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# Strategies Department Store Managers Use to Increase Employee Engagement

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Abstract

Strategies Department Store Managers Use to Increase Employee Engagement

by

Samara Desir

MS, American Intercontinental University, 2013

BS, College of Staten Island, 2010

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2018

## Abstract

Business leaders are challenged with sustaining an engaged workforce to achieve economic prosperity in their organizations. The implementation of effective strategies to increase employee engagement can mitigate the challenges of employee disengagement. The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore the strategies that department store managers used to increase employee engagement. The conceptual frameworks selected for the research were Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation and Kahn's engagement theory. The research participants consisted of 5 department store managers, from the northeastern United States, who successfully used strategies to increase employee engagement. Data were collected from the participants in semistructured interviews and from company archival documents about the strategic efforts that department store managers used to increase employee engagement. Data analysis consisted of compiling the data, coding for emergent themes, disassembling the data into common codes, reassembling the data into themes, interpreting the meaning, and reporting the themes. The 9 themes that emerged from the data were manager and employee relationship, employee motivation, rewards and incentives, expressing appreciation, ensuring employee wellbeing, health and safety, employee empowerment, employee feedback, and establishing employee expectations. The study results could contribute to positive social change by providing department store managers with strategies to increase employee engagement, which may reduce employee turnover and create community-wide employment opportunities for community members.

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### Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved favorite five children, Elisha, Annisa, Abigail, Mikaela, and my Prince Michael for their support, encouragement, and patience with me. You've been my motivation and inspiration. Thank you for being my children, I love you all and I thank God for you all every day. To my husband, Pete, your reassurance, steadfast support, and love throughout the DBA journey has enabled me to accomplish my objective of attaining such a prestigious degree. To my mother and grandmother, thank you for teaching me the value of education and the value of perseverance on this doctoral journey. To my cousin, Lionel, thank you for inspiring me and being so compassionate and patient when I needed advice and counsel about academic and personal matters. I have embraced you as a second dad, you will always have a special place in my heart. To my uncle, thank you for all the times you were on my side and thank you for being the best uncle in the world. To my siblings, and all my other relatives, I thank you for your continued support and encouragement.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Employee engagement in the workplace can increase employee productivity in organizations. Bin (2015) suggested that employees who are engaged contribute to the financial sustenance of the organization. On average, businesses lose more than \$375 billion a year of productivity because of a lack of employee engagement (Valentin, Valentin, & Nafukho, 2015). Many organizations are concerned with employee engagement (Bailey, 2016). Employee engagement directly affects organizational performance (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). Leaders should employ strategies to increase organizational success (Mishra, Sharma, & Bhaskar, 2015). Strategies to increase employee engagement are significant to managers because disengagement leads to low productivity (Haymes, 2016). Ensuring that employees engage within a business is essential to maximizing profitability (Ünal & Turgut, 2015). The intent of the research was to impart insight on the strategies that department store managers used to increase employee engagement.

### **Background of the Problem**

Disengagement is prevalent in the workplace and adversely affects productivity and profitability in organizations. Businesses in the United States with disengaged employees have a decline in reduced productivity per year (Noble & Smith, 2015). In 2013, disengaged employees cost their organizations \$450 billion annually (Bhattacharya, 2015). Engaged employees are a significant component in the financial sustainability and accomplishments of an organization. In a rapid economic cycle, an engaged workforce is essential for growth and monetary sustainability (Lightle,

Castellano, Baker, & Sweeney, 2015). Although most managers understand a need to improve employee engagement, many have yet to develop strategies to increase employee engagement (Sanneh & Taj, 2015). Managers who implement employee engagement strategies have reduced staff turnover, improved productivity and efficiency, improved retention of customers, and increased profitability (Adjani, 2015). It is essential that managers implement strategies to increase employee engagement to make necessary adjustments regarding engagement levels and employee motivation in the organization.

#### **Problem Statement**

Disengagement among employees results in reduced performance, lost revenue, and decreased productivity (Dempsey & Reilly, 2016). Kazimoto (2016) revealed that organizations with high levels of engagement improved their financial results by 2% to 8% from 2014–2016, whereas organizations with low employee engagement experienced decreases in financial performance of 10% to 2% per year. The general business problem is that some department store managers experience low employee engagement, resulting in low productivity that threatens organization sustainability. The specific business problem is that some department store managers lack the strategies to increase employee engagement and productivity.

#### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore the strategies that department store managers used to increase employee engagement and productivity. The population for the study was five department store managers from the Northeastern

United States who realized increased profitability since implementing strategies that increased employee engagement. The results from this study might contribute to positive social change by providing department store managers with strategies that can increase employee engagement, leading to improved revenue growth. Understanding the strategies department store managers use to increase employee engagement could reduce employee turnover and increase stable employment, thus supporting the local economy.

#### **Nature of the Study**

There are three types of research methodologies: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Qualitative researchers gather rich textural data and conduct in-depth analyses of the phenomenon under study (Yates & Leggett, 2016). A qualitative research design was appropriate to explore a detailed knowledge of the participants' experiences that increase employee engagement. The quantitative method consists of statistical analysis and testing hypotheses, in addition to researchers conducting experiments and surveys (Zefeiti & Mohamad, 2015). I did not choose the quantitative method because I was not accepting or rejecting, or proving or disproving, a hypothesis using numeric data for the research. Mixed-method researchers combine qualitative and quantitative components within a research study (Kaur, 2016). A mixed method was not applicable to the research because I was not studying statistical measures or using numerical data.

Qualitative researchers can use one of the following designs: ethnography, phenomenology, or case study (Anderson, Stewart, & Abdul-Aziz, 2016). Ethnography is the study of communities, cultural groups, and organizations (Symon, Cassell, &

Johnson, 2018). An ethnographic study design was not appropriate because I was not studying social interaction within a culture or community. The focus of this study was not on individual worldviews or the lived experiences of the participants (Charlick, Pincombe, McKellar, & Fielder, 2016); therefore, phenomenology was not appropriate. Marshall and Rossman (2016) cited that a case study is an exploratory approach that enables the researcher to explore how or why questions of a particular occurrence in its context. A single case study design was appropriate to explore the strategies that department store managers used to increase employee engagement.

#### **Research Question**

The central overarching research question that I used for this study was: What strategies do department store managers use to increase employee engagement and productivity?

#### **Interview Questions**

1. What management strategies have you used to increase employee engagement?
2. What challenges have you encountered when attempting to implement strategies of employee engagement and productivity?
3. What strategies did you find worked best to increase employee engagement?
4. How do you assess the success of management strategies meant to increase employee engagement and productivity?
5. What additional information would you like to share to address any aspects of employee engagement and productivity?

### **Conceptual Framework**

I selected two theories for the conceptual framework for the research: Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory and Kahn's (1990) engagement theory. Vroom developed the expectancy theory in 1964; the theory has direct application to workplace settings (Vroom, 1964). Vroom suggested that employee performance is based on motivational elements which consist of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Nimri, Bdair, and Al Bitar (2015) revealed that employees work hard to earn rewards they value and consider attainable. In this study, I applied Vroom's expectancy theory to illustrate motivational strategies that department store managers use to increase employee engagement.

Kahn (1990) created the engagement model in 1990 with three concepts related to work performance: physical, cognitive, and emotional. Kahn found that employee engagement depends on the cognitive and emotional awareness of the employees and the correlation to the assigned tasks. Kahn noted that an individual's psychological presence is an essential ingredient for effective role performance. Engaged employees contribute to their organizations by becoming cognitively, physically, and emotionally involved in their assigned tasks that increase productivity (Kahn, 1990). In this study, I explored the strategies that department store managers use to increase employee engagement and productivity. The engagement model applied to my study to illustrate how managers ensure the involvement, commitment, and productivity of employees.

In the research, I described the two competing and contrasting theories: the social exchange and the Herzberg's (1959) two factor model. Although the Herzberg two-factor model seemed practical for the study, I did not select it because the hygiene

factors, if overlooked, may cause demotivation at the workplace setting. The social exchange theory was founded by George Homans in 1959 (Homans, 1959). The social exchange theory is based on the concept that individuals are engaged in relationships to maximize personal gains and profits. I employed the social exchange theory as a lens to view the results of the study by illustrating the connection between managers providing extrinsic or intrinsic rewards to augment employee motivation. In addition, Herzberg's two-factor model is based on the perception that individuals are motivated in the workplace by two central factors: motivators and hygiene factors. Herzberg described motivators as recognition, promotions, achievements, personal development, responsibility, and the work ethic. Hygiene factors include salary and benefits, company policy, and relationship with coworkers. Dissatisfaction occurs when any of these benefits are insufficient or inadequate in the workplace.

### **Operational Definitions**

The following definitions provided context for the study:

*Collaboration:* Collaboration is a type of group process that promotes employee engagement; collaboration occurs when employees cooperate to create a product, provide a service, or build other employees' skills building through a willingness to share knowledge, leadership, and followership (Mellin, Belknap, Brodie, & Sholes, 2015).

*Disengagement:* Disengagement is the personal withdrawal of an individual's self and preferred behaviors deriving from an absence of diminished responsiveness to a situation (Bailey, 2016).

*Efficiency improvement:* Efficiency improvement is striving to achieve a measure of consistent and effective performances necessary to remain fully engaged (Meswantri, & Ilyas, 2018).

*Employee engagement:* Employee engagement is the the quality of capacity an employee is willing to invest in achieving the organization's goals (Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey, & Saks, 2015).

*Engagement:* Engagement is the continuity of committed efforts aligned in a direction to produce something significant and valuable (Rosin, 2015).

*Motivation:* Motivation is an internal mental energy that facilitates employees to achieve their desired goals in an organization (Makki & Abid, 2017).

*Organizational alignment:* Organizational alignment represents employee engagement goals and their effect on individual performance (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015).

*Organizational commitment:* An organizational commitment is a psychological state of attachment and identification felt by individuals toward the organization (Bhattacharya, 2015).

*Productivity:* Productivity is a certain amount of an employees' input to produce the desirable business output (Owor, 2016).

*Valence:* Valence is a discernable worth a person associated with compensation (Shweiki et al., 2015).



## **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are aspects of the study that the researcher believes are accurate, although no validation exists (Leung, 2015). In this study, I assumed that all participants would answer the questions candidly and truthfully. The second assumption was that participants have a sincere interest in participating in the study and know that their contribution to the study is valuable. I assumed that the participants were knowledgeable of the phenomenon under study and were willing to share their knowledge.

### **Limitations**

Marshall and Rossman (2016) stated that limitations are areas within the research over which the researcher has no control. Limitations of a study are potential weaknesses. According to Yin (2018), potential study limitations comprise the size of the sample, time restraints, and the location of the participant. The study sample was limited in both size and population. Although the sample size was enough to conduct a qualitative study, the size was not large enough to be representative of the larger population of other organizations. The findings from this study reflected the perceptions of only department store managers and not those of other managers from other organizations. By conducting a qualitative study, the data I collected were exploratory and descriptive and were not numerical or statistical data to prove or disprove a hypothesis. The limitation of the case study design consisted of internal and external validity. Although a case study was a preferred method to explore the how and why of

an event, I had no control of the participants' reactions, their memory of events, or any additional events that may have affected the internal or external validity of the findings.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are limits set by the researcher to create the focus of the study (Noble & Smith, 2015), including the standards for participant selection, the geographical area, and the organization that the researchers choose to focus on (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This study was delimited to participants in the Northeastern United States. I chose to only interview department store managers who successfully used strategies to increase employee engagement and not managers from other organizations. The study was delimited to only department managers and did not include other types of leaders in retail, such as chief executive officers, executives, supervisors, or directors of store operations. I did not interview employees because I wished to explore managers' perceptions of strategies to increase employee engagement.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study findings may be of value to department store managers who wish to create strategies to increase employee engagement. Gupta and Sharma (2016) stated that disengagement continues to grow among employees, which reduces productivity and profitability in organizations. Rosin (2015) found that business managers experience an engagement imbalance because employees do not put forth the effort they need to drive their performance and growth agendas, adversely affecting productivity and profitability. Many department store managers lack awareness of management and employee behavior factors that need to be addressed to increase employee engagement. The results of the

study could help department store managers find strategies to engage employees. An engaged employee will increase customer satisfaction.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The results of the study could be beneficial to businesses because employee engagement is important to any organization. Engaged employees offer their efforts, skills, and talents to the organization's missions and goals (Thompson & Webber, 2016). Employee engagement is a component of work performance and employee retention (Burton, Chen, Li, & Schultz, 2017). Ariani (2015) suggested that employee engagement is interrelated with increased sales and consumer loyalty to the organization. There is a connection between increased employee engagement and enhanced productivity. When employees are completely engaged, they take steps toward the advancement of the organization. Employees who are engaged have potential, are virtuous, and contribute to the growth and expansion of the business (Chatterjees & Das, 2016). Engaged employees are positive, proactive, and connected to the company's missions and goals. Managers may use the results of the research to improve employee engagement, thereby increasing productivity.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The results from this study may contribute to social change by increasing awareness of employee engagement strategies. When employees are satisfied, they provide better services and engage positively with their communities (Akhtar, Boustani, Tsivrikos, & ChamorroPremuzic, 2015). Chong and Yeo (2015) revealed that engaged employees acquire a work ethic system that enables them to be productive in the

community. The more managers create a culture of a supportive atmosphere, the more the employees feel valued, which increases employee morale and engagement.

Increasing employee engagement adds value to communities by creating a stable workforce, thus supporting the local economy. Strategies to increase employee engagement may help in the development of communities by increasing purchasing power, which affects those who own or work at community shops, restaurants, and stores.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The purpose of this literature review was to provide an in-depth evaluation of previous studies linked to employee engagement. The literature review includes an assessment and synthesis of peer-reviewed articles and journals accessed via the Walden library database. I used the following keywords: *employee engagement, disengagement, work motivation, employee motivation, managers, management strategies, productivity, organizational success, and corporate strategies*. I applied Vroom's (1964) and Kahn's (1990) engagement theories to explore the motivational strategies that managers can use to increase employee engagement.

The literature review is organized as follows: (a) expectancy and employee engagement, (b) instrumentality and employee engagement, (c) valence, and employee engagement, (d) conceptualizing motivation, (e) engagement and motivation in business, (f) Kahn's engagement theory, (g) categories of employee engagement, (h) engaged employees, (i) nonengaged employees, (j) actively disengaged employees, and (k) importance of employee engagement. I present an overview of the historical development of Vroom's expectancy and Kahn's engagement theory. Next, I describe

the conceptual framework used to explain the processes of engagement. Last, I discuss the key areas of agreement and disagreement about engagement at a theoretical level. The literature review consisted of 264 references with a total of 238 peer-reviewed articles, which meets the requirements of the 85% peer-reviewed articles. The peer-reviewed articles included publication dates from 2015-2018, which is within 5 years of the anticipated completed date of the study.

### **Vroom's Expectancy Theory**

**Expectancy and employee engagement.** A motivated workforce is essential to increase employee engagement that can lead to increased productivity. According to Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, people are motivated toward a behavior based on three factors: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Vroom claimed that expectancy is the belief that effort will increase performance. Vroom found that the level of engagement that the employee releases is a determinant of the anticipation of the rewards that he or she will receive. Whittington (2015) explained that expectancy refers to the amount of energy an employee demonstrates while expecting that the increased amount of energy will yield improved performance of the task. When employees are motivated, they work harder and are more satisfied with their jobs (Furlich, 2016). Expectancy theory consists of the mental processes regarding choice or choosing. In expectancy, an employee is motivated to perform efficiently to attain the reward.

Employees are motivated when they believe that their work will lead to the rewards that they desire. Barba-Sánchez and Atienza-Sahuquillo (2017) stated that these rewards involve outcomes, such as feelings of accomplishment, achievement, and using

and developing skills and abilities. Gupta and Sharma (2016) stated that internal content, such as satisfaction at work, appreciation, a sense of fulfillment, wages, bonus packages, and vacations are motivational factors that increase employee engagement. Whittington (2015) noted that individual rewards (financial rewards, team climate, and participation in decision making) positively influence employee engagement. Managers must understand what motivates each employee in their organization to enhance the employee's motivation.

**Instrumentality and employee engagement.** The second factor in Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory is instrumentality. Vroom's instrumentality includes the belief that employee performance will be rewarded. An employee may believe that an increased amount of labor is instrumental to gaining the reward or prize that includes a salary increase, bonuses, or vacations. For instance, an employee may believe that increased work performance is instrumental in avoiding certain situations such as being laid off; therefore, they place a high value (valence) on work performance (Sanneh & Taj, 2015). In instrumentality, if the employee performs well, then a valued outcome (a reward) will be provided. To increase motivation, managers can provide rewards, such as an increase in salary, vacation, or other benefits. It is vital that managers comprehend the motivational needs of employees to enhance performance.

Instrumentality reflects the rewards system within an organization. Numerous researchers have examined the effect of instrumentality in organizations and found that it enhances employee engagement (Barakat & Moussa, 2016; Bin, 2015; Furlich, 2016; Gallus & Frey, 2016). Managers can also use instrumentality to enhance employee

motivation and performance (Bin, 2015; Kumar & Pansari, 2015). Instrumentality is the belief that a valued outcome will be received if employees perform well. If an employee performs to a certain level, he or she will be rewarded with an outcome that is beneficial to him or her.

Instrumentality is affected by two factors that influence individual motivation and employee engagement. Kuranchie-Mensah and Amponsah-Tawiah (2016) suggested that the factors associated with the individual's instrumentality for outcomes are control and trust. When employees believe that they have some control over the distribution of rewards, their instrumentality factor increases (Howell & Howell, 2017; Rosin, 2015). A lack of trust in leadership results in a loss of control of the reward system (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). If employees trust their leaders, they are more likely to believe their leader's promises, thus increasing employee engagement.

**Valence and employee engagement.** Valence is the third component of the expectancy theory model, and it consists of the desirability of an outcome to a worker. Vroom (1964) noted that an individual's motivation to perform depends on the value the individual places on the reward and his or her confidence that the efforts will help to achieve the desired goal. To conceptualize the theory of valence, Furlich (2016) revealed that valence is important for the employees to have to choose the highest rewards or outcome. For valence to increase, employees must consistently receive the rewards that validate the value of the reward. When employees place a high value on a reward, they are willing to invest effort in their work (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). Gupta and Sharma (2016) explained that leaders should understand that happy

employees are more sociable, supportive, and productive. According to the principles of expectancy theory, valence relates to cognition, which then leads to actions and improved employee engagement (Jin & McDonald, 2016). For valence to occur, the reward needs to be something that the employees value and are willing to work to obtain. Employees may value monetary rewards while some value recognition. Subsequently, it is imperative that managers determine what outcomes motivate a worker to increase motivation.

