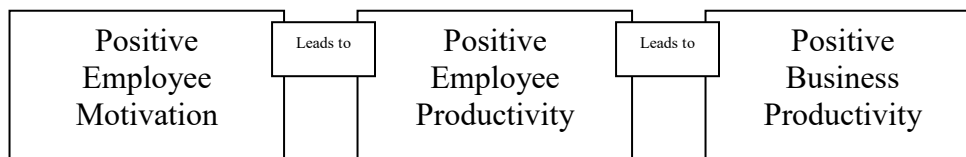
| Positive Employee Motivation | Leads to | Positive Employee Productivity | Leads to | Positive Business Productivity |

Figure 1. Depiction of employee productivity.

The findings of the data analysis were presented in the form of themes emanating from the data. The results in this study addressed the central research question as well as factors and motivators in relation to workplace self-expression. At the beginning of interviewing Participant 9, data saturation began and extended to the point of repetition. I verified this further through the data analysis process. The participants were provided with the opportunity to conduct member checking once completed.

I had two goals for the participant interviews and the data analysis. The first goal was to find evidence that either supported or challenged the conceptual model sustaining this research, and the second goal was to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which these conceptual constructs manifest in the employees' experience at work. I believe that I have accomplished both goals in this study. After analyzing the data, three major themes emerged. These three themes were (a) managing relationships, (b) barriers in the workplace, and (c) the workplace environment (see Table 2). The significance of exploring the effects of employee self-expression in the workplace may assist leaders with implementing strategies to increase productivity, motivation, and profitability allowing leaders to sustain organizational and economic development.

Theme 1: Managing Relationships

The first theme identified by participants related to leadership. Information transmitted by leaders has a powerful influence on employees' interpretations of their work experiences (Yiwen, Lepine, Buckman, & Feng, 2014). Policies established by leaders should take employees' needs into consideration as long as the policy will not affect business results. The goal of an organization should be to keep employees' motivated and productive (Yagil & Medler-Liraz, 2014). To apply Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, leaders need to adopt a two-stage process to motivate people (Herzberg et al., 1959). First, leaders need to eliminate the dissatisfaction employees are experiencing and, second, leaders need to help employees find satisfaction.

When asked if feedback was solicited from employees' concerning policies restricting workplace self-expression, leaders provided data by addressing Question 6, which queried whether or not feedback was solicited from employees concerning policies restricting self-expression in the workplace prior to implementing a policy. Participants P2-P9 described that employees' feedback was solicited and how. P1 stated no feedback was solicited. P7 expressed that employees were given the opportunity to serve on a committee created specifically for policy review. P3 contributed that the employees that were asked for feedback were positive about creating a policy on workplace self-expression and agreed with a culture of professionalism.

The analysis of the participating institutions employee policies and websites revealed statements such as "commitment to the highest ethical standards," "positive image," and "protect academic freedom." The information from the above-mentioned

sources suggests that the companies' strategies were aimed to create a collegiate environment for all employees and to advance the mission of the institutions. These standards are derived from a set of core values that include integrity, student success, academic and institutional excellence, lifelong learning, respect, accountability, and innovation.

Leader-employee relationships in the workplace today have taken on a sense of entitlement (Loi et al., 2014). Leaders have begun to create strategies when developing policies to allow for open self-expression (Gottfredson & Aguinis, 2017). This will help to enhance the leader-employee relationship through less restrictive environments, allowing for the employees to be more productive and motivated, which in turn will create an environment of trust and positivity (Loi et al., 2014).

Theme 2: Barriers in the Workplace

When asked about the effect observed on work productivity and motivation while keeping the rules in place, leaders provided data by addressing Question 4 of the impact observed on work productivity and motivation since restricting self-expression in the workplace. Five participants (P1, P2, P3, P5, and P7) described key barriers that could arise within an organization if there are restrictive policies on self-expression in the workplace. Employees may find difficulty in expressing their true selves at work, because there are so many situations in which employees are expected to act a certain way or to do certain things (Kokkoris & Kühnen, 2015).

P1 expressed that employers are entitled to have a dress code, and this should be reasonable considering the nature of the job the person is required to do. P3 voiced that

self-expression has reached such a level with Millennials in 2018 that it is common to see tattoos and piercings among workers in almost any setting. Body art and self-expression are more accepted in the workplace and are becoming more accepting accepted as time progresses (Foltz, 2014). P8 stated that employees often become nervous when they feel their rights are being restricted. P8 also stated that soliciting feedback is a great method to disarm these notions. According to Herzberg et al. (1959), a reward once given becomes a right.