The component of valence is the significant value that an individual places on the results of a completed task in a controlled setting. Valence positively relates to employee engagement in organizations (Khaleel, Chelliah, Khalid, Jamil, & Manzoor, 2016). Baumann and Bonner (2017) found that valence is an antecedent in employee engagement that builds a supportive environment and counteracts stress. Employees demonstrate valence when they are motivated, and they believe that they will be rewarded for achieving the desired goal. Johnson, Friend, and Agrawal (2016) agreed that rewarded systems are the best motivators for employees to improving employee engagement. Employees who view rewards as worth the effort are motivated to work to obtain them.

To increase employee engagement, managers must ensure that the three motivational elements (expectancy, instrumentality, and valence) are taken into consideration. Barba-Sánchez and Atienza-Sahuquillo (2017) found the above factors support efficient performance, which leads to positive rewards (instrumentality) a high value on the rewards (valence), thus increasing employee engagement. Kanfer, Frese,



and Johnson (2017) found that managers who use Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory are successful in motivating their employees, which increases their performance. According to Vroom's expectancy theory, employees' work motivation is affected by valence and instrumentality. Because Vroom's model is formulated on an individual decision-making basis, department store managers must recognize the motivational model and include it in their strategies to increase employee engagement. An employee's beliefs about expectancy, instrumentality, and valence generate motivation, thus increasing engagement.

### **Kahn's Engagement Theory**

An engaged employee is committed to the organization and the organization's objectives. The origin of engagement within the academic literature is traced back to the work of Kahn (1990). Based on the engagement theory, Kahn defined engagement as a dedicated approach and commitment that employees have to the organization and its objectives. Kahn suggested that there are three initial psychological conditions that affect an individual's disengagement and engagement at work: psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability. These three elements, according to Kahn, correlate to employee engagement. Disengaged employees are not proactive in contributing to their organizations. Employers seek employees who are physically, emotionally, and psychologically engaged. Employees who are psychologically engaged care about the quality of their work, which forms the basis for employee engagement.

The first element in Kahn's (1990) engagement theory is psychological meaningfulness. Kahn stated that psychological meaningfulness is a sense of feeling

valuable, useful, and meaningful. Tims, Derks, and Bakker (2016) asserted that psychological meaningfulness relates to the value that people attach to a work goal, compared to their personal goals. Glavas (2016) revealed that employees become engaged at work if they find their work meaningful. Engaged employees seek meaningfulness at work to feel valued and appreciated.

Engagement at work and psychological meaningfulness are aspects of productivity and profitability. Bakker (2017) found that psychological meaningfulness positively relates to work engagement. Furthermore, Bailey, Madden, Alfes, and Fletcher (2015) revealed that psychological meaningfulness increases physiological health, employee job satisfaction, and employee value in their work. Roof (2015) confirmed that the success of an organization is based on the need for employees to feel a part of the organization as contributors to the organization's financial attainment. Engaged employees have a sense accomplishment, excitement, enthusiasm, and positivity about the organization. Employees feel a sense of competence, focus, positive interaction with colleagues, and satisfaction when they feel they are a part of the organization's accomplishments.

To increase employee engagement, managers should fulfill employees' needs for meaningfulness in their work, a determining factor in employee engagement. By creating an environment in which employees feel supported and valued, employees feel empowered and become motivated to engage and give their best. Renard and Snelgar (2016) revealed that work engagement and psychological meaningfulness contribute to employee engagement. Jung and Yoon (2016) found that employees who find their work

meaningful and fulfilling are more engaged. Employees feel a sense of mission, significance, and contentment if they value their contributions and see their job as helping the organization improve the organization's purpose and value. To feel meaningful, an employee needs to feel that he or she is doing a good job and feel that he or she is a part of the organization's accomplishments.

Meaningfulness is an essential factor in employee engagement. Menges, Tussing, Wihler, and Grant (2017) suggested that managers can help employees find meaningfulness at work. The interdependent nature of meaningfulness and work engagement can foster employee empowerment and increase employee engagement. Business managers should be aware of the role of psychological meaningfulness in employee engagement by encouraging employees' expertise, talents, skills, and achievement. Managers can create an environment that increases levels of employee engagement. Employee engagement is achieved when employees focus on purpose and value of the organization (Devi, 2016). When employees think that their leaders adequately recognize their contribution, they become more motivated and engaged.

The second psychological element, as noted by Kahn (1990), is an individual's psychological safety, which is the individual's sense of wellbeing. According to Kahn, psychological safety improves the employee engagement. Nimri et al. (2015) found a direct association between levels of employee engagement, safe working conditions, and psychological safety. Alagaraja and Shuck (2015) found a correlation between psychological safety and employee engagement safety. According to Nimri et al., employees who feel safe psychologically safe are more productive and make better use of

corporate assets. Many employees and managers may believe a paradox exists between efforts in safety and production (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016). However, sustainable improvement in psychological safety and health comes from a fully engaged business (Edmondson, Higgins, Singer, & Weiner, 2016). Promoting safety includes efforts to reduce or prevent injuries on the job. When a company develops a safety culture, positive results happen for business.

The third psychological condition of Kahn's (1990) engagement theory is psychological availability. Psychological availability includes the mental and expressive energies to perform the work. Kahn noted that elements that influence psychological availability are a stressful work environment, personal matters, a lack of enthusiasm, weariness, and a lack of energy. Kaliannan and Adjovu (2015) found that workers engage in work conditions that promote subjective value, meaning, and security. Employees who have physical resources (i.e., health) and cognitive resources (e.g., lack of stress and distraction) available to them are more engaged in their job (Ford, Myrden, & Jones, 2015). According to the engagement theory, psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability are predictors of employee engagement. Employees experience meaningfulness at work when they are happy, committed to performing the assigned task, and find their work valuable and worthwhile. Employees seek fulfillment and feel motivated to make a positive contribution to their organization.

Psychological wellbeing and employee engagement are associated with employee engagement. Shuck, Zigarmi, and Owen (2015) suggested that psychological wellbeing and work performance are two components that managers need to increase to advance

employee engagement. As noted by Viitala, Tanskanen, and Sääntti (2015), the wellbeing of employees influences productivity and performance. Townsend and Loudoun (2016) stated that managers who listen to what employees consider to be important about their jobs demonstrate that they value their employees, which makes them feel appreciated. Employee engagement can increase when employees feel heard, valued, and appreciated.

Psychological conditions of meaningfulness affect employee engagement. Kahn (1990) suggested that psychological meaningfulness is linked to engagement levels at the workplace. Employees who experience psychological meaningfulness experience positive emotions, have a goal or vision for the organization, and interact positively with their coworkers. Gupta and Sharma (2016) suggested that engaged employees give their best to the organization. Psychologically engaged employees feel an emotional connection to the job and are happier because they are committed to the organization. These three psychological approaches included in the engagement theory are essential in increasing employee engagement.

Employees are cognitively and emotionally engaged when they understand the expectations, goals, and missions of the organization and have resources and opportunities to be efficient and feel fulfilled in their work. Shah and Beh (2016) stated that employee engagement is the worker's psychological condition at work. Renard and Snelgar (2016) reported that employee engagement is the state of mind of the employee as opposed to the job itself. Chiang, Kee, and Tan (2016) emphasized that engaged employees believe in the work they perform, which leads to increased productivity in the

business. The engagement levels of employees remain high when they can keep developing themselves and stay actively engaged in the workplace.

Engaged employees are the determining factor in a successful organization and a mediocre organization. Encouraging workers to become engaged in their organizations is important to organizations (Taneja, Sewell, & Odom, 2015). Popli and Rizvi (2015) found that engaged employees care about the work they are doing and believe that they can make a difference in the organization. Disengaged employees are detrimental to the organization's growth and financial development. Managers should identify and implement solutions to engage workers to renew the characteristic emotional, psychological, and cognitive of the engagement theory in the employees (Cook & Artino, 2016). Focusing on employee's capabilities, talents, and positive traits will increase employee engagement. Therefore, it is imperative that managers understand strategies to increase employee engagement and the financial effect it has on the organization.

Employee engagement affects organizational performance. Kahn (1990) noted three psychological conditions necessary for engagement: meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Aghaz and Tarighian (2016) mentioned that employee engagement consists of the consistent support necessary to maintain or increase the economic growth of the organization. Organizations with effective employee wellbeing programs strategically outperform their competitors (Yalabik, Van- Rossenberg, Kinnie, & Swart, 2015). Managers continue to view employee wellbeing as a strategic advantage to organizations (Zakaria, 2015). Conrad, Ghosh, and Isaacson (2015) observed that engaged employees

work hard and are committed to the success of the organization. An organization that has engaged employees has higher profitability and productivity.

### **Competing Theories: Social Exchange Theory and Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement models and theories have been used to conceptualize the effectiveness of employee engagement in business organizations. The social exchange was first introduced by George Homans in 1959 (Homans, 1959). Social exchange theory is a well-known concept in areas such as sociology and psychology (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, & Hall, 2016). Social exchange is essential in increasing employee motivation in each organization. The objective of the social exchange model is to illustrate the motivational basis for a worker's performance (Perry-Jenkins & Wadsworth, 2017). People think of a relationship regarding perceived costs and benefits (Cook & Artino, 2016). The social exchange theory is about how people evaluate the costs and rewards of their relationships. When the rewards are positive and beneficial, a person feels optimistic and maintains the relationship. If, however, people feel dissatisfied with their interaction with one another and the costs are outweighing the benefits, the relationship loses value and is likely to end. Drawing upon their values, people will assess their relationship options based on what is most important to them.

The principles of social exchange theory apply to employee engagement as it is used to describe the motivational factors of employee's behaviors. According to the theory, relationships are formed based on interpersonal exchange. Owor (2016) suggested that for employees to engage and feel committed to the organization, they need to connect the revenue or services of the organization to their belief of what they should

receive as an employee. The exchange consists of investments, such as pay in return for the time expended by employees, benefits, and organizational support (Reader, Mearns, Lopes, & Kuha (2017). When employees receive favorable treatment from employers, rewards, or incentives, they feel encouraged and enthusiastic regarding the task and become more engaged. Employee engagement increases when employees assess the amount of support or resources they receive from the organization and reciprocate with commitment and dedication to the organization.

Scholars have revealed a correlation between social exchange theory and employee engagement. Employees of private organizations who were rewarded for hard work and had relationships with the manager that involved reciprocity had an increased level of engagement and organizational commitment than employees in public organizations (Bailey, 2016). Lightle et al. (2015) found that employees who perceive that they receive support from their managers or supervisors feel obligated to reciprocate with increased emotional commitment and engagement. As noted by the social exchange theory, a committed employee cares about the success of the organization's objectives.

When employees experience positive interactions with managers, they feel more connected and loyal to the organization. Allam (2017) suggested that employees who are in a positive, reciprocal relationship with their organizations become more productive and contribute to the business. Eldor and Vigoda-Gadot (2017) stated that the transactional and relational framework of the social exchange theory increases employee engagement and influences job performance. According to the social exchange theory, an individual will be more likely to seek out relationships if he or she thinks that he or she will receive



a benefit in return. One way of reinforcing positive relationships in the workplace is by providing benefits to employees for appreciation of their skills and talents. If, however, the manager has not provided the appropriate relationship, organizational environment, or resources, the level of engagement decreases, affecting productivity in the organization. The social exchange theory is applicable to the study as it is used to illustrate the association between rewards and employee motivation. Managers may use the social exchange theory as a positive reinforcement to increase employee engagement. .

#### **Contrasting Theory: The Herzberg Two-Factor Model**

The Herzberg two-factor model is used to understand employee engagement. The two-factor model originated from Herzberg in 1959. Herzberg's two-factor model is used to understand the synergy between employees' performance and what can be done to increase motivation in the workplace. The model consists of two aspects that determine how motivated or how satisfied or dissatisfied an employee is in the organization. Herzberg characterized these factors as hygiene factors and motivation factors (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). The term hygiene includes the factors that they are essential to maintaining satisfaction in the job but are not sufficient to keep employees motivated (Rahman, Akhter, & Khan, 2017). Hygienic factors include job security, status, interpersonal relationships, working conditions, and company policies (Sanjeev & Surya, 2016). Hygienic factors prevent dissatisfaction in the organization. The organization must provide these elements to employees to keep employees from being dissatisfied. Job security is important to employees for them to feel financially and psychologically safe and balanced in their jobs (Douglas, Douglas, McClelland, &

Davies, 2015). If employees are fearful of being dismissed, they will become dissatisfied. Also, employees' status within the organization should be recognized and maintained to avoid dissatisfaction (Sudha, 2017). Managers must ensure that employees do not feel left out if restructuring occurs in the organization. In addition to status, the interpersonal relationship of the employees with superiors should be appropriate and reasonable (Fisher, 2017). Conflicts and humiliation and lack of respect should not be present in the employee's interpersonal relationship with subordinates.

Working conditions should be hygienic, safe, and clean. The equipment must be updated and well maintained. Company policies should not be too rigorous ; they should be reasonable and flexible to motivate the employees to perform well (Mazzetti, Biolcati, Guglielmi, Vallesi, & Schaufeli, 2016). As noted in the two-factor model, these factors include flexible working hours, breaks, dress codes, or vacations, which are significant in addressing the motivational challenges of employees in organizations (Shonubi, Abdullah, Hashim, & Ab Hamid, 2016). The lack of hygiene factors will lead to demotivation. By implementing hygiene factors, managers ensure that the employees are not distracted or dissatisfied.

Managers can use Herzberg's (1959) motivational factors to increase employee engagement. Motivational elements, as described in the Herzberg model, includes salary, benefits, growth opportunities, advancement opportunities, responsibility, and meaningfulness of the work (Osabiya, 2015). Motivators can influence employees and motivate them to work hard and increase employee performance. The motivational factors are based on employee's individual needs and personal growth and development

(Koh, Teh, San, & Abdullah, 2017). To build satisfaction, managers must ensure job opportunities are provided. Employees must be praised and recognized for their achievements. Managers must create work that is rewarding and matches employee's skills and potentials.

Employee engagement in the workplace is affected by efficiency and motivation. The two-factor model applies to employee engagement because hygiene and motivational factors affect satisfaction or dissatisfaction in work, which affects employee engagement. When managers ensure that hygiene and motivational factors are implemented, employee engagement increases (Alshmemri, Shahwan-Akl, & Maude, 2017). The hygiene factors are the conditions used to determine whether employees will stay committed to the organization. The hygiene factors are internal conditions of the organization, such as quality of supervision, company policies, working conditions, or interpersonal relationship with others. Hygiene factors can motivate employees however, if not present, they can demotivate as well (Sulaiman & Seng, 2016). According to Herzberg (1959), hygiene factors cannot be regarded as motivators because they are not sufficient to motivate employees. The motivational elements consist of promotions, opportunities for growth within the organization, achievements, and bonuses. Motivators are needed to motivate an employee to higher performance and engagement. Herzberg motivators in the workplace lead to increased employee engagement and work performance. Satisfied and content workers are more productive and engaged. Conrad et al. (2015) found that managers who fulfilled the hygiene or maintenance factor in their organizations improved productivity in their organizations. Etor and Etudor-Eyo (2016) suggested that engaged

employees are the foundation of the organization because they are immersed in their work and are motivated by an internal motivation from within and not from external factors (hygienic).

The psychological need, when fulfilled by the manager, will motivate employees and enhance employee performance. Darvishmotevali, Arasli, and Kilic (2017) claimed that, in applying the two-factor theory, managers could have an effective system to satisfy the emotional and psychological needs of the employees. Managers can fulfill this need by improving job content. Management must ensure that the hygiene factors are implemented to avoid dissatisfying employees. Motivational factors should be provided to the organization to ensure employees stay engaged and motivated. Although the Herzberg motivational factors are ideal for facilitating employee engagement, I rejected this theory because the hygiene factors, when not implemented in the organization, can demotivate employees. Even if present in the workplace, the hygiene factors are not sufficient to increase employee engagement.

### **Conceptualizing Motivation**

The concept of motivation is central to understanding the strategies that department store managers use to increase employee engagement. Motivation is separated into two different categories: intrinsic and extrinsic (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation represent core determinants of employee engagement (Makki & Abid, 2017). Extrinsic motivations include direct and indirect monetary rewards that individuals receive in exchange for their job performance (Kuvaas, Buch, Weibel, Dysvik, & Nerstad, 2017). The motivational

elements are external and include factors such as money or rewards. Intrinsic motivation differs from extrinsic because it is based on internal motivation, such as the pleasure and satisfaction an individual gets from working on tasks and accomplishments (Deci, 1975). A highly motivated workforce is essential to the success of an organization. Managers must understand both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and use them as strategies to increase employee engagement.

Motivation is the inspiring emotion that influences an individual to act.

Motivation is intrinsic if the individual feels an internal interest or enthusiasm to continue an activity simply because he/she enjoys it. The motivation is derived from within the individual (Deci, 1975). When intrinsically motivated, the behavior is performed due to the satisfaction it brings. Employee engagement is a component of work performance and employee retention (Burton et al., 2017). Intrinsic motivation includes foundational expectations, perceptions, and feelings of an individual (Cook & Artino, 2016). When employees are intrinsically motivated in a workplace setting, they feel that they are doing a great job and enjoy the task. An employee who is intrinsically motivated has an internal desire to perform on the job, thus improving employee engagement. Managers can increase intrinsic motivation in the workplace by making the job challenging, increasing autonomy, making the job purposeful, and complimenting the employee's contribution to the organization.

Motivation is related to the success of an organization. The internal drive that an individual must perform well and meet challenges is attributed to intrinsic motivation. Basu and Bano (2016) suggested that intrinsic motivation is the highest level of self-

determination, and satisfaction is derived from performing activities. The activities that people voluntarily perform in the absence of material rewards (extrinsic motivation) is related to intrinsic motivation. Kumar, Mehra, Inder, and Sharma (2016) suggested that intrinsic motivation is associated with positive employee outcomes. When employees are intrinsically motivated, they make extra effort based on personal reasons. To increase work performance, managers must create an environment in which intrinsically motivated workers to feel empowered to enhance intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation is necessary for individuals to be engaged in their roles in a workplace setting. When employees are intrinsically motivated, they have a sense of purpose and know that they are doing something worthwhile, and they feel fulfilled. Furlich (2016) revealed that when employees are intrinsically motivated, they focus on the organization's economic prosperity and are dedicated to its success. They offer integrity and professionalism, and they find satisfaction in their work. When employees are more intrinsically motivated, they perform better and are more productive. Intrinsically motivated employees often complete a task they find gratifying and meaningful (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). An intrinsically motivated employee will stay late to complete a task because of the enjoyment they feel when working on the project. To increase intrinsic motivation, managers must communicate to employees that the results of their work benefit the organization.

Intrinsically motivated employees engage in an activity because it is stimulating and interesting. Managers who provide positive feedback and encouragement enhance intrinsic motivation and increase employee performance (Orsini, Evans, & Jerez, 2015).

Employees will be more motivated when they are encouraged, applauded, or commended for a task in which they find joy and satisfaction when performing. Employees who are more motivated by clear, realistic, and personally valuable reward expectations will work harder for the organization, thus increasing productivity (Robescu & Iancu, 2016).

Managers can enhance the productivity of employees by motivating them intrinsically.

Extrinsic motivation occurs when an external reward motivates people.

Organizations can use extrinsic motivation to motivate employees and increase employee engagement. Ajmal, Bashir, Abrar, Khan, and Saqib (2015) found that extrinsic rewards validate an employee's desire to become more productive and amplify his or her effectiveness and motivational level when implemented in the organization. According to Choy, McCormack, and Djurkovic (2016), extrinsically motivated employees are motivated by visible or detectable external benefits, such as pay raises, bonuses, or promotions. Managers can extrinsically motivate their employees with tangible rewards to increase employee engagement.

Motivated employees are top performers who are ambitious and driven to succeed. Employee motivation is correlated with employee engagement. Porter, Riesenmy, and Fields (2016) showed that 70% of workers are disengaged because of lack of motivation. Motivation is the desire to seek pleasure and avoid pain (Singh, 2016). Motivation is especially important to mitigate economic risks in organizations. To increase engagement, managers must understand how employees are motivated, which is predictive of later performance. Leaders must provide both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to motivate employees in an organization. An understanding of the key

motivational factors will enable the managers to understand an employee's motivational needs and apply the appropriate type of motivation.

The two categories of motivations may differ in how effective they are at promoting positive behavior. Haymes (2016) revealed that intrinsic motivators (accomplishments, appreciation, the enjoyment of the task itself) motivated British workers, while Nigerian workers were motivated by external factors (salary, benefits, wages, promotions) were extrinsically motivated. According to Haymes, British workers were intrinsically motivated whereas Nigerian workers were extrinsically motivated toward reaching the desired goal. The British employees' motivation was derived from within rather than a desire to gain external rewards (Haymes, 2016). The motivational factors for Nigerian employees were external and occurred when employees understood the rewards related to performing certain tasks. In addition, Dill, Erickson, and Diefendorff (2016) found that employees in the healthcare sector were more intrinsically motivated which is demonstrated in daily altruistic care of patients. Both intrinsic and motivational elements can be used to motivate employees, thus increasing productivity in organizations.

Employees must have an internal desire that inspires them to take further action toward the desired goal. Intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are beneficial to keep the employee motivated, retain talented workers, increase satisfaction, and improve employee performance (Ajmal et al., 2015). Incentives are a tool for increasing productivity and quality performance. Managers are encouraged to consider awards, such as advancement, recognition, pay, and benefits, as effective motivational elements



in organizations to improve employee engagement (Gallus & Frey, 2016). Rewards and appreciation of the employees' efforts are determining factors of employee motivation and engagement.

Researchers use various theories and models to acquire a comprehensive analysis of a study. In order to understand which theory is efficacious for the research, I conducted an in-depth analysis of each theory and presented them in the conceptual framework. I selected Vroom's expectancy theory and Kahn's engagement model to illustrate the connection between employee engagement and motivation in the workplace. Vroom's expectancy theory is based on motivation and valued outcome the employee's desire. Engaged employees are hard working, skilled, and demonstrate potential; therefore, it is imperative that managers understand the motivational needs of the employees to increase engagement. Similarly, Kahn's engagement theory consists of the psychological commitment engaged employee demonstrate in the workplace setting. Kahn's (1990) engagement theory is relevant to the research as it consists of that the idea that employees must be psychologically committed to being engaged in their organizations. In addition, I chose the social exchange theory to illustrate the concept that individuals are more likely to sustain a relationship when they feel rewarded within the relationship. The Herzberg (1959) two-factor model core elements are motivators and hygiene factors. In contrast, I rejected the Herzberg two factor model because although the motivators such as achievements, recognition, promotion, growth, and advancement can increase motivation, the hygiene factors (policies, supervision, working conditions, and the work itself) may not be sufficient to increase motivation. .

### **Engagement and Motivation in Business**

Engagement and motivation are the primary promoters for business success. Menges et al. (2017) proposed that motivation amplifies job performance by augmenting vitality and diminishing stress levels. Similarly, Mumba (2015) claimed that many organizations often discuss the association between motivation and performance. Motivation positively affects employee engagement (Said, Zaidee, Zahari, Ali, & Salleh, 2015). Employee engagement is a component in work performance and employee retention (Burton et al., 2017). Employee motivation is essential for a favorable financial outcome in organizations.

Employee engagement affects the financial aspect of the organization by increasing productivity. Businesses that continue to build employee engagement can reduce employee turnover by 45% (Pohler & Schmidt, 2016). Actively increasing employee engagement can increase annual revenue in organizations by 50% (Howell, & Howell, 2017). When employees are engaged, they facilitate the financial output of the organization. Employee engagement is linked to the profitability and productivity of the company. Amazon experienced a 38% increase in profit margins and improved customer satisfaction because employees were more engaged at work (Johnson & Jiang, 2016). Increasing employee engagement requires a strategic, long-term application and plan to increase proficiency.

Motivated employees are an asset to organizations. As organization amplify motivation, they can become more competitive in comparison to neighboring companies. Olafsen, Halvari, Forest, and Deci (2015) revealed that employees who were provided

with a monetary method of motivation outperform their competitors by 10%, thus affecting their financial results. Also, businesses with motivated employees are successful in providing better customer service, sell more quality products, and are more innovative (Namatovu & Dawa, 2017). Bakker (2017) found that reduced employee motivation led to decreased productivity. Managers must motivate employees because disengaged workers have decreased profitability. Motivated employees improve organizational performance.

Employee engagement is associated with increased productivity. Saleem, Saqib, and Zahra (2015) found that work engagement correlates with various positive business outcomes, including higher customer loyalty, increased productivity, and profitability. Bose and Coughlan (2016) suggested that organizations could attain significant business results when employees remain engaged in their work, resulting in positive economic achievement. Engaged employees are assets to their organization because they are more committed, hard-working, and productive (Bin, 2015). Managers must build an environment in which employees continue to increase productivity in their organization.

#### **Companies with Disengaged Employees**

Regional and international reviews have revealed the escalating dilemma of disengaged employees in business organizations. Sievert and Scholz (2017) suggested that disengaged employees have increased from 32% to 40% in the United States. As of 2012, 160 businesses in the United States alone were disengaged and experienced decrease productivity (Mehta, Chandani, Moksha, & Parul, 2016). Organizations with

disengaged employees are ineffectual and have a complacent demeanor toward the goals of the organization, which reduces profitability.

Businesses with disengaged employees are in the less competitive business environment. As noted by Radda, Majidadi, and Akanno (2015), disengaged employees in consulting firms are 43% less motivated than pharmaceutical businesses in Japan. The percentage of employees who are not engaged increased from 5% in 2013 to 11% in 2015 resulting in decreased revenue (Popli & Rizvi, 2015). The level of disengaged employees has increased from 2010-2012 resulting in decreased earnings and profitability (Ford et al., 2015). Disengaged employees negatively affect business financial realities.

Disengaged employees are detrimental to organizations worldwide. In the United Kingdom, businesses are on the decline by 56% because employees are not fully engaged (Al Mehrzi & Singh, 2016). In Canada, employees who work in fast foods restaurant are disengaged, which cost the business \$120,000 a year because of disengaged employees (Henderson, Hawke, & Chaim, 2017). As businesses cope with the problem of employee disengagement, strategies to increase employee engagement can ensure the full recovery of businesses. A swift action to correct the ongoing issue of employee disengagement will positively affect the financial outcome of the organizations.

The cost of disengagement will continue to rise if strategies to increase employee engagement are not implemented. As noted by Plester and Hutchison (2016) nearly 12% of employees remain disengaged due to lack of encouragement and job satisfaction. Ford et al. (2015) found that more than 24% of employees feel burnout and choose to disengage in their respective companies. In a company located in Florida, employees

were found to disengage by taking extended breaks and texting during company time (Glavas, 2016). U. S. businesses are facing less economic resiliency due to disengagement in businesses.

The financial affects of disengagement are detrimental to business worldwide. Businesses in the Virgin Island, Florida, and Texas are facing dire financial straits because of employee disengagement (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). In China, the financial damage of disengagement is an estimated cost of 55 billion per year (Huang, Wellman, Ashford, Lee, & Wang, 2017). As a result of disengaged employees, business has decreased profits, and financial recovery remains a challenge to corporations. Disengagement in business ranks 15 in Georgia and Indiana (Sievert & Scholz, 2017).

Employee disengagement interferes with the financial growth of corporations. Disengaged employees are not committed and are less dedicated to the organizations' financial improvement. Disengaged employees hinder the progress of businesses and dominate the national landscape of corporations worldwide. Lightle et al. (2015) found that a 78% decrease in profits occurred as result of employees taking excessive sick days in Alabama, New Guinea, and Virginia. In Houston and Florida, disengagement is rampant due to employees feeling disconnected to the job and having a less proactive approach to the organizations' missions and goals (Jin & McDonald, 2016). The cycle of employee disengagement is continuous throughout the nation.

Employee disengagement is catastrophic to businesses. According to Queiri, Yusoff, and Dwaikat (2015) found that 78% of employees are disengaged at the workplace in Malasia. Disengaged employees are ineffective and undermine other

workers' contributions to the organization. Disengaged employees cost over \$300 million a year because of decreased productivity worldwide (Newman, Ye, & Leep, 2014). The number of the disengaged employees in organizations has tripled from 2011-2014 (Buchko, Buscher, & Buchko, 2017). A financial assessment and understanding of strategies to augment employee engagement can solve the disengagement problems in the businesses.

Employee disengagement is engulfing the international workforce in the United States and abroad. A private company in Australia reduced revenue by 56% in 2013 because employees were not fully engaged (Rosin, 2015). Employee disengagement emerged from several factors, including high turnover rates that added to spiraling recruitment costs, poor client relationships that lead to lost revenue, and excessive absenteeism (Rastogi, Pati, Krishnan, & Krishnan, 2018). An analysis of the connection between employee disengagement and business prosperity is key to improving employee engagement (Popli & Rizvi, 2015). Taking steps to identify the cause of disengagement can help decrease disengagement. Disengaged employees have a direct harmful effect on the overall economic capability of organizations. A significant investment in strategies to increase employee engagement can mend the disconnect between engagement and disengagement.

#### **Employee Engagement-Principal Factors**

Companies that ignore aspects of employee engagement are potentially losing revenue and facing diminished profit margins because of costs associated with employee turnover, recruiting, and lost productivity from disengaged workers. Managers are

responsible for ensuring that their employees are engaged (Kohli, Bhattacharyya, & Kohli, 2015). North Shore-LIJ Health System financed a monetary fund to educational programs to encourage employee engagement levels within their organization (Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015). At Johnson and Johnson, the organizations' corporate culture consists of employees who are engaged and dedicated to their work (Shuck et al., 2015). The employee assessment and feedback fostered a positive work environment and helped in increasing employee engagement. Subsequently, the employee has a link with the fulfillment of the organization and its success.

#### **Ramifications of Disengaged Employees**

There are many causes of employee disengagement. Allam (2017) mentioned that disengagement includes feeling not properly compensated for work, a lack of proper communication between manager or employees, a lack of understanding or connection to the core mission and values of the company, or feeling underappreciated and unrecognized for their work. Rao and Rao (2017) revealed that disengaged employees decrease productivity, lower customer satisfaction, and increase employee turnover. Disengaged employees are less motivated and only meet the bare minimum of the requirements of the jobs. Managers can be better equipped to deal with disengaged employees, thus gaining greater traction on the global dilemma of employee disengagement.

Setting employee goals and expectations can reduce a disengaged workforce. Companies with goal setting objectives had operating margins that rose from 3.67% in 4 years whereas margins for companies with fewer goals setting strategies productivity by

3.01% (Osabiya, 2015). Wood, Logar, and Riley (2015) suggested that setting employee goals increases employee commitment and motivation. To be fully competitive, the manager must set goals to direct employee's efforts toward maximizing accomplishments in the company (Allam, 2017). Essentially, setting goals in the organization enforces employee engagement and increases productivity.

Goal setting in the organization is one approach to effectively reduce disengaged employees. To increase productivity, performance goals must meet SMART criteria: (a) specific, (b) measurable, (c) achievable, (d) realistic, and (e) timely (Jung & Yoon, 2016). Adjani (2015) suggested that managers can communicate tasks and behaviors employees must demonstrate to achieve successful results. To implement goal setting in organizations, managers must provide employees with performance expectations of how employee's individual work contributes to the organization. Goals must be specific, clear, and precise to enhance employee engagement.

Measurable goals are essential to increase employee performance. Wei, Wagner, Hudson, Yu, and Shattuck (2015) suggested that goals that are measurable should demonstrate progress. Similarly, Bakker (2017) revealed that larger goals can be revised into smaller attainable tasks and actions to gauge progress and serve as reference point. Measurable goals can be effective in helping employees strive harder to achieve their goals increasing engagement.

Goals should be attainable to reduce employee disengagement. Goals that are not attainable can demotivate employees and decrease performance (Vorina, Simonič, & Vlasova, 2017). Attainable goals can enable employees to engage actively and



participate in the organization to grow company business (Dahling, Taylor, Chau, & Dwight, 2016). Task-oriented goals can increase employee engagement and increase profitability (Shuck et al., 2015). Managers can ensure that goals are attainable motivates employees thus reducing employee disengagement.

The manager must also be realistic to assist employees in reaching their objectives. Realistic goals that are challenging and attainable based on employee's knowledge, skills and resources can decrease disengagement (Sanneh & Taj, 2015). Hanaysha (2016) suggested that setting realistic goals assist employee in staying focused on the task at hand and increase performance levels. Allam (2017) mentioned that realistic goals increase productivity and enable employees to generate revenue for the organization. Setting goals that are realistic increase employee performance and reduces employee disengagement.

SMART goals have reasonable and trackable time. A goal that is time-bound will enable employees to track their progress and manage their time effectively (Bailey, 2016). Cook and Artino (2016) revealed that employee who was given a specific time to accomplish their work were more productive and creative. A reasonable time frame helps the employees come to the realization that the task can be achieved. Rahman, Rankin, and Rosin (2015) mentioned that a logical time frame enables the employees to become motivated and engaged. Employees can feel demotivated when not able to accomplish their projects or assignment on time.

An additional method for eliminating disengagement is to provide opportunities for promotions and development. Ariani (2015) found that employee motivation can

increase when employees are motivated to soar and move upward in the corporate ladder. The manager can provide the opportunity for employees to develop their skills and be highly compensated for their contributions (Bailey et al., 2015). In 2010, a local retail store located in the Los Angeles area had a 25% increase in sales of profitability when employees were promoted from sales to management positions (Chaudhary & Chaudhary, 2017). An effective method for eliminating disengagement is to consistently provide opportunities for self-development and growth in the organization.

Managers are responsible for the performance level and the productivity of the employees; as a result, the development of employees is essential to meet the goals and progress of the employees. Howell and Howell (2017) suggested that managers must assess the strengths and weaknesses of the employees to help them cultivate their skill and talent efficiently. Chaudhary and Chaudhary (2017) mentioned that when managers must decide what can be leveraged as a skill or an asset to the organization to increase productivity. Also, managers must discern the challenges and barriers that need to be addressed which may affect employee development. Problems can be solved by implementing new training for employees such as skill development programs and employee orientation to adapt to those new changes to increase employee engagement.

To reduce disengagement, managers must listen to their employee's concern or apprehensions. Managers can meet with employees individually to discuss challenges, goals, and objectives of the organization individually. Reed, Goolsby, and Johnston (2016) suggested that managers who actively listened to their employees and provided constructive criticism and feedback increased employees confidence and productivity.

Similarly, Brody, Fishman, Horton, and Raman (2016) found that that managers can meet with the employee, reviews their needs and concerns and what they need to learn in the department, and how the managers can assist them in the process. The objective of the manager is to ensure that the employee feels heard, values appreciated in the organization (Gardner, Hailey, Nguyen, Prichard, & Newcomb, 2017). The managers have the responsibility to ensure that the employees are equipped to perform the job for him/her to succeed. Meeting and listening to each employee individually will help managers establish an individual assessment plan to determine the need for each employee. Smith, Peters, and Caldwell (2016) suggested that career training opportunities are an effective method for reducing employee disengagement. As training programs are implemented, employees acquire the necessary strategies to gain more confidence in their work. Enforcing training programs with both technical and interpersonal skills is a strategic opportunity to increase employee performance.

Employee engagement is essential to organizational success. When employees are engaged, they are energetic, motivated, and enthusiastic about accomplishing the assign tasks which leads to increased productivity. Motivation is the key factor in amplifying employee engagement. Kaliannan and Adjovu (2015) revealed that motivation is the internal desire and willingness to take action to fulfill an action toward a desired goal. Workplace motivations are the reasons and factors which motivate employees to perform at their optimum in the organization. To illustrate the nuances and connection between employee motivation and performance, Vroom (1964) developed the expectancy theory. Vroom's expectancy theory consists of the idea that an individuals' performance is

influenced by three elements: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. As noted by Vroom there is an established connection between motivation, effort, and increased productivity.

In addition, Kahn (1990) introduced the engagement model in 1990 with three concepts related to work performance: physical, cognitive, and emotional. According to Kahn, these three psychological elements are central to increase employee engagement and productivity. In contrast, the social exchange theory is used to illustrate that individuals choose to maximize rewards and minimize costs when creating or maintaining relationships. The social exchange theory applies to the workplace setting as employees decide to increase effort and performance based on a profit or net return. In addition, the Herzberg two factor model consists of motivators and the hygiene factors. The motivators increased employees' engagement by motivating employees to work harder toward the desired objective. The hygiene factors if not present in the workplace can demotivate and reduce employee engagement. To reiterate, based on these theories and models, proactive implementation of the strategies to increase employee engagement can help managers increase productivity in their organizations.