The higher education institutions in this study all have code of conduct policies that places parameters for treating everyone fair, meeting professional responsibilities, and prohibiting verbal or physical assaults. P7 expressed that employees do not feel their freedom of expression is being compromised by these policies, but rather these policies are designed to manage areas of behavior that are not acceptable to maintain a professional workplace. When the code of conduct policies were first discussed with each other, leaders of each institution submitted the draft policy to faculty unions and college counsels for feedback. The initial reaction from the leaders that review the policies was that the policies would limit faculty creativity and academic freedom. Although there was no loss of productivity or motivation, over time, with the support of leaders, the policy was viewed as fostering collegiate, collaborative, and safe environment for everyone.

A review of the policies and websites to determine what strategies were being used to maintain a motivated and productive work environment while restricting self-expression revealed that employees were content with the rules put in place and did not feel their freedom of self-expression was violated. The interviewees also stated that even

though policies were in place, the employees' motivation and productivity was not affected. The findings indicated that leaders are engaging with employees so they could get a grasp on their employee's feelings, needs, and motivations. Employee policies established at the institutions set a standard to prevent barriers in the workplace. These policies are not restricting employee self-expression in the workplace.

Theme 3: Workplace Environment

The work environment is the surrounding where the employees work that can influence employee's motivation and productivity. A positive and healthy work environment can help to increase an employee's motivation to go to work, improve organizational citizenship behavior, and lead to commitment (Herzberg et al., 1959). An encouraging work environment makes employees feel good about coming to work, and this provides motivation to sustain them throughout the day. The employee can experience positive personal growth when working in the organization, including increased workplace creativity. The organizations' positive working environment can affect the employee's productivity, which can lead to the success of the company. Apart from maintaining productivity, the organization can achieve goodwill which means the organization is seen by society as having a favorable image and reputation. By favorably positioning the organization, members of society will view the organization favorably, resulting in a beneficial organizational culture.

The third theme in this study was the supportive working environment. Fostering a positive, supportive, and encouraging working environment in which employee morale

is high is important to employee motivation. Positive work environments lead employees to utilize higher levels of effort in support of the goals and strategies of the organization (Allen, Ericksen & Collins, 2013). P8 added that encouraging an open dialogue and free expression increases productivity in the workplace as employees feel as if they have a voice. However, with open dialogue there should be some parameters around prohibiting behaviors that are harassing and hostile.

The institutions' employee policies and websites provided further justification from the participant interviews that motivation and productivity is not being affected. The purpose of employee policies is to set forth the colleges' expectations for the professional conduct of its employees. Employees are charged with the responsibility to read and to abide by the provisions of the policies. Leaders provide clear direction and timely feedback when needed to ensure employees are content allowing for continued motivation and productivity. This research showed that employees do not find policies regarding conduct to be restrictive.

Depending on the main assumptions and expectations of workers concerning workplace culture, self-expression has different psychological, physical, and social impacts (Kokkoris & Kühnen, 2015). The use of freedom of expression could reasonably be limited if freedom of expression is determined to be harmful to others. Participants indicated employers are focusing on the ability of the employee to perform their role in the company instead of focusing on physical appearance. Leaders need to nurture future leaders through allowing self-expression and socialization. P8 contributed that the leaders that encourage open dialogue are more successful.

Table 2

Summary of Themes and Key Findings

Operational definition	Theme	Key finding
Motivation	Workplace environment	Employee motivation has not been affected by workplace self-expression policies being implemented.
Productivity	Barriers in the workplace	Policies limiting workplace self-expression have not impacted employee productivity.
Leadership	Managing relationships	Leaders have created and implemented workplace self-expression policies that have maintained employee motivation and self-expression. Leaders have consulted with employees during the process of implementing these policies.
Culture	Workplace environment	Employee motivation and productivity has not impacted business results negatively. The culture of the higher education institutions has remained positive.

Correlation to the Conceptual Framework

Organizational leaders must be mindful of the different attributes of their employees and how they work within the organizational environment. Also, leaders must

take note of any unforeseen differences and look for ways to apply those differences to the work environment. The distinction Herzberg made was including factors deeper than the impact of a positive environment by introducing a concept defined as hygiene's, an independent phenomenon that allows for a clearer determination of the factors that can create an unhealthy, psychologically, work environment. Concerning policies and administration as identified by Herzberg (1959), the participants expressed that employees are satisfied with existing policies and therefore motivation and productivity have not been affected.