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 1 of the study was comprised of the background of the problem, the conceptual framework, purpose statement, nature of the study, and research question. I identified the structure of themes relating to Kahn's (1990) engagement theory and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory and the correlation between business outcomes.

Section 1 included the definition of terms, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations as it relates to the research.

Research from the literature review consisted of Vroom's expectancy theory, Kahn's engagement theory, the social exchange theory, and Herzberg's two-factor model. In the literature review, I included a discussion of Vroom's expectancy theory which focuses on the employee motivation and the correlation to increased productivity. I incorporated the social exchange theory and Herzberg's two-factor model as competing and contrasting theories. An assessment of the social exchange theory and Herzberg's two factor theory is significant to comprehend various motivational factors in the work place setting. In the literature review I also presented a descriptive element to illustrate conceptualizing motivation, engagement and motivation in businesses. I included an analysis of companies with disengaged employees, employee engagement principal factors, and ramifications of employee engagement. The research is relevant to department store managers who wish to obtain knowledge on strategies to increase employee engagement.

Section 2 includes the procedures for conducting the research. The purpose of the study, the role of the researcher and participants, research methodology and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection, and reliability and validity will be detailed as well. I discuss the criteria for selecting the participants as it relates to strategies department store managers use to increase employee engagement. In Section 3, I presented a detailed analysis of the study findings and the correlation to the successful strategies department store managers may use to increase employee engagement in their

organizations. A systematic review of data sources included participant interviews, company archival documents, and publicly available documents. I also provided recommendations for actions and future research.

## Section 2: The Project

Employee engagement is related to improved productivity. Managers are responsible for engaging employees in an organization. An engaged employee is an individual who is enthusiastic about his or her work and is willing to contribute to the organization's objectives (Hanaysha, 2016). The overall level of engagement in organizations increases when managers implement strategies to increase employee engagement.

Section 2 includes an analysis of the research methods used to conduct the study. In Section 2, I explain the purpose of the research, role of the researcher, participants, research methods, research design, population and sampling, research ethics, data collection instruments, data collection techniques, data organization techniques, and reliability and validity of the research.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore the strategies that department store managers use to increase employee engagement that leads to increased productivity. The population for the study was five department store managers from the Northeastern United States who realized increased profitability since implementing strategies that increased employee engagement. The results from this study might contribute to positive social change by providing department store managers with strategies that can increase employee engagement, leading to improved revenue growth. By implementing strategies to increase employee engagement, department store

managers can reduce employee turnover, which increases stable employment, thus supporting the local economy.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher plays a role in qualitative research. As the researcher in this study, I served as the primary data collector in the research. My role included contacting the participants, collecting and gathering data through semistructured interviews and company archival documents, transcribing the interviews, conducting member checking, and analyzing the data. In qualitative studies, the researcher gathers and analyzes data to find answers to the research question (McKim, 2017). Paradis, O'Brien, Nimmon, Bandiera, and Martimianakis (2016) found that qualitative researchers use various data collection methods, such as interviews, observations, focus groups, and field notes. The objective of a qualitative researcher was to acquire an in-depth comprehension of occurrences and social interactions in the world in detail (Bengston, 2016). As the researcher, I conducted semistructured interviews and analyzed company archival documents.

My professional experience included 10 years working in the retail industry. For the first 5 years, I worked as a sales associate. After 5 years of working as a sales associate, I was promoted to a managerial position. As a manager, my duties included recruiting, hiring, training, motivating, and retaining employees. My role as a department store manager also consisted of implementing employee retention strategies to increase employee engagement and to improve organizational performance. As a retail employee and manager, I have observed how managers motivate employees while overseeing the



daily operations of the department. My experience working as a retail employee and manager inspired me to explore further the strategies that department store managers may use to increase employee engagement. In my exposure to the work environment as a sales associate and manager, I developed an understanding of employee retention strategies. As a sales associate, I noted that engaged employees often shared a sense of purpose and were more committed when they had the tools needed to perform their work. Based on my experience as a manager, I learned to empower, encourage, delegate tasks to employees, and implement effective employee retention strategies in the organization.

Because of my previous experience in retail as a sales associate and department manager, it was imperative for me to maintain a neutral stance and not allow my preconceived ideas to influence the study. Although I have experiences in retail as an associate and manager, I did not allow these experiences to influence the results of the study. I approached the research with an objective outlook by reflecting on and bracketing my biases during data collection process. Although I have worked in retail, I had no relationship with any of the department store managers in the study site organizations.

Researchers use the ethical standards illustrated in the Belmont Report to ensure that each participant is treated with dignity, respect, benevolence, and fairness. As noted by Friesen, Kearns, Redman, and Caplan (2017), the Belmont Report is necessary to safeguard the relational aspects of the participants and the researcher. During the study, my objective was to ensure that I applied all of the guidelines of the Belmont Report and protected the rights, autonomy, and confidentiality of the research participants. I

provided an informed consent form to participants, and I obtained their consent to participate in the research. Hammarberg, Kirkman, and De Lacey (2016) suggested that researchers have a responsibility to inform participants about the details of the research to ensure that they understand their role in participating in the study. I explained to the participant the risks and benefits of participating in the research. I clarified to the participants that their participation in the research is voluntary.

Biases are preconceived beliefs about a particular group or individual. Almalki (2016) stated that biases include either unfairly favoring a group or favoring a group or population. Avella (2016) found that researcher biases negatively influence data collection and data analysis. To eliminate bias, the researcher must be aware of the information added or omitted in his or her study (Barnham, 2015). Noble and Smith (2015) found that to increase the validity of the study, researchers must avoid bias that will affect the outcome of the research. To mitigate bias and avoid viewing the study from a personal viewpoint, I set biases aside and remained neutral before starting the interview. Biases can be mitigated through bracketing. I openly acknowledged my biases by bracketing them in my researcher journal. Charlick et al. (2016) and Blau and Kahn (2017) found that bracketing consists of setting aside theories or personal knowledge of previous research findings and theories related to the research topic. Nicholls (2017) suggested that bracketing provides the researcher an opportunity to avoid influencing his or her perceptions and concepts about the research with that of the participant. I bracketed my preconceived ideas about the study topic before interviewing the participants in my researcher journal. By bracketing my thoughts in my researcher

journal, I maintained an impartial perspective and remained open-minded to the participants' ideas as I interacted with them during the interview. I was dedicated to fairness and accuracy in the research. I remained empathetic, listened actively, and paraphrased the content of the participants' replies. To avoid bias, I focused on the participants' experiences and not a personal agenda.

Researchers use interviews as a data collection technique to gather in-depth data about the participant's experience. Castillo-Montoya (2016) suggested that researchers conduct interviews to seek the meaning of the central theme in the lives of the participants. When conducting the interview, the researcher asks the participants probing and follow-up questions necessary for additional clarification (Ponelis, 2015). I used an interview protocol as a guide to ask the participants questions relating to their experiences (see Appendix A). Noble and Smith (2015) mentioned that an interview protocol is a set of interview questions used in the data collection process when conducting qualitative research. By using an interview protocol, I ensured the validity and credibility of the findings.

### **Participants**

The population for the study consisted of five department store managers from a department store located in the Northeastern United States. The eligibility criteria for participation were based on the participants' use of strategies to increase employee engagement. I selected the participants based on their professional experiences as leaders in the retail business. The participants must have been employed at the site for over a

year as organizational leaders to obtain adequate experience and knowledge in implementing effective employee engagement strategies.

To gain access to the participants, I first obtained Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. To gain access to the population, I visited five department stores in the Northeast part of New York within a five-mile radius of my community. I approached organizational gatekeepers who assisted me in finding the participants. Mullen, Kelloway, and Teed (2017) revealed that organizational leaders are in charge of managing and setting the direction and goals of the organization. I contacted the identified company by sending an email or initiating a phone call, and I spoke to the gatekeepers (organizational leaders) for approval to conduct the study with their employees. Chen (2017) revealed that proactive recruitment strategies consist of having a system that allows for contacting the potential participants for the research. Recruiting participants consists of sending emails, calling participants directly, referrals, or face-to-face contact with the participants (Musiat et al., 2016). By talking directly with organizational gatekeepers, I had the opportunity to ask for their permission to access the potential participants for the research.

Upon receiving permission from the organizational gatekeepers, I also requested the contact information of potential participants including name, phone number, and email. I established a working relationship with the potential participants by visiting the organization or sent an email, introduced myself and explained the objective of the research. I provided a time frame of 3 to 4 days for participants to reply to the message. Dawson, McDonnell, and Scott (2017) mentioned that allowing ample time for

participants' response is essential in helping the participants plan in preparation for the study. If the participant replied to the email, my plan consisted of contacting each participant to schedule a convenient time for the participant to discuss additional details of the study. I built rapport by staying in contact with each participant via emailing and placing phone calls. Dempsey, Dowling, Larkin, and Murphy (2016) suggested that building rapport with research participants is a fundamental aspect of conducting qualitative research. After obtaining their permission, I scheduled an appointment with the participants and agreed on where the interview was to be held. The area selected should be neutral, free from distractions, and readily available to the participants (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). I contacted the participants again to remind them of the preset appointment for the interview. By replying to the emails, the interviewees accepted the invitation to participate in the research.

### **Research Method**

I chose the qualitative method for this study. A qualitative methodology consists of an in-depth understanding of human behavior (Almalki, 2016). Qualitative researchers can acquire an understanding of a person's or group's experience about a shared experience or phenomenon (Walby & Luscombe, 2016). Ponelis (2015) found that qualitative research consists of a structured approach in which the researcher seeks to explore a phenomenon in its natural setting. Qualitative researchers concentrate on the interpretation of social reality and contextualized meanings from individual beliefs and practices (Noble & Smith, 2015). The objective of the qualitative research was to explore

the significance and meaning of people's experiences and daily living and to explore the what or how of the participants' experiences.

The worldview of the qualitative researcher is social constructionism. Cleland (2017) stated that social constructionism is the concept that knowledge, and many aspects of the world, are constructed through interaction with the environment and other individuals. Social constructionists believe that reality or truth is socially constructed. Sutton and Austin (2015) suggested that social constructionism only exists because society creates reality through social agreement. The qualitative method consists of understanding a process and the how and why while exploring an occurrence (Cornelissen, 2017). Qualitative research aligns with social constructivism as the study involved interpreting individual behavior or the study of people and their connection to the world.

There are various types of data collection methods for qualitative research. Data collection for qualitative research includes interviews, focus groups, direct observation, and content analysis of archival documents. Qualitative researchers conduct interviews to understand the experiences of others. There are two types of interviews: structured and semistructured. The structured interview includes questionnaires based on predetermined and standardized identical set of question (Connelly, 2016). Scholars use semistructured interviews by creating a predetermined set of open-ended questions to explore themes and responses in detail (Manzano, 2016). A semistructured interviewer uses open-ended questions to allow new ideas to emerge from the participants' responses. Bengston (2016) stated that content analysis is a method used to make sense of large

amounts of contents in documents. A content analysis of the research consists of gathering archival documents from the participants, internal company documents, and a collection of publicly available documents from company websites.

I considered using a quantitative approach to this study. Rahman (2016) suggested that quantitative research consists of distinct statistical or hypothetical measures used to conduct research. Quantitative research includes numerical data that are illustrated in charts, diagrams, grids, or spreadsheet (Halcomb & Peters, 2016). Almalki (2016) found that quantitative scholars measure data to show the correlation between the data and observation. The quantitative method consists of testing hypotheses and numerical values rather than explaining concepts or exploring the phenomenon to obtain information about the research (Hammarberg et al., 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rahman, 2016). Quantitative research is based on numerical analysis and hypothesis, which are precise, testable, and results-oriented.

The quantitative researcher adopts a postpositivist worldview. A postpositivist believes that knowledge is objective, and reality exists outside of an individual's perception (Shannon-Baker, 2016). Also, positivists seek to correlate the association amongst two or more variables (Gehman et al., 2017). The objective of a postpositivist is to prove that reality is constructed by people and their experiences. Rahman (2016) mentioned that a postpositivist believes that data about the world and human experience are measured numerically and analyzed statically. A postpositivist focuses on causal relationships to develop laws and theories to illustrate or describe the external world.

Researchers use mixed-method research to combine exploratory and statistical analysis when collecting data. Mixed method research consists of a comprehensive analysis of integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods into one analysis (Guetterman & Fetters, 2015). Mixed method researchers employ both methods simultaneously to create a research outcome stronger than either method individually (Sedoglavich, Akoorie, & Pavlovich, 2015). Mixed method researchers are pragmatics. Guest, Namey, Taylor, Eley, and McKenna (2017) found that pragmatism is a branch of philosophy in which individuals assess truth regarding effect, outcome, and practicality. The pragmatic is not committed to any philosophy or way of thinking about reality. The pragmatist approach focuses on the practical outcomes of the research (Westra & Carruthers, 2017). A pragmatist collects data from both quantitative and qualitative research and focuses on the social aspect of the research.

The objective of the study was not to emphasize numbers or statistical analysis; therefore, a quantitative or mixed-method approach does not meet the objective of the study. I did not select quantitative research because I would not measure quantifiable or statistical data by using scales or surveys as data collection technique. Furthermore, the quantitative method was not appropriate for this study because I would not be examining the relationship between variables or theories. I did not select a mixed method approach because I did not seek to analyze numerical data or interpret the results of the data. I also did not seek to acquire knowledge of a phenomenon or examine a theory. I selected a qualitative research method because I wish to explore and understand the participants' experiences to gain an in-depth understanding of their surroundings. A qualitative



research is appropriate for this study because I will explore the meaning of the participant's experiences.

### **Research Design**

I used a qualitative, single case study to explore the strategies that department store managers used to increase employee engagement in their organizations. Ponelis (2015) claimed that a case study design occurs in various disciplines, and it may consist of quantitative or qualitative data; a case study design is the exploration of phenomena in a natural setting. In a case study, a case is an exploration of a bounded system (case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth, data collection (Liu, 2016). A case is an occurrence, a problem, a process, activity, a single individual, or several people who are being examined during a precise moment (Elman, Gerring, & Mahoney, 2016). The objective of a case study is to identify a problem, the key points, or issues in a situation. Additionally, Harrison, Birks, Franklin, and Mills (2017) highlighted that a case study is the assemblage and presentation of accurate, unstructured data gathered from various sources to better understand groups, people, societies, or organizations. According to Marques, Camacho, and Alcantara (2015), a case study design is ideal for exploring why something is successful. In this exploratory, single case study, I explored the strategies that department store managers used to increase employee engagement

I considered an ethnographic design for this study. Draper (2015) revealed that ethnography consists of describing people and how their behavior, either as individuals or as part of a group, influences the culture or subcultures in which they live and move.

Tumilowicz, Neufeld, and Pelto (2015) found that ethnography is the study of an intact social group in their natural setting for a long duration of time. Rahi (2017) suggested that ethnography consists of exploring cultural phenomenon where the researcher observes a society from the participants' perspective. Ethnography is the study of social interactions and cultural norms. The focus of my research did not include highlighting research on cultures, social norms, or common beliefs of a societal group; therefore, an ethnographical design did not meet the objectives of this research.

Researchers use the phenomenological research design to illustrate or describe individual experiences as it occurs in a study. Phenomenologists study the outside world as it is related and interpreted by human consciousness (Rahman, 2016).

Phenomenological research has two separate components: descriptive phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology (Charlick et al., 2016). The focus of inquiry is on what people experience regarding a phenomenon and how they interpret those experiences (Devadas, 2016). Although phenomenological researchers explore human experiences, the primary focus of this study is not on a phenomenon. I rejected the phenomenological design because I did not wish to seek comprehension of a phenomenon or situation in the research.

Grounded theory is a type of qualitative design. Boadu and Sorour (2015) noted that a grounded theory design consists of generating theoretical ideas from the data. Grounded theory is derived from the phenomenon it represents. Grounded theory scholars create a theory from the data that are collected to explain a phenomenon (Tucker, 2016). According to Chong and Yeo (2015), grounded theory is used to

discover or form a theory from an event or occurrence. Instead of the theory being used to shape data, the content from the data shapes the theory. I rejected the grounded theory approach because I did not wish to create a theory from the collected data.

Qualitative researchers must achieve data saturation. Saturation occurs when interview responses provide no new data, coding, or themes (Tran, Porcher, Tran, & Ravaud, 2017). As noted by Hagan and Wutich (2016), data saturation in qualitative research is achieved when no new data generate additional insights. Guest et al. (2017) mentioned that data saturation occurs when new data do not provide any theoretical insight. I analyzed the data to determine if saturation occurred with the five participants interviews. If the data do not indicate the occurrence of saturation, additional interviews were will continue with three or more participants until no new information or themes occur. Saturation is achieved when all interview questions are explored in detail.

### **Population and Sampling**

The population for this study was comprised of five department store managers from a single department store the Northern part of New York who have successfully used strategies to increase employee engagement. The goal of this study was to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the strategies that the participants used to increase employee engagement. In the research, I used a nonprobability, purposeful sampling method. Palinkas et al. (2015) revealed that purposive sampling is a type of sampling in which the researcher purposively selects participants to answer the research question. Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) noted that purposeful sampling is a sampling technique in which researchers rely on their judgment when choosing members of the population to

participate in the study. Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggested that a purposive sampling is used when participants are thoughtfully or purposefully recruited to meet the objective of the research. I selected a purposive sampling because this sampling method will enable me to identify the participants who meet the criteria to answer the research question. I chose a purposive sampling method to ensure that participants were selected based on their experiences and knowledge of the strategies that department store managers use to increase employee engagement.

I selected participants based on their experiences as managers in the retail industry. The participants must perform the essential functions of a manager in the retail business in order to participate in the research. The duties of a manager include leading, organizing, planning, conceptualizing the needs of the organization, strategizing, and setting goals and objectives. Managers must have the ability to apply technical skills, set up policies, and direct and motivate the employees toward the desired goals of the organization. In addition, eligibility criteria of participants included working as managers in the retail business. The skill sets that are acquired from working in retail are distinctive from other professions. Furthermore, I decided that a minimum of 1 year of experience was required to meet eligibility criteria for the participants to acquire adequate experience and managerial skills on the positions. The final key criteria for participant participation was effective implementation of employee retention strategies. It is essential that the participants have implemented employee retention techniques that were effective in improving employee retention in their facility.

I selected five participants as a sample size for the research. Emmel (2015) revealed that the sample size in qualitative data is a minimum of 5 to 10 participants. I applied the recommendation of the sample size when deciding the justification of that selection. I continued to interview additional participants in order to achieve data saturation. Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested that data saturation is attained when no new data emerges during the data collection process. Noble and Smith (2015) found that data saturation occurs when the themes become recurrent to the researcher. I discontinued to interview participants when data saturation was achieved.

Choosing the right interview setting for a qualitative study requires adequate preparation. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), to ensure confidentiality, a comfortable location with no loud noise is ideal for meaningful and uninterrupted conversation. Castillo-Montoya (2016) found that choosing a setting with no distractions enables the researcher and the participants to stay focused on the interview process. I contacted the participants who responded to the email to schedule a date and time that was most convenient for the participant. I allowed the participant to choose a time and place that accommodates his or her needs and is conducive to conducting an interview. I scheduled an appointment with each participant via email. Prior to the day of the interview, I sent a friendly email to each participant before the interview.

### **Ethical Research**

In qualitative studies, researchers adhere to ethical standards when conducting research involving human participants. The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979) emphasized that it is

imperative that participants should be treated with utmost respect, dignity, justice, and beneficence. Castillo-Montoya (2016) suggested that ethical standards consist of the application of fundamental ethical principles to a variety of topics involving research. Akwensivie (2015) found that the ethical standards a qualitative researcher must follow include the informed consent, confidentiality, and cognizance of the researcher's potential effect on the participants and vice versa. As the researcher, I adhered to the Belmont Report to assure the ethical protection of the participants.

Researchers must obtain informed consent from participants to participate in research. The fundamental components of informed consent are (a) the information pertaining to the research, (b) assessment of the participant's rights, (c) research is voluntary, (d) an assurance of confidentiality, and (e) risks and benefits involved in the research (Patel, Sridharan, & Patel, 2016). An informed consent is needed to ensure that the participants know all the information relating to the research and their role as participants in the study (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2016). Harvey (2015) agreed that informed consent is a process that allows the researcher to explain risks, benefits, and alternatives that are critical to meaningful participant decision making. Fluk (2015) suggested that obtaining consent consists of notifying the participants of their rights about the study and the objective of the research. Kihn and Ihantola (2015) mentioned that informed consent is provided freely to the participant and is in writing. The consent form is comprised of an overview of the objective of the study, procedures, expected duration, and benefits to ensure that the participants understand the objective of the study. An

informed consent form was provided to the potential participants, which informed them of their decision to participate in the research.

After the participants signed the consent forms, I asked the participant if he/she had any questions or concerns, and I provided more information about the research. I assured the participants that if they did not understand some of the words or concepts, I would take the time to explain to them all of the details and that they may ask any questions for additional clarity. In the research, I did not offer any incentive to the research participants to participate in the study to avoid placing undue pressure on the participants and coercing them to participate in the research. Voluntary participation requires that participants not be persuaded or manipulated to participate in research (Baillie, 2015). Participants are also welcome to decline if they need to leave the study, and they will not be penalized for withdrawing from the research. Participants should be able to leave a study at any time if they feel uncomfortable (Hadi & Closs, 2016). I informed the participants that if they should decide to withdraw, they should let me know at any time. The participants may wish to provide a reason for withdrawal, but I informed them that they were not required to provide a reason for discontinuing their participation in the study. To ensure confidentiality of the participants, predetermined identification numbers (i.e., M1, M2, M3) were used to protect their identities. Sutton and Austin (2015) found that code numbers can be used in all parts of the research documents except for the consent form. All other files were preserved in a locked cabinet to ensure confidentiality. The data collected from participants will remain on an encrypted thumb drive for 5 years after completion of the research. Audio recordings

were not started until the interviewee had given consent, and the interviewee's name was not recorded. I followed the procedures outlined in the informed consent and safeguarded participants' identities throughout the study. Applying proper ethical standard helps to ensure that the researcher will protect participants as much as possible. Final Doctoral Study included the Walden IRB approval number 06-13-18-0478965.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

As the researcher, I was the primary data collection instrument in this study. Akwensivie (2015) noted that data collection instruments are used to gather data for a study. Interviewing in qualitative research is a common data collection method (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The data collection instruments that are used in this study are semistructured interviews, an analysis of internal company documents, and publicly available company documents. Theron (2015) suggested that a semistructured interview is a combination of structured and unstructured interviews. Moldavska and Welo (2017) revealed that researchers use content analysis to analyze word-based data by using coding procedures to identify themes in the data. Pacho (2015) suggested that researchers use interviews, written documents, audio-visual materials, electronic records such as email messages and websites, and anything else needed to help them to answer the research question(s). I selected the participants based on their knowledge of strategies used to increase employee engagement.

I conducted semistructured interviews to allow for focused, conversational, two-way communication between the researcher and participant. In preparing for the interview, I reviewed the interview questions and notes and prepared a fact sheet that



supplied general information, such as name, position in the company, and the number of years employed with this company. These data were useful to contextualize the participants' answers. I used an interview protocol as a guide to conduct the interview. In the interview protocol, I included the informed consent and interview questions (see Appendix A). Prior to conducting the interview, I first discussed the informed consent with the participants. During the informed consent process, I explained to the participants the procedures of the research and informed them that their participation is voluntary, and they may choose not to participate, or end the interview at any time. Symon et al. (2018) noted that researchers are required to obtain an informed consent for individuals who participate in the research. If the participants agreed to participate, I proceeded by asking them to sign the consent form, and I provided a copy of the form to the participant. After the participant signed the consent form, I conducted the interview. I used a set of predetermined interview questions (see Appendix A) to ask each participant questions relating to the research. I asked each participant the same set of questions to ensure credible and valid findings in the research.

After the completion of each interview, I used the data gathered from the semistructured interviews, in conjunction with internal company data and publicly available documents, to explore the knowledge, perceptions, experiences, and viewpoints of participants on matters related to employee engagement and productivity. Upon the conclusion of each interview session, I conducted a transcript review and member checking to enhance reliability. Hamad, Savundranayagam, Holmes, Kinsella, and Johnson (2016) suggested that transcript review is completed after each participant

receives a copy of the transcript from the transcribed interview data. The objective of conducting a transcript review is to ensure that the details in the transcript are precise and accurate (Nicholls, 2017). I first performed a transcript review by asking the participant to read the transcript to confirm that their ideas and concepts were reflected accurately in the transcript. I provided the participants the opportunity to revise the transcript to verify the precision and accurateness of the data. I provided the participants with a copy of the transcript verbatim in a Word document in which I summarized their responses and sent it to them via email for verification and accuracy of the results.

After the transcript review, I conducted member checking with five participants. Member checking is a process of asking the research participants about their feedback in response to the interview questions. Scholars use member checking to increase the accuracy and credibility of qualitative research (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams, & Blackman, 2016). Baillie (2015) described member checking as an essential technique for establishing credibility. When I conducted member checking with each participant, the participant was given the opportunity to verify his or her statements or fill in any missing information. I asked each participant to edit, elaborate, or delete his or her wording from the narrative if necessary. I contacted the participants via email or phone call to ensure that they read the report obtained their feedback. The objective in conducting member checking was to compare my report with the participants to ensure that the participants' interpretations were accurate.

### **Data Collection Technique**

This section includes the data collection technique for conducting this study. The data collection techniques used in this study were semistructured interviews, a content analysis of internal company documents (ie., employee handbook, employee manuals, and documented data from company files), and a content analysis of publicly available company documents. In the research, I first conducted a semistructured interviews with five participants. Semistructured interviews are in-depth interviews where the participant must answer open-ended questions presented by the researcher (Manzano, 2016). Theron (2015) suggested that a semistructured interview is a combination of structured and unstructured interviews. In semistructured interviews, the researcher prepares a set of predetermined questions before starting the interview session (Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas, Visitacion, & Caricativo, 2017). I selected a semistructured interviews as a data collection to technique to allow for focused, conversational, two-way communication between the researcher and participant. In preparing for the interview, I reviewed the interview protocol (see Appendix A), which contains the interview questions and the informed consent form. I prepared a fact sheet to keep track of general demographic information such as name, position in the company, and the number of years employed with this company. Throughout the interview, I asked probing questions as needed for more clarification and elaboration. I wrote detailed notes based on my observation of the body language of the participants. I remained nonreactive to the participants' responses to increase the reliability of the interviewee's responses.

Prior to starting the interview, I obtained a permission from the participants to use an audio recording device. Researchers use a digital recorder to record interview data because the digital recorder is used to preserve the entire verbal part of the interview for future analysis (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Before starting the interview, I ensured that the recording device was in proper working order. Once it was confirmed that the device was working, I began asking the interview questions. Each interview averaged between 45 to 60 minutes. Manzano (2016) suggested that the interview is a discussion between the researcher and the participant. I interacted directly with the participants during the interview session.

Semistructured interviews offer advantages and disadvantages. Among the advantages are (a) the presence of the interviewer gives structure to the interview situation and (b) the presence of the interviewer may allow him or her to determine any uneasiness from the participants (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). A disadvantage of the semistructured interview is that some participants may be reluctant to share information due to shyness or hesitancy (Oltmann, 2016). Further, Malagon-Maldonado (2014) mentioned that semistructured interviews are time-consuming and require subjective interpretation of data.

I conducted a content analysis of the internal company documents and publicly available documents from company websites highlighting employee retention strategies. Bengston (2016) stated that content analysis is a method to interpret and analyze contents in written format. Shannon-Bakker (2017) suggested that content analysis can be used to explain topics such as media reports, interviews, social changes, and changing trends, and

it includes a measurable and replicable understanding of textual data. I conducted a content analysis of the written data to comprehend the information from the documents.

The content analysis includes advantages and disadvantages in research. A central advantage of content analysis is that it is unobtrusive. Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, and Snelgrove (2016) suggested that content analysis is unobtrusive because the researcher does not collect the data directly from individuals. The content can be analyzed and examined via comments such as historical documents, interviews, editorials, magazines, or periodicals that pertains to the research topic. An additional advantage of content analysis is cost-effectiveness. Liu (2016) revealed that although content analysis is labor intensive, it is low cost and requires minimal expense. Researchers do not have to provide monetary incentives to fill out surveys or provide incentives for participation. Another advantage is that content analysis is used in quantitative and qualitative research. The researcher can select a sample from the material and conduct the qualitative or quantitative analysis. The disadvantage of content analysis is that it is time-consuming. Connelly (2016) noted that when performing a content analysis, the researcher needs to record every detail from the content for further analysis. An additional disadvantage is the scope for misinterpretation. Because it is an objective analysis, the meaning and significance of the text are often misconstrued.

Member checking was a part of the data collection process. Scholars conduct member checking in qualitative to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings (Noble & Smith, 2015). Chase (2017) suggested that researchers use the member checking technique by asking the participants to verify or elaborate on data from the data

collection process. Researchers can determine if the data are accurate by ensuring that the researcher's interpretations of the data are in alignment with the participants' feedback (Thomas, 2017). I conducted member checking by asking each participant to validate, revise, or adjust any data to ensure the accuracy of the findings.

#### **Data Organization Techniques**

The data organization technique in the study consisted of an audio recorder to capture the data. To supplement, I used a researcher journal in which I documented the study. I used the researcher journal to make regular entries during the research process. Cengiz and Karatas (2015) found that keeping a researcher journal helps a researcher construct essential knowledge, organize his or her thoughts, solve problems, and increase analytical skills. In the researcher journal, I recorded the name, date, time, and location of the interview with each participant. As noted by Fluk (2015), the researcher journal can be used to document the research process or note keywords or to write any thoughts that may lead to bias. The research journal consisted of my ideas, nonverbal cues of the participants relating to the strategies used to increase employee engagement. Maintaining a research journal enabled me to note my experiences, opinions, and thoughts and to avoid bias in the interpretation process of the study. I retained the research journal and log each meeting regarding the progress of research.

I securely preserved the electronic information on a flash drive for 5 years to ensure confidentiality and privacy of the participants. Noble and Smith (2015) suggested that transmitting the data to an electronic device is a vital step in ensuring that the data are preserved efficiently and well-maintained. I conserved all electronic files on a

password-protected flashdrive to safeguard the participants' information. When conducting research, paper records and files containing data should be handled in a manner that limits access only to those persons with reasons to access them (Almalki (2016). After 5 years, I will erase all electronic data and shred any paper content.

### **Data Analysis**

In data analysis, the researcher analyzes and interprets the data to understand the information. To analyze the data, I used methodological triangulation to check the validity of the study by analyzing the data from multiple sources. Triangulation includes the combination of different methods of gathering data or different methods of analyzing data (Leung, 2015). Bengston (2016) suggested that triangulation in case studies is easier because of the use of different sources and the participant's description supporting the same concept. Ghahari and Farokhnia (2017) revealed that triangulation is a method used in research to enhance the credibility of the outcomes of the study. Noble and Smith (2015) suggested that triangulation of data with the use of two or three resources can reduce bias in a study. To analyze the data, I implemented methodological triangulation by gathering a variety of data collection points. I transcribed interviews, used internal company documents (i.e., company handbook), and publicly available company documents to achieve a synchronic validity of the study.

Researchers conduct interviews to collect information about participants' experiences. I conducted a semistructured interview to explore the views and experiences of the participants. Peters and Halcomb (2015) found that interviewing is a data collection technique used in research to understand the life experiences of the

participants. I used a digital tape recorder to record the participants' responses during the interview. Manson and Robbins (2017) suggested that a digital recorder can be used in research to capture the narrative of the participants. I listened actively to the recording to transcribe data by using the voice-to-text device called the Dragon Professional Individual voice recognition software. I first recorded the interviews using an audio recording device and then use the Dragon Professional voice recognition software to help me transcribe the interviews. Ogawa, Hori, and Nakamura (2016) explained that the Dragon Professional Individual software is designed to convert audio into text which saves time and is convenient to use when transcribing interviews. I listened to the audio and dictated the information to the computer as the voice-to text feature converts the audio to textual data.

I used a thematic coding method by first identifying and highlighting the textual data from the interviews and archival documents into manageable categories of words or phrases to create themes of the content. Vaughn and Turner (2016) stated that coding is a process of labeling and assigning the data into categories. Onwuegbuzie, Frels, and Hwang (2016) emphasized that qualitative researchers use coding in content analysis to find the consistency of words or ideas in the document. Upon coding the data into themes, I formed a thematic analysis of the data. Leung (2015) revealed that thematic analysis occurs once the coding process is finalized. Secondly, I identified the main themes by noting the consistency of each theme from the data. I noted each theme and classified them into categories to produce an analytical interpretation of the data.



I analyzed the transcribed interviews, internal company documents, and publically available documents by using Yin's (2018) five steps data analysis method. Yin explained that data analysis consists of (a) data compilation; (b) data disassembly; (c) reassembling data; (d) data interpretation; and (e) data findings, transcript, internal company documents, and publically available documents. Almalki (2016) explained that compiling consists of a gathering and assembling method of data to classify, categorize, and establish order to the data. I compiled the data by organizing, categorizing, and arranging the data from the transcribed interviews, internal company documents, and publically available documents in an order to create a pattern.

After data compilation, I disassembled the interview transcripts, company documents, and publically available documents. Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, and Casey (2015) found that data disassembly consists of coding the data as relevant themes and as concepts emerge. I disassembled the data by dividing the compiled data into pieces, parts, elements, or units and labeling each unit. Coding is a procedure used in data analysis to identify themes in the data. Theron (2015) explained that coding is a process of collecting major thematic ideas and labeling sections of ideas with codes that correlate to the research questions. Zhao, Li, Ross, and Dennis (2016) noted that coding relates to refocusing and refining the analysis into order and grouping to form a thematic category. Woods, Paulus, Atkins, and Macklin (2016) revealed that coding organizes data into themes that relate to the topic. Onwuegbuzie et al. (2016) found that coding occurs as categories are interlinked to create one global theme. I used a color-coded highlighter on

a printed copy to distinguish the concepts and themes relating to strategies department store manager use to increase employee engagement.

After coding the data and identifying themes, I reassembled the data. Yin (2018) revealed that data reassembling consists of identifying a group of themes and clustering them to form patterns. I reassembled the data by clustering and categorizing the labels into sequences and groups. I highlighted and categorize the interview transcripts, internal public documents, and publicly available documents to achieve a visual understanding of the data. As the new themes are categorized, I kept track of the data by using a research diary to note the themes and recognizable patterns as they appear.

Data interpretation consists of finding meaning to the data. Yin (2018) found that data interpretation is a process in which the researcher finds meaning from the collected data. Rankin (2016) suggested that data interpretation includes organizing the data where the researcher finds a link relating to the data and data interpretation. Sutton and Austin (2015) noted that interpreting the data can help the researcher comprehend the concepts and add significance to the data. To interpret the data, I reviewed written notes or memos from interview transcripts, internal company, and publicly available documents. I labeled each theme by relevant phrases, sentences, or sections.

The final step of Yin's (2018) five sets data analysis is reporting the findings. Tai and Ajjawi (2016) found that the researcher can present the findings in a way that is clear and direct to the reader. Bishop and Kuula-Luumi (2017) suggested that the findings should include analysis and discussion of relevant details and information relating to the research. Upon receiving my results of the study, I compared and contrasted the findings

to determine whether they align with the conceptual framework and the literature review. After creating the themes and the subthemes from the data using Yin's five-step data analysis, I compared and contrasted the themes to the findings to see if they support the conceptual framework and the literature review. I analyzed and present the results in relation to the themes in Section 3.

### **Reliability and Validity**

#### **Reliability**

Researchers ensure reliability and dependability of a research by providing rich details to ensure the consistency of the results. A study is reliable when another researcher can replicate the findings of the original study by following the documented process (Hadi & Closs, 2016). Leung (2015) explained that reliability and dependability is the degree in which a research instrument produces consistent results. I ensured reliability and dependability by using member checking. Member checking is a technique used after the interview to confirm that both the researcher and the participant are in alignment with the assessment from the initial interview (Manzano, 2016). Researchers use member checking to establish reliability and dependability in the research (Bengston, 2016). Marshall and Rossman (2016) found that member checking permits each study participant to read the data and interpret the data from his or her perspective to ensure accuracy, dependability and reliability. As I conducted the member checking process with each participant, I provided opportunities to the participant to ask any questions, revise, or adjust the data to ensure the interview results are accurate. I used member checking to enhance the reliability, validity, and dependability of the findings.