Applications to Professional Practice

This study adds to existing bodies of knowledge to develop strategies on creating policies on self-expression in the workplace that keep employees motivated and productive. This study also provides knowledge on how the findings are relevant to improving business practices, contributing to the effectiveness of a knowledgeable and flexible workforce regarding policies around employee self-expression in the workplace. Because disengagement contributes a personal, individual cost to the employee, disengagement contributes to a loss of revenue to the organization (Salman et al., 2015). Employee motivation and productivity are fundamental in the management of employees within an organization. The management of these fundamentals has a direct bearing on the company's productivity and quality of service. These fundamentals have an impact on the company's profits and continued existence. The interview results revealed that 100% of participants had a positive attitude about the work environment because they have not seen a decrease in employee motivation and work productivity.

The lack of strategies that decrease barriers and improve workplace relationships between management and employees might have a significant impact on organizations (Dyer et al., 2016). It is important for leaders to understand how to develop strategies for positive workplace motivation and productivity. Consequently, organizational leaders should put good policies in place that promote motivation and greater productivity.

Implications for Social Change

Employees of organizations live within communities, and higher education institution employees serve a significant role in the community and the greater society. The findings of this study could produce positive social change through the actions of higher education employees who are more highly engaged at work. Engaged employees are more productive and motivated. The work environment, leadership personnel, team and co-worker relationships, organizational policies, and workplace well-being are the driving factors towards employee engagement (Anitha, 2014). The implications are expressed in terms of tangible improvements to individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, or societies, as the finding could affect social change. Because higher education employees serve the public good, the positive social change will not only be driven by the educational services provided by these employees, but also by the constituents whom these employees serve.

At the community level, the benefits of higher education employees who are allowed increased self-expression at work may be more motivated and productive, increasing organizational productivity and performance. The benefits at the community and societal level may be the increased economic contribution and subsequent increased

tax base resulting from the students who receive the education delivered by engaged higher education employees. The increased tax revenue and employment may reduce dependence on economic assistance, thereby increasing the ability of government agencies to allocate scarce financial resources to other programs benefiting the community.

Recommendations for Action

Leaders who develop workplace strategies such as self-expression may provide a positive assortment of abilities, motivation, and opportunities to increase productivity. Effective organizational leaders understand that their principal objective is to enhance the productivity of their employees, but the lack of workplace strategies may have a negative impact on organizations. The results of this study could contribute to training by inclusion in leadership courses at the university level. Other options for distribution of results are articles in scholarly journals and higher education industry publications.

Business leaders should recognize all forms of personal expression (Brdulak et al., 2017). Business leaders should choose the most suitable motivation theory for their organization. For the organizations in this study, the appropriate motivation theory is Herzberg's two factor theory because employees have varying needs that may change over time. Organizational leaders should create a positive working environment to maintain increased employee productivity and motivation. Motivating employees will establish a healthier working environment and increase workflow. The majority of the interview participants had a positive attitude about the work environment. Leaders should

continue to contribute to the balance between self-expression at work and outside of work to produce improved outcomes at work.

Applying the recommended solutions in organizations may lead to more highly motivated employees with a higher rate of productivity and hence enhance business outcomes. These recommendations were investigated in the literature review as good practices to achieve highly motivated and productive employees. In addition to enhanced organizational productivity, motivated employees may be more innovative and creative, resulting in potential cost savings. Implementing policies in the workplace while taking into consideration motivation in the organization must be performed with a high regard for the decision makers.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore strategies that some business leaders in higher education institutions use to restrict employees self-expression in the workplace. While the study participants provided valuable insight and feedback about restricting employees freedom of self-expression in the workplace, further research is recommended. There have been no new studies published since this proposal.

Quantitative research could examine the relationships between the employee self-expression, strictness of self-expression policies, and employee productivity and employee motivation. Promoting an inclusive environment in the workplace also contributes to maintaining employee motivation and productivity. Because the findings of theme 3 suggested leaders who maintain an open dialogue with employees maintain a

motivated and productive workforce, further quantitative research could examine the relationship between employer-employee level of open dialogue and worker motivation and productivity. Policy creation and implementation decisions affect the profitability of organizations through the effects these policies have on employees' behaviors. Additional research might establish a relationship between an individual's experience of the workplace and that individual's civic contributions. An additional research topic may be whether or not allowing employees to have freedom of self-expression in the workplace fosters better functioning societies.