**Validity**

Researchers establish validity in a study when the findings are precisely and accurately depicted in the data. In qualitative research, validity is the process of consistency and accuracy of the data (Heale & Twycross, 2015). Noble and Smith (2015) revealed that rich descriptions of the data enhance validity in qualitative research. To ensure the validity of the research, I conducted a methodological triangulation of data, such as interview transcripts, internal organizational documents, and publicly available documents. Methodological triangulation includes using multiple sources to increase the validity and credibility of the research outcome (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggested that triangulation can be used to confirm research from multiple sources to ensure the accuracy of the data. I used triangulation to assess the data and acquire different perspectives from multiple sources. In order to increase validity, I collected and analyzed the data from the three sources to ensure the validity of the findings. By combining and analyzing the data from multiple sources, I obtained a more comprehensive understanding of the findings. I triangulated the data to minimize inconsistencies and irregularities in the findings.

**Credibility**

It is imperative that the researcher establishes credibility in a research. To ensure credibility, I used the member checking and a triangulation technique such as interview transcripts, internal organizational documents, and publicly available documents. Noble and Smith (2015) noted that member checking is a process which permits each study participant to review the collected data from the interview to confirm the interpreted data

reaffirmed by the participant. The member checking is a method used in research in which the participant checks the information from the interview to ensure that it is accurate from the participants perspective (Manzano, 2016). I used member checking procedure to ensure credibility in the research. Triangulation is used to enhance the credibility of the research (Sutton & Austin, 2015). I used the interview transcripts, internal organizational documents, and publically available documents to triangulate the data and add credibility to the research.

**Transferability.** Transferability is the applicability of findings to other groups of individuals or contexts. In transferability, the researchers note the details of the study and compare them to other research to find generalizability in the findings (Noble & Smith, 2015). Hadi and Closs (2016) mentioned that a study is transferable when the researcher provides details of the study in order for the readers to gain an accurate understanding of the research. Korstjens and Moser (2017) noted that transferability is a process in which the researcher provides a complete analysis of the research with precision and accuracy for the readers to decide if the results are transferable to their context. I provided an in-depth explanation of the population, geographical locality, position of employees, and type of business of the research. To ensure transferability I recorded the procedures of the research and provide a detailed description of the study.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability is the level in which the outcomes of the research can be approved by other researchers. Booth (2016) revealed that confirmability relates to the way a researcher maintains neutrality to allow respondents to shape the inquiry. Akin, Yildirim, and Goodwin (2016) explained that in confirmability, the

researcher must avoid personal biases. I ensured confirmability by being aware of my personal biases and bracketing them in a research journal. I remained neutral and maintained an objective viewpoint. I ensured confirmability by establishing an audit trail to increase the trustworthiness of the research.

**Data saturation.** Data saturation is a useful concept in qualitative research. Data saturation in qualitative research occurs when no new ideas can be retrieved from the data (Nicholls, 2017). Emmel (2015) suggested that in data saturation, the researcher discontinues from gathering data when the data categories are saturated. Fusch and Ness (2015) explained that data saturation can be attained in multiple ways such as interviews, triangulation, or focus groups. I ensured data saturation through interviews and methodological triangulation. Etikan et al. (2016), revealed that data saturation is attained when the participant's responses are repetitive to the researcher. I continued to interview additional participants until no additional data were acquired.

### **Transition and Summary**

The objective of conducting the research is to explore strategies department store manager use to increase employee engagement. In Section 2, I presented how I selected a qualitative single case study to gather an exploratory analysis of the data. The participants for the research consisted of five department store managers who were successful in implementing strategies to increase employee engagement. I applied a purposeful sampling technique to classify the participants who were knowledgeable in employee engagement strategies. I used a semistructured interviews, an intergation of archival document and publically available document as a data collection instrument to

acquire an in-depth exploration of the participant's experiences. I discussed member checking, transcript review, and methodological triangulation to ensure reliability, credibility, and validity of the research.

In Section 3, I present a detailed analysis of the study findings and the correlation to the successful strategies department store managers may use to increase employee engagement in their organizations. A systematic review of data sources includes participant interviews, company archival documents, and publicly available documents. I also provide recommendations for actions and future research.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory single case study was to explore the successful strategies department store managers use to increase employee engagement. In this section, I present data that originated from interviews with five department store managers who used strategies to increase employee engagement, internal documents (employee manuals and documented data from company files), and publicly available documents. I found nine strategies that were effective in increasing employee engagement: (a) manager and employee relationship, (b) employee motivation, (c) rewards and incentives, (d) expressing appreciation, (e) ensuring employee well-being, (f) health and safety, (g) employee empowerment, (h) employee feedback, and (i) establishing employee expectations. Department store managers can use the results of this study to increase employee engagement in their organization.

#### **Presentation of Findings**

In this qualitative, single case study, the overarching research question was: What strategies do department store managers use to increase employee engagement?

Data collection consisted of interviews with five department store managers from the Northeastern United States and an in-depth analysis of the company documents and publicly available documents. Study findings are presented below.

#### **Theme 1 Manager and Employee Relationship**

Manager and employee relationships were the coherent strategies that emerged from all participant interviews. Each participant concurred that the manager and



employee relationship was vital to augment employee engagement and increased productivity. Manager 1 commented, “my employees like the job. I try to get to know each employee individually and try to cultivate a positive rapport with them. We view each other as family in the workplace setting.” Manager 2 commented,

I try to place myself in their position to relate to them fully. I’ve discovered that forming a good relationship with the employees puts them at ease, they are less stressed at work, and they can get the job done.

Manager 3 agreed by stating,

I tell my employees that they are important and needed. I tell them that on a daily basis. It turns out that the more I told them how great are, the more enthusiastic they became. They felt joy and empowered and became more engaged in their work.

Manager 4 stated,

Although managers are held in a superior position, their highest priority is to set the example and treat each employee with respect. I find that as long as the staff trusts and understand management, we can have a productive business.

Manager 5 mentioned,

It’s not appropriate for managers to constantly criticize their employees. This actually discourages performance. I think they can move the employees and encourage them by telling them how much they value their talents, strengths, skills, that they bring to the table. Secondly, I think they can tell them that as their managers you are totally invested in their success in the workplace setting.

Without a doubt, it is the manager's responsibility to listen to the employee and build a strong relationship to achieve results and be productive. Last year, our organization received a net gain of \$32 billion dollars in increased profits. The manager must lead by example and realize that their employees are valuable assets to the business.

A stable relationship between manager and employee contributes to the productivity of the business.

Manager and employee relationship are the foundation of productivity in an organization. In a review of one of the company's policy and procedure manual, I found that the manager relationship earned a score of 4.4 out of 5 in 2016 with an increased sales and profit margin increased from 8% from 2014 to 14% in 2016. According to the executive handbook, a positive manager-employee relationship was one of the most effective strategies to improve employee performance and productivity. According to the archival documents, managers should facilitate and implement manager-employee relations techniques to meet the growing demand of a 21-century changing economy.

In an analysis of a publicly available company document, I found that the manager-employee relationship was significant in the long-term financial sustainability of the organization. Part of the data evaluation included an examination of the Winning Together Principle policy. The core objective of the Winning Together Policy was to provide modeling techniques to assist managers in maintaining the employee-manager relationship. The Winning Together Policy reinforced strategies tailored at organizational culture, employee engagement, conflict resolution, workplace

investigation, and employee discipline. Additionally, an emphasis on manager-employee relations concept included using effective communication between managers and employees and emphasizing fairness and consistency in the treatment of employees. According to the policy, managers must connect with employees beyond the responsibility of the job, such as establishing commonality of interests, demonstrating care and support, and acknowledging each employee to establish a meaningful relationship. The manager-employee relationship is the single most influential strategy in employee engagement.

Theme 1 findings corresponded with the literature on how the manager-employee relationship can increase employee engagement. Reed et al. (2016) suggested that managers who actively listen to employees and provide constructive criticism and feedback increase employee confidence and productivity. Howell and Howell (2017) suggested that managers must assess the strengths and weaknesses of the employees to help them cultivate their skill and talent. Managers can cultivate an effective employee and manager relationship to improve employee efforts and performance (Hayden, Fourné, Koene, Werkman, & Ansari, 2017). Allam (2017) suggested that employees who are in a positive, reciprocal relationship with their organization's leaders become more productive and contribute to the business. Additionally, Smith, Wallace, Vandenberg, Mondore (2018) mentioned that there must be a mutual trust between managers and employees. Lightle et al. (2015) found that employees who perceive that they receive support from their managers or supervisors feel obligated to reciprocate with increased emotional commitment and engagement. Managers should work closely with employees to improve

organizational effectiveness and to increase profitability in an organization. Özduran and Tanova (2017) suggested that managers need to be strong communicators and support the achievement of the employee. A stable manager-employee relationship is essential to ensure the performance and productivity of the organization and the department.

Theme 1 findings correlated to Kahn's (1990) theory of psychological meaningfulness. Kahn posited that psychological meaningfulness is a sense of feeling valuable, useful, and meaningful. As noted by Kahn, employees experience psychological meaningfulness when their hard work is appreciated, which creates a desire to stimulate employee performance. A reassuring and supportive interpersonal relationship with a manager or supervisor is the pillar that supports manager-employee relationships. Kahn confirmed that psychological meaningfulness affects employee engagement. Kahn's theory corresponded with Theme 1 of the manager-employee relations in increasing employee engagement and productivity.

Theme 1 findings also mirrored Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory as it pertains to the positive managerial affects and employee relationships. The foundation of Vroom's expectancy theory is the ability to comprehend an employee's motivational needs to amplify employee performance. Engaged employees are more productive and energetic when presented with a motivator. Managers can develop rapport with employees that enables them to understand the needs of each employee in the organization. By building a supportive and upbuilding relationship with the employee, managers can discern the motivational aspiration or desires of each the employee, which correlates to employee performance. Managers can use Vroom's expectancy theory of

motivation to increase employee engagement by identifying the intrinsic or extrinsic motivational influence of the employee to increase employee engagement.

### **Theme 2: Employee Motivation**

The participants claimed that employee motivation is an additional strategy that is associated with productivity. Manager 3 stated, “I find that motivating my employees and let them know I appreciate their work really increases engagement. I tell them that they are important and that the organization is successful because of their contribution to the organization.” Manager 1 commented,

I try to motivate my employees by telling them that one day they may eventually own their business. To be better prepared, I tell them to be happy and content here at the workplace to be ready to venture off to their own business. The lesson here is to inspire and motivate them into believing that they can become sole entrepreneurs someday. This increases their motivation and performance.

Manager 2 mentioned, “It’s easy to motivate employees. They need to know that we managers care about them here in the organization. It has been my experience that expressing appreciation to employees improves productivity, especially when there are less than ideal circumstances.” Manager 4 suggested that “I motivate and encourage them to be honest, respect their customers, to be present at their department posts, work as a team and welcome the customers.” Manager 5 specified,

I motivate my staff by first building trust and being fair-minded. I recommend being a good listener to learn the unique needs of each employee to determine

what motivates the employee. My objective is to acquire an understanding of what motivates to strengthen their efficiency in the business.

The participants concurred that motivation enhances employees' potential and increases their enthusiasm to work, thus increasing engagement. It is imperative that managers comprehend motivational strategies and their correlation to employee performance to cultivate it in their employees.

In a review of the company's policy and procedure manual, I found that employee motivation was one of the strategies the company used to increase employee engagement. In the goal and objective section of the manual, I noticed that the company managers implemented the SMART technique to increase employee motivation. The efficient goals were described in measurable objectives. For instance, one of the measurable goals was to increase sales by 25% in a region to improve performance. An additional goal included providing excellent customer service contributing to 85% customer approval and satisfaction scores. Another goal was to generate \$90,000 in the next 3 months during 2016-2017. The management team held several discussions and meeting six times a year, or as needed, to ensure that these goals were attainable and relevant in order to assess the performance of the employee and meet the needs of the organization. To accomplish these goals, the company leaders produced an action plan that was used to complete and record the milestone achieved. As a result of the implementation of the SMART goals, the company generated an increase of \$200 billion from April of 2016 to December 2017. The company archival documents indicated that employee motivation was a significant factor in the development of individual potential and motivation.

Theme 2 findings were consistent with the literature on how employee motivation can increase employee engagement. Grant (2017) pointed out that employee motivation is defined as an inner desire for the individual to perform at higher levels. Menges et al. (2017) proposed that employee motivation amplifies job performance by augmenting vitality and diminishing stress levels. Olafsen, et al. (2015) revealed that employees who were provided with a monetary method of motivation outperformed their competitors by 10%, thus affecting their financial results. Also, firms with motivated employees provide better customer service, sell more quality products, and are more innovative (Namatovu & Dawa, 2017). Bakker (2017) found that reduced employee motivation led to decreased productivity. Employee motivation is a significant component to increase employee engagement.

Theme 2 aligned also with the Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation. According to Vroom's expectancy theory, employee motivation occurs based on three factors: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. According to Vroom, employees are encouraged and motivated when managers provide a task that the employees are confident they can attain and believe that they will be rewarded for completing the assigned task. Managers need to embrace the motivational elements of the expectancy theory to establish the motivational needs of each employee to improve employee performance and productivity.

Theme 2 correlated with Kahn's (1990) engagement theory as it relates to employee motivation. Kahn suggested that the three determinants of the engagement theory consists of psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological

availability. Kahn noted that employees are engaged when they are proactive and psychologically immersed and dedicated to organizational objectives. Employees are highly motivated and committed to a project or work when they find the work meaningful and internally rewarding. Employee motivation correlates with Kanh's engagement theory as motivation improves psychological and physiological health which positively affects employee engagement and productivity. Employees motivation increases when employees are dedicated toward working in tasks that are interesting and in which they feel their contributions to the organization are significant and valuable. Managers can increase meaningfulness by creating a variety of tasks to encourage employee performance, providing employee feedback and autonomy, and assist employees in finding value and meaningfulness at the workplace setting.

### **Theme 3: Rewards and Incentives**

The participants claimed that the provision of rewards and incentives were motivational strategies to increase employee engagement. Manager 1 explained, "some employees are responsive to me offering incentives such as increased salary. Traditionally, I believe that when managers reward their employees, it can actually increase employee performance." Manager 2 mentioned,

I believe that each employee is unique and different. While one motivational strategy may be effective for one employee, it may not be work for another employee. Each employee is unique and valuable. We provide the Employee Discount Plan which offers employee markdowns and discounts by 35% off based



on payment method. We also offer the Vacation Pay and Time Off package to employees for outstanding employee performance.

Manager 3 stated,

In our organization, we offer monetary incentives by offering cash bonuses of \$300.00 or gift cards to show our employees that we value their hard work and contribution to the organization. This year 5 of our employees received the cash bonuses for a job well done in employee performance.

Manager 4 commented,

We assess the productivity of each employee by evaluating sales objectives which leads to improvement in sales and profits. We've discovered that non-monetary incentives, consisting of gifts cards, holiday gifts, home and kitchen apparatus, or vacations are efficient and proven to be ideal increasing employee motivation. In my seven years' experience of working as department store manager, I discovered that offering non-monetary incentives and rewards are beneficial for acknowledging employee's strengths and determination and enhances skills in customer service.

Manager 5 stated,

One of our top priorities as managers is to make sure that each customer is satisfied with the services we provide and that we meet the needs of the customers. We found that our employees are responsive to cash rewards. We offer a bonus of \$500 to \$700 contingent on the employees' performance from the Profit-Sharing and Stock Ownership Plan. I'm a firm believer that monetary cash

incentives uplift the confidence and self-esteem of each employee increasing motivations and productivity.

As noted from the participant responses, rewards and incentive were used as motivational strategies to increase employee engagement. Managers can identify the different ideas to incentivize employees to increase employee performance.

I found support for Theme 3 in the company's policy and procedure manual. As noted in the manual, all-star employees (the sales associate who had excelled in job category) received a 35% on all store merchandise and 15% off from all store services. In addition, sales associates could earn up to 40-50% off when they purchased with the company's employee discount card. Furthermore, the manual included data relating to profit-sharing and stock ownership plan. The company's profit-sharing plan included the profit incentive compensation. The objective of profit incentive compensation plan was to compensate the sales associate for an increase in sales and excellent customer service. Department store managers used as a motivational strategy to increase performance and productivity.

In an assessment of the company's publicly available data, I found information related to incentives and rewards to increased productivity. The organization's website claimed that rewards and incentives were motivators to increasing profitability. The financial report specified an increase in sales by of 56% in 2018 in January through April, which was a result of positive employee performance. The website revealed an increase in net profit margins of \$ 63 million this year in comparison to \$23 million last year. In June of 2017, the company revised its annual guidance plan that focused on new

employee retention strategies. The financial report also indicated that the directors agreed that their policies implemented to increase productivity in the organization were successful. Rewards and incentives are effective strategies department store managers use for continuous sustained financial results in their organizations.

Theme 3 aligned with the literature on the direct effect of reward and incentives as motivators to increase employee engagement. As noted by Reader et al. (2017), employee performance increases when employees are provided with incentives and rewards, such as an increase in salary, company bonuses, employee discounts, and extra salary in return for the time expended by employees to support the organization. Cooklin, Joss, Husser, and Oldenburg (2017) suggested that the mental and physical health of workers in business determine the level of employee engagement and employee performance. In addition, Koh et al. (2017) stated that poor employee wellbeing results in reduced productivity. Furlich (2016) noted that an employee's wellbeing is an indicator of a robust and thriving business. Individual rewards (financial rewards, team climate, and participation in decision making) amplify employee engagement (Whittington, 2015). Furlich (2016) mentioned that extrinsic rewards are external and derived from the supervisor or director of the company used to encourage employee performance. Almond and Gray (2017) stated that incentives and rewards encourage staff to work harder and more productively. Department store managers should use extrinsic and intrinsic motivations to understand the motivational needs of each employee in the organization.

Theme 3 was consistent with Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation. According to Vroom's expectancy theory, employees are motivated toward a behavior based on three factors: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Employees believe that their efforts are associated with increased performance to the assigned task in which they would be provided with a reward. Managers can use Vroom's expectancy theory as an approach to increase employee motivation in their organization by providing incentives and rewards to encourage employee performance. Although organizations rely on monetary rewards to motivate their employees, each employee may require diverse incentives such as gift cards, cash awards, travel, or vacation to motivate or fulfil each employee's motivational needs. As employees demonstrate the desired behavior, managers can motivate employees by using intrinsic or extrinsic incentives to increase employee engagement.