Reflections

During the data collection process, I used open-ended questions to converse with participants. The participants did not report any issues with answering the questions and the participants seemed sincerely interested in the study. I adhered strictly to the interview protocol (see Appendix B) by attempting to make participants comfortable and asked the interview questions in a conversational manner to develop a relaxed environment to elicit thoughtful responses.

Throughout my experiences within the DBA Doctoral Study process, I encountered several obstacles. At times, I found myself gravitating towards a predetermined conclusion of what was occurring in the workplace. I anticipated finding that higher education leaders are implementing strict policies to restrict employee freedom of self-expression in the workplace, resulting in adverse effects on employee motivation and productivity. However, my preconceived ideas were not reflected on to the participants.

As I conducted my interviews with participants, I began to realize that in many cases, organizational leaders are consistently looking for ways to motivate employees and not create negativity in the workplace. Leaders need to do what is best for the success of their organization while remembering that people have different needs and these needs cause them to behave in different ways. As a result of my research, I am more open to the needs of the organization while at the same time trying to satisfy the employees' needs to express themselves in the workplace.

Conclusion

Motivated employees not only influence individual performance, but also the whole organization's performance and productivity. Based on the literature review, interviews, and the analysis completed, I have determined that employees are motivated even with policies that restrict their freedom of self-expression in the workplace. Less restriction of self-expression leads to enhanced productivity and motivation which affects business performance. If an employee enjoys employment, that employee will be more likely to remain an employee long-term, which is beneficial for business. Work is a reflection of individual choices, passion, and ambitions. It seems contradictory that many employees are worried about being themselves when they are actually at work.

Leaders in some higher education institutions have implemented strategies to maintain a professional environment, while allowing employees to remain comfortable about being themselves. As a result, employees in these institutions are happier and more productive. For this reason, it is important for leaders to encourage staff to be themselves.

Employees should be questioning whether or not self-expression at both home and work is an accurate self-reflection. To be a motivator, it is important for a leader to develop strategies to really motivate employees, and necessary for the leader to discover the fundamental needs of the employees. Employees that are motivated will perform at a higher level, which will increase business performance and productivity.

The above findings are consistent with Herzberg's two factor theory for motivation. Herzberg contended that employees are influenced by two factors: motivation and job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Employee's motivation for better performance is so vital for the company to attain its goals. From Herzberg et al.'s (1959) perspective, internal motivation is important. Each organizational leader should evaluate the needs and tailor strategies to their respective organizations to gain the optimal approach for motivating employees and decreasing barriers.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What part of the business strategy prompted you to develop and implement policies and procedures around self-expression in the workplace?

2. What specific policies have you implemented regarding self-expression in the workplace?

3. What specific types of employee self-expression do your organizational policies limit in the workplace and how does it relate to the business strategy?

4. What impact have you observed on work productivity and motivation since restricting self-expression in the workplace?

5. What strategies have you considered to increase productivity and motivation while keeping the rules in place?

6. What feedback, if any, did you solicit from employees concerning policies restricting self-expression in the workplace prior to implementing a policy?

7. What were key obstacles to implementing successful policies for restricting self-expression in the workplace and how did they affect the strategy?

8. How did you address the obstacles?

9. What other topics that we did not cover in our discussion would you like to discuss that may contribute to my understanding of the strategies you utilize to manage self-expression in the workplace without negatively impacting work productivity?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

The setting and the sequence and series of interview questions will apply to every interview and discussion. The plan is for a 60 minute phone interview. Member checking will confirm the efficacy of interpreting the participant's answers.

Protocol

1. Introductions and setting the stage.

2. Obtain a signed informed consent form, reviewing the contents, and answering participant questions.

3. Prior to beginning the interview, I will start the audio recording device by stating the location, date and time of the interview and the participants coded identification to preserve anonymity.

4. Conduct the interview using the prepared questions.

5. Ask additional questions of the participant, as applicable.

6. End interview or discussion. Confirm the member checking process with the participant.

7. Discuss the follow-up process with the participant for possible additional questions.

Conclude by thanking the participant, shutting off the recording device, and ending the call.