Theme 3 findings aligned with Kahn's (1990) engagement theory. Kahn claimed that employees demonstrate work performance physically, cognitively, and emotionally. According to the engagement theory, psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability are predictors of employee engagement. Employees experience meaningfulness at work when they are happy, committed to performing the assigned task, and find their work valuable and worthwhile. Kahn emphasized that employees seek fulfillment and feel motivated to make a positive contribution to their organization. Engaged employees are interested, attentive and involved while focusing on the goals and missions of the company. Theme 3 incentives and rewards aligned with Kahn's engagement theory as employees are psychologically or intrinsically motivated, which

increases employee engagement. Managers can assist in increasing employee engagement and productivity by offering innovative and meaningful work which creates a sense of employee self-worth and value.

#### **Theme 4: Expressing Appreciation**

The participants emphasized expressing employee appreciation as an effective strategy to increasing employee engagement. Manager 1 stated, “As a manager, the most we can do is show some appreciation in some way to show we appreciate all the employees’ hard work and efforts.” Manager 2 agreed, “I show appreciation to my staff by telling them they’re doing a great job and that we appreciate their contribution at the company.” Manager 3 stated, “I express appreciation to my employees by saying, Well done on achieving that particular objectives they were working on. A simple thank you will always motivate employees and demonstrate that we care about them as people as well. Expressing appreciation to employees helps them function in a way that improves self-confidence and motivation. The results are that they are able to increase sales and profitability when they feel encouraged and appreciated.

Managers 4 mentioned, “It’s been my experience that expressing appreciation to my employees improves self-esteem and they gradually start making progress which actually and improves productivity.” Manager 5 revealed,

It is essential that employees feel appreciated for their contributions in our store. I ensure my employees feel appreciated by giving them a gift card or sending them an email in appreciation for their work at the store. I am proud of my

employees and I say thank you for what they do on a daily basis in order to sustain our organization.

The participants revealed that employee affirmations were an effective strategy to employee engagement. Managers should express appreciation of employees for hard work and efforts. When employees are appreciated, they are enthusiastic and encouraged to work more which increases productivity.

In an assessment of the company policy and procedure manual, I found support for Theme 4. The company policy and procedures manual revealed one method of showing appreciations was through employee appreciation week. The directors from the department provided a certification or a gift card to the employees who excelled in achieving their goals. The appreciation note was referenced in the sales associate's performance appraisal to be reviewed by the director of the organization. In addition, employees were celebrated during barbecue cook-off with free food and drinks for every employee. Managers held frequent meetings to express thanks to the employees for their exceptional contributions to the organization. As noted in the handbook, when managers show appreciation to employees for their contribution to the organization, employees reinforce the positive behavior and increase employee performance.

I found support for Theme 4 in a review of publicly accessible documents. In a survey called One Link, I found that 78% of profits increased after the implementation of employee appreciate programs. The objective of the program was to increase employee retention, reduce employee turnover, and enhance employee satisfaction. According to the survey, the rise in revenue was attributed to the appreciation that employees felt in the

organization. Employees aspire to receive appreciation and acknowledgment for a job well done in a business organization. A “thank you” or good job in a hand-written note or email is valuable to an employee and contributes to employee engagement.

The theme of expressing appreciation was consistent with the literature. Townsend and Loudoun (2016) stated that managers who show appreciation to employees demonstrate that they value their employees, which makes them feel appreciated and more committed to the organization. Gupta and Sharma (2016) stated that internal content (i.e., satisfaction at work, appreciation, a sense of fulfillment) are motivational factors that increase employee engagement. Showing appreciation is the act of concentrating on an individual's desires or wishes and contributions and not solely on organizational objectives (Chaudhary & Chaudhary, 2017). Expressing appreciation is one effective strategy for increasing employee engagement. Delaney and Royal (2017) mentioned that expressing thanks to employees increases emotional moral and releases stress from the workload and responsibilities of the organization. Managers can increase employee engagement by expressing appreciation to employees in the organization

The theme of expressing appreciation aligned with Kahn's (1990) engagement theory. Kahn suggested that there are three initial psychological conditions that affect an individual's disengagement and engagement at work: psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability. These three elements, according to Kahn, correlates to employee engagement. Employees who are appreciated show higher ambition and agility and are effective in work performance. In Kahn's engagement theory, the element psychological meaningfulness affirms the notions of appreciation by

creating a sense of inner pride in the employees by which they feel appreciated and valuable. As managers express appreciation to employees, they can motivate employees to become more effective, which results in increased productivity.

The theme of expressing appreciation contrasted with Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation. Vroom's expectancy theory is based on extrinsic motivation in that an individual's effort will result in reward attainment. Rewards may include gifts cards, monetary gifts, increase in salary, or luxury vacations. When employees are motivated, they believe they will receive a reward that will satisfy their needs. Employees desire to feel valued and needed for their contributions in the organization. Vroom's expectancy theory is based performance and effort to generate a valued outcome. For employees to feel motivated, the rewards must be attainable, valued, and desired to increase motivation and employee performance.

#### **Theme 5: Ensuring Employee Wellbeing**

Ensuring the wellbeing of employees in the organization was the fifth predominant strategy that emerged from the participant interviews during data collection. Manager 1 commented, "I try to make sure that my staff is happy and content. They are happy to do the job and come to work every day." Manager 1 also added, "I pay my employees a decent salary to make ends meet and to be able to take care of their families." Manager 2 mentioned,

If employees are fatigued and are dealing with personal issues from home, this can affect their performance on the job. My objective is to build an environment in which employees can de-stress, thrive and feel welcomed and cared for when



they come to work. This can affect performance in how customers perceive the attention they're receiving from the employee which can also affect productivity.

Manager 3, stated,

It's important that managers show employees that they care about their employee's wellbeing. I ensure my employees that I care about them by taking a sincere interest in their personal lives when they share issues or concern with me.

Manager 4 commented,

Sometimes a few of my staff come to work exhausted and drained out. Some of them work three or four shifts. I notice these things, and I try to give them a "thank you note" to let them know they're appreciated. I see a different reality when I show appreciation to my staff. They're much happier, and I really need my employees to be happy with the job well.

The participants emphasized that ensuring the wellbeing of the employees is the foundational strategy in improving employee engagement in the organization. A workforce comprised of healthy employees positively affects employee performance and reduces employee absenteeism while augmenting organization's profitability.

In a review of the company's policy and procedures manual, I found that a health and wellness program called Total Wellness was introduced in 2015, emphasizing wellness as a right of each employee in the organization. The implementation of the Total Wellness program was intended to promote health and keep the employees healthy in the organization. In the health and wellness program, employees were offered a daily fitness program consisting of personal training coaches, wellness classes that focused on

nutrition and the importance of physical and psychological wellbeing, and trained licensed massage therapists to support the general wellness of the employees. The objective of implementing the wellness program was to assist employees in getting through the daily job stressors at the company through a self-preservation plan. To perform at their utmost capacity, employees must be healthy both physically and psychologically. Managing physical and psychological health creates energy and vitality while reducing stress and stress-related illnesses. As indicated from the policy and procedure handbook, psychological and physical health was one of the key ingredients to amplifying productivity.

The company website also emphasized employee wellbeing in an organization. As indicated in the publicly available documents, 90% of employees participated in the wellness program. As noted from the Total Wellness program, services and programs were geared toward supporting a culture of wellness and wellbeing in the company. The wellness program in the organization positively affected the employees' work performance by increasing productivity by 30% from March 2016 to December 2017. Employee wellbeing was a fundamental element in improving profitability in organizations.

Theme 5 was consistent with the literature review. Organizations with effective employee wellbeing programs strategically outperform competitors (Yalabik et al., 2015). Shuck et al. (2015) suggested that psychological wellbeing and work performance are two components that managers need to increase employee engagement. Viitala et al. (2015) suggested that the wellbeing of employees influences productivity and

performance. Managers continue to view employee wellbeing as a strategic advantage to organizations (Zakaria, 2015). As affirmed in the literature, ensuring the wellbeing of employees is the main priority of the top managers to increase employee productivity in the organization.

The theme of employee wellbeing applies to Kahn's (1990) concept of the engagement theory. Kahn noted three psychological conditions necessary for engagement: meaningfulness, safety, and availability. According to Kahn, employees are dedicated and committed when they feel supported and valued in the workplace. Kahn mentioned that managers who are attentive and listen to employees contribute to their emotional wellbeing in the business. As conveyed in the findings, employee wellbeing is a key platform strategy to augment employee engagement. In alignment with Kahn's conceptual framework, employee wellbeing is imperative in securing effective employee motivation and job performance.

The theme of employee wellbeing conflicted with Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation. Vroom's theory is the foundation of self-efficacy in which the individual belief of the ability to successfully perform a particular task results in receiving a reward. In Vroom's expectancy theory, motivation is associated with a desired reward, the belief that effort is associated with increased performance, and the performance is associated with the desired result. Employee wellbeing is based on psychological and physiological elements to ensure that employees are happy and content at the workplace. Employee wellbeing in organizations is essential as a cheerful workforce results in improved performance and productivity in the organization.

**Theme 6: Health and Safety**

The participants correlated health and safety strategy as an efficient strategy that increased employee engagement. Manager 1 and Manager 2, emphasized the importance of ideal working conditions of employees to promote employee engagement. Manager 1 stated,

As the manager I have the responsibility to ensure that we have a safe working environment for employees and staff. In our store, we ensure that employees adhere to all health and safety standards. Employees must ensure that all store equipment are in proper working order, specifically good working machinery, adequate ventilation, etc. Whenever there's a water spills or any slippery surfaces, we make sure that we mop the floor and the area is tidy before customers enters the store. The objective is to take steps to promote order and safety in our organization.

Manager 2 commented,

As managers, we must ensure that employees respect and implement safety regulation in the store. Our store is productive because we prioritize safety standards that protects our staff and shoppers. We have an ethical obligation to protect the staff and shoppers and enforce safety standards that ensure a safe working environment.

The participants revealed the importance of health and safety as a priority to promote a healthier and safer working environment.

In an evaluation of the policy and procedures manual, I found support for the theme of health and safety. As emphasized in the policy and procedures manual, the company adhered to strict health and safety standards by conducting safety meetings in which the manager and the employees discussed strategies to enforce stronger health and safety procedures. All managers, supervisors, and sales associates shared a collective obligation to ensure the health and safety of all employees and customers in the organization. Managers and employees should follow the best practices of health and safety rules to safeguard themselves and fellow employees.

In addition, the company's publicly available data derived from a health and safety report indicated that the objective of the company was to secure a neat, organized, and safe working environment for each employee. New sales associates were encouraged to attend health and safety training courses and were cautioned to log and report any occurrence of accidents, injuries, or falls to their supervisor immediately. According to the health and safety report, incidents could be avoided when associates were proactive in ensuring health and safety best practices in the organization. By implementing health and safety procedures, the organization increased their level of engagement by 34% in 2016. The implementation of a successful safety culture demonstrated thoughtfulness and selflessness for staff and created a positive working environment for the organization.

The emerging theme of health and safety was confirmed in the literature as an effective strategy to amplify employee engagement. Conrad et al. (2015) found that managers who implemented hygiene or maintenance factors in their organizations increased productivity in their organizations. Hygiene factors are internal conditions of

the organization, such as quality of supervision, company policies, working conditions, or relation with others. Sulaiman and Seng (2016) suggested that managers are required to employ health and safety measures to protect employees in an organization. The implementation of health and safety rules are obligatory to increase employee engagement and organizational success. Managers or leaders must ensure a safe and healthy workplace setting for employees to be fully engaged and committed to attaining organizational objectives.

Study findings confirmed Kahn's (1990) engagement theory as the theory relates employees' psychological safety and the association to employee engagement. Kahn suggested that employees who feel psychologically safe are more productive and make better use of corporate assets. As noted by Kahn, managers who are dedicated and committed to maintaining health and safety procedures in the workplace can significantly increase employee engagement. Kahn affirmed that there is correlation between psychological wellbeing, safety, and employee performance. Therefore, it is imperative that managers create a safe, secure working environment to increase employee engagement.

Theme 6 of health and safety was incompatible with Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. Vroom's expectancy theory was based on the idea that employees perform on the level to which they will be rewarded. Vrooms highlighted the value employees place on the outcome and the effort they expend to attain the desired objectives. In contrast, health and safety consists of ensuring a safe and clean work environment for employees and to adhering to the safety regulations of the organization. Employees should follow

the guidelines and best work practices to maintain a safe workplace and mitigate risks to the health and safety of each employee in the organization. Vroom's expectancy theory differed with Theme 6, as the emphasis was on understanding the association between performance and rewards and the health and safety consists of sustaining a safe and healthy work environment to meet the health and safety needs of employees in the organization.

#### **Theme 7: Employee Empowerment**

The seventh strategy that emerged from the collected data was employee empowerment. The participants affirmed the importance of the rapport between empowerment and employee engagement. Manager 1, Manager 2, Manager 3, Manager 4, and Manager 5 highlighted the importance of employee empowerment and the effect in the organization. Manager1 stated,

I give my employees more rules and responsibility by letting them know exactly what I need for them to do in the department. As the manager, I discuss the visions and goals of the organizations and delegate assignments to each employee by providing the tools and resources needed to achieve the objective.

Manager 2 mentioned,

I encourage each employee to share their thoughts and ideas during the scheduled staff meetings, they are encouraged to discuss issues or problems in the store and can offer solutions in relations to how to deal with the problems within the department. I create an environment of trust and openness to maintain the lines of communication open.

Manager 3 commented,

Empowering my employees consists of consistent coaching, training and educating each employee. It's important that managers design and implement activities that address the need of the employees. Also, when my employees are given responsibilities, they become assertive, self-assured and reliable. They can work with more confidence, this increases more sales, profits and thus increases productivity.

Manager 4 stated, "profitability increases when employees are friendly with customers. I value honesty, so I ask each employee to be honest. When employees are open-minded and mindful of the objectives of the organization they can succeed." Manager 5 stated,

I personally believe in fairness and adequately preparing my employees by providing training in in customer service, communication skills, training in working the cash register, show customers where items are located in the store, etc. The more unique we are, the higher, more market share we will generate. The role of managers in the store is to empower and encourage each employee. By empowering our employees, we can achieve great heights and continue to effectively provide a positive experience to our customers.

As indicated in the theme employee empowerment, the objective of the manager is to empower employees to increase their motivation and performance. Managers who provide the tools and resources to employees increase employee empowerment and reduce employee turnover in the organization.



The company policy and procedures manual indicated that employee empowerment is a part of the collaborative team effort and organizational culture in the corporation. According to the policy and procedures manual, employee empowerment consisted of the delegation of tasks to each employee by providing the necessary training, resources, and a level of autonomy tailored toward completing the assigned duties. Employees were encouraged to develop creative and independent thinking skills, as managers provide hands-on training and occasions for employees to grow in the organization. In addition, the manual indicated that employees were encouraged to discuss ideas with management regarding effective strategies to increase sales in their department to increase profitability.

I gathered data from the company website that aligned with the theme of employee empowerment. I found that company sales and revenue were decreasing in profits in 2014 by 54%. In 2016 a new CEO was hired and created the Forward Focus Program. In 2017, profit sales increased by 80% in generated revenue. According to the website, the increase in sales was primarily attributed to the employee empowerment program called Forward Focus designed to implement sustainable changes such as effective communication, training and coaching programs, and employee and management feedback. In addition, the CEO implemented new employee recognition awards that provided rewards to employees and team members. Employees were provided the opportunity to be a part of a team in which they could demonstrate their full potentials and function at their highest ability. Upon the CEO's retirement in 2016, the corporation revenue and stock markets value increased three times more than the original

value. The employees feel a sense of significance and change their perception of the workplace setting when they feel empowered and motivated.

Theme 7 of employee empowerment aligned with the literature review. The perception of motivation is associated with extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation represent core determinants of employee engagement (Makki & Abid, 2017). Extrinsic motivations include direct and indirect monetary rewards that individuals receive in exchange for their job performance (Kuvaas et al., 2017). A correlation exists between employee empowerment and motivation. Intrinsic motivation is psychologically associated with employee empowerment because employees are more committed and dedicated to the assigned task when they feel valued and appreciated by the leaders in their organizations. Feeling valued and praised correlated to intrinsic motivation leading to feeling a sense of empowerment (Almond & Gray, 2017; Baird, Su, & Munir, 2018; Delaney & Royal, 2017; McLellan, 2017). Employees are motivated and feel empowered when they assign learning and purpose to their work and are honored and acknowledged for their achievements in the organization. When managers create a work environment that is inclusive in which employees are empowered, employee performance increases. Managers are encouraged to cultivate an environment of reassurance and to provide workers with the necessary supplies and training required to achieve their objectives.

The theme of employee empowerment aligned with Kahn's (1990) engagement theory. According to Kahn's engagement theory of motivation, employees are motivated by psychological factors that increase employee engagement. Kahn defined engagement

as a dedicated approach and commitment that employees have to the organization and its objectives. When employees feel appreciated, they feel empowered thus increasing employee performance. Kahn indicated that appreciation improves cognitive functioning, creativity, mental alertness, and, innovative thinking. When employees experience positive emotions such as recognition, it results in improved motivation and performance.

Theme 7 of employee empowerment aligned with Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. Vroom noted three factors to increase employee motivation: valence, which is the value the individual attaches to the desired reward, instrumentality, which is the belief that the individual will attain the reward; and the expectancy, which is the concept that increased effort will result in achieving the desired goals. Employee empowerment correlates to Vroom's expectancy theory as employees believe that their efforts are linked to increased performance. Empowered employees believe that their performance can have a positive effect on the envisioned outcome. Vroom's expectancy theory correlated with Theme 7 as engaged employees are confident in their ability to perform a task well and believe that the result of their efforts will generate the expected outcome. Thus, employees are empowered and engaged when managers create a working place setting that inspires and increases employee performance.

#### **Theme 8: Employee Feedback**

Participants mentioned that employee feedback was a strategy that can be used to increase employee engagement. Manager 1, Manager 2, and Manager 3 mentioned the

importance of providing employee feedback to enhance employee performance.

Manager 1 stated,

As the manager, I also critique my staff on their performance. It's difficult to find a balance because some employees are resistant to change while others will accept the feedback I provide them. I am very specific and detailed for them to be aware of what their responsibilities are in the organization. I notice that some of my staff actually improve in job performance after receiving feedback from me.

Manager 2 commented,

From a standpoint of management, I tell them we need you to do something and explain to them what my expectations are of the task they need to complete. I critique their performance on the basis of how well they follow directions or ask questions and their ability to perform the job well. If I need to give them a review of their performance, I tell them exactly what's need to be done privately in my office relating to their departments. I try not to make it a personal issue. I only focus on the behavior that needs to change and not the employee. Our goal is to keep employees motivated and customers happy and content so that they'll have a positive experience when they shop at our store.

Manager 3 stated,

In my view giving constructive criticism can be challenging because some employees are defensive so I have to get my courage together to provide feedback to those individuals. My strategy is to focus on the positives such as the strengths of the employees and not on the problem in the beginning. I start by building up

and so that they can be more inclined to hear what needs to communicate. The minute I tell them they're doing an outstanding job, they become positive and optimistic. I compliment them for something good they have accomplished such as if they did a great job in customer service and were very useful in answering customer questions, then I would get to the main point of the matter and tell them what they need to focus on in the future.

As noted in the participant interviews, employee feedback was a significant strategy that was used to advise and update employees relating to their conduct and performance in the workplace setting.

An evaluation of the company policy and procedures manual reflected the theme of employee feedback. The policy and procedures manual revealed that in 2015, the company had a 45% increase in employee turnover. According to the policy and procedures in 2016, an improvement occurred in reference to a reduction of 13.6% in the turnover rate. As noted in the policy and procedures manual, the difference was due to managers providing positive employee feedback. Managers were encouraged by the executive director to emphasize the employee's skills, aptitudes, and capabilities in conjunction with opportunities in employee training and advancement when providing employee feedback. When providing employee feedback, managers should communicate a plan of action by outlining goals to achieve for future progress. Managers must provide adequate and timely employee feedback to improve employee engagement in their organizations.

The company website revealed that employees preferred receiving feedback from their managers. According to the survey, 93% of employees answered “yes” confirming that “Happy Friday Feedback” was an opportunity to be acknowledged and appreciated by their supervisors or managers. During Happy Friday Feedback, employees were recognized for their achievement and contributions. Also, 88% of employees in the survey revealed that Happy Friday Feedback was an opportunity to speak to the managers and receive constructive feedback on individual performance. Employee feedback is an essential part of employee engagement. Useful and constructive feedback from a manager can increase revenue, productivity, and profitability in a business organization.

The employee feedback theme was also noted in the literature. Managers who provide positive feedback and encouragement enhance intrinsic motivation and increase employee performance (Orsini et al., 2015). Kim and Holzer (2016) found that performance goals should be implemented to align with the employee’s growth and development with the business objectives. Similarly, Baird et al. (2018) noted that the objective of providing feedback is to state the problem and reinforce the positive behavior objectively. Employee feedback is a necessary strategy to increase employee engagement.

The employee feedback theme aligned with Vroom’s (1964) concept of employee motivation. Based on Vroom’s expectancy theory, people are motivated toward a behavior based on three factors: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. When employees are motivated, they work harder and are more satisfied with their jobs. The expectancy theory is based on a meritocracy foundation by highlighting the value of hard

work and high performance. Individuals believe more effort will contribute to higher performance. Generally, employees prefer feedback because they seek guidance on how to improve their performance. Employee feedback is essential in assisting employees to work on their objectives, increase motivation, and improve work performance. Managers can acquire a comprehensive understanding of motivation to provide effective employee feedback to increase employee motivation and employee engagement

Theme 8 of employee feedback correlated with Kahn's (1990) engagement theory of the conceptual framework. Kahn stated that there are three initial psychological conditions that affect an individual's disengagement and engagement at work: psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability. These three elements, according to Kahn, correlates to employee engagement and employee performance. Employees who receive regular input and feedback from the employers can strive to adjust, which increases their contributions meaning and increases productivity. The resources and strategies that managers use when providing employee feedback affect employee engagement levels in the organization. When employees accept feedback, they are more productive, and this directly affects the bottom line of the business organization.

#### **Theme 9: Establishing Employee Expectations**

Establishing employee expectation was the ninth strategy that surfaced from the participant interviews. Manager 1 stated, "I tell my staff exactly what I need them to do. I try to explain to them what their duties are and my expectations of them for the organization." Manager 2 suggested,

One of the successful methods for a positive rapport with each employee is effective communication. My objective is to communicate precisely what their specific assignments are and ensure they have an adequate understanding of what they're assigned to do. Communicating specific details to employees fully prepare them and determine how productive they'll become when given future responsibilities. Just simply move forward and get the job done.

Manager 3 commented,

It's all about communication. From my experience, as long as the employees trust and understand my point of view as the manager, we can have a productive business. It gives them a better sense of what we're trying to accomplish for that particular project.

Manager 4 suggested,

It's essential that employees and managers communicate effectively to come up with a mutually acceptable solution. Managers can avoid challenging circumstances with employees and accomplish a great deal when they implement effective communication. Managers must be consistent and communicate what they need the employees to do to get the job done. That is winning strategy and will help sustain the economic sustainability of the organization. The skilled employee will perform at a high standard and will contribute to the profitability of our store.

Manager 5 commented,



In reality, every employee needs to be well organized, capable, proficient and competent. I expect them to be honest, know what they're duties and responsibilities are in their departments. I expect each employee to follow direction and be willing to accept my advice or counsel to maintain optimum performance.

The participants agreed that establishing clear goals and expectations enable employees to achieve the goals and missions of the organization.

The policy and procedure manual outlined the manager's perspective of employee's expectations of the company. The manual included the golden rules that indicated that managers must be consistent in communicating sales associate's objectives by outlining the role of each employee, intermittently checking with the sales associates to evaluate their progress, acknowledging efforts, and providing additional training and coaching if necessary. The manual also included an employee performance review in which sales associates were rated on their performance based on a rating scale of 1-5. Level 5 was categorized as exceptional, Level 4 was exceeds expectation, Level 3 was meets expectation, Level 2 was improvements needed, and Level 1 was unsatisfactory. According to the policy and procedure manual, establishing clear expectations was valuable in maintaining employee performance. Subsequently, the objective of the managers was to provide precise feedback that promotes effective employee performance.

The publicly available documents reflected Theme 9. I noted that the manager must ensure the employees are cognizant of company values to set goals to direct

employees to maximize accomplishments. To ensure goal-setting success, managers must provide each employee with clear performance expectations that are linked to how the employees' individual work contributes to the company's overall goals.

Theme 9 employee expectations was aligned with the literature. Shah and Beh (2016) suggested that employees are cognitively and emotionally engaged when they understand the expectations, goals, and missions of the organization and have resources and opportunities to be efficient and feel fulfilled in their work. In order to establish employee expectations, managers must provide the opportunity for employees to develop their skills and be highly compensated for their contributions (Bailey et al., 2015). Employees are committed to performing at their highest capacity when managers provide detailed employee expectations.

Theme 9 of employee expectations was affirmed in Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation. Managers can assist employees in meeting expectations by providing resources, coaching, and training to achieve the objectives of the organizations. As employees meet the expectations of the managers, their level of motivation and performance increased, which leads to improved productivity. Managers can apply the expectancy theory to motivate staff to achieve the goals of the organization.

Theme 9 employee expectation is applicable to Kahn's (1990) engagement theory. Kahn identified three processes that are essential to the employee engagement: psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability. Kahn noted that these three psychological characteristics enhance employee performance. When employees understand what is expected of them in the organization, their work and

contributions to the organization becomes meaningful, and they have a sense of accomplishment. Managers should create an environment in which employees know that there is the possibility that they will have meaningful work and they find a sense of value in the organization.

### **Application to Professional Practice**

Business leaders can apply the study findings to implement successful strategies to increase employee engagement in their organizations. Managers can use the study results to improve profitability in their organizations. Based on the results of the research, managers could improve employee engagement through the implementation of the following nine motivational strategies: manager and employee relationship, employee motivation, ensuring employee wellbeing, employee empowerment, establishing employee expectations, reward and incentives, expressing appreciation, employee recognition, health-safety, and employee feedback. In Theme 1, the participants discussed the importance of a positive manager and employee relationship that consists of an open and honest communication while working to achieve organizational objectives. Özduran and Tanova (2017) cited that a genuine professional relationship between manager and employee motivates and inspires employees, which increase job performance and increase productivity. When employees feel that managers care and have their best interest at heart, they became more productive and engaged in their work.

In Theme 2, the participants highlighted employee motivation as an effective strategy to increase employee engagement. Ryan (2017) mentioned that managers can improve employee engagement by getting to know employees to ascertain their

motivational needs. The participants noted that motivations commenced with managers finding out what employees' value to determine the needs of each employee. In Theme 3, participants concurred that incentives and rewards were efficient strategies that increased employee engagement. The participants also emphasized the use of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards as a motivational strategy to enhance employee performance. Huang (2018) identified extrinsic motivators as cash bonuses, gift cards, or reward for exceptional job performance. Similarly, Woolley and Fishbach (2018) reported that intrinsic motivation consists of time off from work, vacations, flexible work hours, and restaurant discounts.

In Theme 4, the participants also communicated the need to feel appreciated for their contributions to the organization. Likewise, Menges et al. (2017) highlighted that expressing appreciation creates a physiological effect and increases self-confidence which drives performance. It is imperative that managers demonstrate that they appreciate and value their employees to reduce employee turnover in the organization. In Theme 5, the participants concurred that employee wellbeing is one of the key fundamentals strategies to increase employee engagement. Guest (2017) revealed that employee wellbeing reduces stress and enhances mental acuity to maintain focus and alertness at the workplace. The participants developed and implemented employee wellbeing programs in their organization and provided daily respite to encourage productivity. In Theme 6, the participants elaborated on health and safety as the primary strategy to increase employee engagement. Similarly, Hofmann, Burke, and Zohar, (2017) noted that adhering to health and safety protocols and regulations is essential to

ensure the overall safety and wellbeing of employees in businesses. Managers can benefit from the results of the study by providing a safe working environment to protect employees and staff in their business.

In Theme 7, the participants agreed that employee empowerment and employee engagement were interrelated to increase employee engagement. Kim and Fernandez (2017) cited that employee empowerment includes the ability of employees to make decisions for the best interest of the organization. Employees were provided with resources, additional training, and autonomy enabling them to make decisions to complete the assigned tasks in the organization. In Theme 8, the participants mentioned that employee feedback was an essential strategy for improving employee performance. Rizvi (2017) advised that employee feedback should be given in a sincere and genuine manner and must be comprehensive, precise, and authentic. In Theme 9, the participants discussed establishing employee expectations as an effective strategy for increasing employee engagement. Petrou, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2018) cited that employee expectations should be manageable in order for employees to feel that they can be successful. Participants set expectations of job responsibilities of each employees to ensure that expectations were attainable.

An engaged employee can add to the business organization bottom line by increasing business profitability. To increase competitiveness, managers must identify employees who are willing and able to perform at high levels to increase productivity. Engaged employees results in maximum satisfaction for employees and the organization by generating increased profits and revenue in the organization. By using strategies to

increase employee engagement, leaders can generate profit and promote economic security in business. When department store managers can recognize and identify successful strategies to increase employee engagement, they can improve profitability and productivity in the business. Managers can use the strategies described in the research to achieve financial stability and profitability in their organization.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The study findings could contribute to social change by providing department store managers with strategies to increase employee engagement, which can reduce employee turnover, thus creating employment opportunities for families in the communities. Engaged employees are skilled, proactive, devoted, and adhere to vigorous work ethics in their organization (Lavy & Littman-Ovadia, 2017). Leaders could apply strategies to enhance employee engagement and protect the community by providing employees with secure wages. Additionally, a manager's heightened awareness of employee engagement strategies may expand the local economy by increasing purchasing power to support business owners throughout the region. Engaged employees demonstrate enthusiasm, excitement, and individual efforts in completing their goals to provide goods and amenities to society (Walby & Luscombe, 2016). The findings of the study can be used to promote social change by enabling workers to provide community resources to the general public. To expand community resources, business leaders can capitalize and invest profits that may be used to generate employment opportunities to families who struggle and thus strengthen the community.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The following recommendations for further action to improve employee performance arise from the study findings. Business leaders need to recognize the unique needs of their employees. Factors that promote motivation for an employee may differ in comparison to another employee. The research participants collectively agreed that employee engagement was elevated when managers were attentive, showed appreciation, or rewarded their employees. Hence, I recommend that business leaders empower their employees by giving them a sense of independence, autonomy, and accountability relating to precise tasks in the organization. I also recommend that business leaders review each of the strategies outlined in the study findings to ascertain which of the employee motivation strategies can be best used to achieve organizational objectives.

Upon completion of the research, I plan to disseminate the findings from the study by providing the research participants with a PowerPoint presentation of the results. Additionally, study findings will be published by Walden in the ProQuest/UMI dissertation database. Furthermore, my goals are to submit the research findings to Business Source Premiere, Public Personnel Management, and the EBSCO. Moreover, I anticipate presenting the results of the research at seminars, conferences, and other related professional events.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The purpose of the research was to explore the successful strategies department store managers use to increase employee engagement in the Northeastern part of New York. Study findings were limited in relation to the Northeastern New York

geographical area and the population therein. Future researcher efforts might focus on employee engagement strategies in other geographical regions. Additionally, data collection consisted of participant interviews, archival documents, and publicly available documents. Recommendation for future research may include a mixed-method study in which both qualitative and quantitative data can be combined to acquire an in-depth analysis of the results. Similar to the present study, I recommend that the researcher collect qualitative data by conducting semistructured interviews to evaluate the experiences of each participant while simultaneously collecting quantitative data derived from surveys given to firms that meet financial performance criteria. The integration of both data research methods may allow a researcher to obtain a more detailed look at strategies that department store managers may use to increase employee engagement. As this was a qualitative single case study, I recommend further research using a multiple case study in retail organizations and analyzing each data set separately and comparing the similarities or correlations to increased productivity in business organizations.

### **Reflections**

The doctor of business administration program at Walden University was both arduous and mentality stimulating and challenging. Upon reflecting on the doctoral process, one of the lessons I learned is the value of cultivating resiliency and determination to achieve my objectives. During the doctoral journey, I experienced many challenges and trials; yet despite the tribulations, I learned to be resilient, and I developed an inner strength that was steadfast and resolute. In the process, I discovered my unique talents and skills that were unnoticed initially, but were developed along the journey. I



developed character traits and learned not to be complacent when pursuing such an honorable title and degree. The doctoral process has also enabled me to develop a sense of discipline, adaptability, and consistency, which were proper structures required to complete the doctoral program. The hallmark of my success was a commitment to the daily labor of working long hours day and night, avoiding diversions or distractions, and remaining and anchored through perseverance as I continued to strive to accomplish my visions to become a doctor.

As the researcher, the credibility and the validity of the research was the main priority. Recognizing my personal biases was central to ensure the credibility of the data. I acquired a profound comprehension of strategies that managers use to increase profitability in their organizations. By conducting the research, I had an opportunity to interview the five department managers who were cooperative and attentive during the interview. The value of this research effort is rooted in its importance to department store managers interested in promoting organizational productivity.

### **Conclusion**

Employee engagement is a foundational element that leads to increase productivity in businesses. Organizations with high levels of employee engagement are more efficient and effective than those that have low levels of employee engagement. I explored the strategies that department store managers use to increase employee engagement and productivity. I collected data through participant interviews, archival document, and publicly accessible documents to ensure validity and credibility of the research. In the study, I used two conceptual frameworks: Vroom's (1964) expectancy

theory of motivation and Kahn's (1990) engagement theory. In the data collection analysis, I found nine five themes of the topic consisting of manager-employee relation, employee motivation, ensuring employee wellbeing, employee empowerment, and establishing employee expectations increase employee engagement. The information shared by the participant were credible and confirmed to increase employee engagement in the organization. Managers who embrace the study findings will benefit from significantly enhanced organizational financial preparedness and profitability.

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### Appendix: Interview Protocol

This appendix includes the participant interview, consent forms, and interview questions. When the I began the interview process, the line of questions concerning the strategies department store managers use to increase employee engagement will be highlighted.

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Positional Title: \_\_\_\_\_

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Hello, my name is Samara Desir. I am a Doctoral Student with Walden University. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today, and I am extremely enthusiastic about having the opportunity to interview you today. The main focus of our interview today is to understand more about the strategies department store managers use to increase employee engagement. I would like to spend the next hour with you to get your perspective on the strategies department store managers use to increase employee engagement. I am conducting a voluntary semi-structured interview which will be tape recorded and transcribed verbatim afterwards, as this protects against bias and provides a permanent record of what was and was not said during our interaction. Via the use of open-ended questions, you have the opportunity share or describe your experiences on the strategies used to increase employee engagement. We consider you the expert at your work so there are no wrong answers to any of our questions. Because of your current position with the selected organization, you are best suited to share your experiences

**Commented [JKG1]:** Your document has only one appendix; therefore, the title is Appendix, rather than Appendix A. See APA 6<sup>th</sup> ed., 2.13.

Revise your Table of Contents and any in-text parenthetical references to the Appendix, also.

concerning strategies managers may use to improve employee engagement. While you answer questions to the best of your ability, please focus on the details pertaining to strategies department store managers use to increase employee engagement in your organization. Please feel free to be honest and critical even if the strategies implemented required improvement. Please be assured that the interview interaction is strictly confidential.

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at Walden University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete sign a consent form. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study. If you choose to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with the researcher or the University. The inform consent supplies sufficient information about the research assisting to make an informed decision regarding participation. You are also being asked for your permission to audiotape this interview, but if you wish not to be recorded, only notes will be taken. After an ongoing process of reflection and re-examination of the transcribed interview, I will send an email to you to review once the interview is transcribed to ensure accuracy and validity. To ensure accuracy of the data, I will conduct member checking in which you will have the opportunity to verify, edit, or revise the data from the interview transcript.



Please be aware that many people are increasingly protective of their privacy and wary of being tracked and thus might only volunteer if they see these assurances. To preserve data integrity, please be advised that the information will be saved in a locked cabinet and a flash drive for five years until completion of the research. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

**Interview Demographic Background:**

- What is your title in this department?
- Walk me through a typical week in your department?
- What is your educational background?

**Interview Questions:**

The following are the questions that I will use in the interview session. The benefits of the research will be to better understand the strategies department store managers use to increase employee engagement. The methods that will be used to meet this purpose include semi structure interview with 5 participants. Semistructured interviews consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored for the discovery or elaboration of the research topic.

Interview Questions

1. What management strategies have you used to increase employee engagement?
2. What challenges have you encountered when attempting to implement strategies of employee engagement and productivity?
3. What strategies did you find worked best to increase employee engagement?

4. How do you assess the success of management strategies meant to increase employee engagement and productivity?
5. What additional information would you like to share to address any aspects of employee engagement and productivity?