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Public Service Employee Perceptions of Leadership Behaviors That Engage or Disengage

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

A high percentage of U.S. employees do not engage in their work, resulting in lower productivity. U.S. corporations are losing more than $400–$500 billion per year because of low productivity at work. This phenomenological study involved an examination of leadership behaviors that engage or disengage employees in public service organizations. Kahn's conceptual frame of engagement and Maslow's hierarchy of needs motivation theory guided this study. The purpose was to determine why disengagement behavior continues despite extensive literature on the benefits of engagement and what organizations can do to encourage leadership behaviors that engage employees and discourage leadership behaviors that disengage them. Applying a descriptive phenomenological research method enabled an in-depth examination, based on their perceptions, of the lived experiences of employees of public service organizations. Interviews of a purposeful sample of 12 nonmanagement employees at a government agency in the northern region of Texas provided the study data. I used Giorgi's (2009) modified Husserl approach to identify potential themes and the constant comparative method to identify the final themes at the point where I reached data saturation. The study findings consisted of 8 leader behaviors that engage and 9 leader behaviors that disengage nonmanagement public service employees. If implemented, these findings have the potential to contribute to human resource management and the development of leaders skilled in managing engagement and improving employee productivity and satisfaction while lowering turnover costs.

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Dedication

I dedicate the study to friends and family who prayed for my success in this endeavor, to my sister who is a constant inspiration and kept me motivated to complete this journey, to my mother who waited years until I completed my study to get the attention she received from me in the past, and to my faculty mentors, Dr. Robert Levasseur and Dr. Marcia Steinhauer, whose patience and guidance in completing this journey I appreciate. Lastly, to Dr. Guy, who served as my sounding board and provided support that motivated me throughout the dissertation writing process.

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First, I give God the glory for enabling me with the stamina to continue this path through rugged terrain. I appreciate the Walden administrative staff for assisting in every way for my success. The Writing Center and the Walden librarians were helpful with supplying the necessary tools and suggestions in completing this research. I thank Dr. Kolberg for coming to my aid when I really needed support and help in moving forward with this project.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Employee engagement is significant to organizational success. Studies show that disengagement in the workplace is one of the many challenges for management (George, Howard-Grenville, Joshi, & Tihanyi, 2016) in workplaces around the world. The issue is so prevalent that scholars and social practitioners are showing a growing interest in understanding the causes and effects of employee engagement and disengagement, which continue despite substantial existing literature on engagement (Wollard & Shuck, 2011). Studies show that organizational survival is contingent on maximizing an organization's profits, but to maintain profitability, leaders must support engaging employees, (Kortmann, Gelhard, Zimmermann, & Piller, 2014; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). In addition, managing the balance between employee relations and work disengagement is important for organizations performance (Hill & Birkinshaw, 2012; Kortmann et al., 2014).

This qualitative study involved a phenomenological approach in exploring the human condition of engagement and disengagement in the workplace. The first major section in this chapter is the background, which includes literature from extant studies conducted on engagement and disengagement in the workplace. Next is the problem statement, describing occurrences in the workplace and evidence relative to problematic issues. The aim is to provide a concise statement of the connection to the problem and the focus of inquiry. The research question reflects the core of the research, as it informs the method and guides the stages of inquiry, analysis, and reporting of the results.

Background of Study

The background information in this section is an extension of previous knowledge drawn from a variety of articles in peer-reviewed journals. Osborne and Hammoud (2017) showed that baby boomers were more accessible to engage among all generational groups. Baby boomers prefer the assurance of long-term contracts and process-oriented environments in contrast to millennials, who are likely to turn over when they no longer receive anticipated recognition and promotions (Osborne & Hammond, 2017). Some researchers suggest that leaders considering human resource strategies for dismissing employees should consider removing the younger workers (e.g., millennials) instead of the older workers, such as baby boomers (Hayes, 2015).

Baby boomers are characteristically dedicated, diligent, and have high job satisfaction, which results in an intention to stay. Bakker (2011) said engaged employees connect to their work roles through dedication, have energy levels and job satisfaction, and immerse themselves in their work. Bakker also stated that committed leaders beget engaged employees. In contrast to the classic great man in leadership, the leaders today do not have heart (Bakker, 2011). Zenger and Folkman (2014) stated that leadership requires charisma and that some leaders possess this remarkable quality, which can set them apart and attract others to them, enabling them to lead others to achieve exceptional outcomes. However, most leaders do not possess this quality (Zenger & Folkman, 2014). Leaders without natural charm can motivate employees using six steps: (a) providing a clear vision of the organization’s future, (b) enhancing a positive one-on-one team relationship, (c) being a good listener, (d) connecting to people, (e) driving a focused process with on-time delivery and getting things done, and (f) using the power of their role in leading people (Zenger & Folkman, 2014, p. 26).

MacLeod and Clarke (2010) suggested engagement is a form of communication and mutual respect among employees, leaders, and the consumers served. Engagement creates corporate social responsibility (CSR), which represents a win–win strategy involving mutual obligation, understanding, and expectations for all parties (Fisher, Geenen, Jurcevic, McClintock, & Davis, 2009). Unfortunately, as Galagan (2015), Gruman, and Saks (2011) and Saks (2006) have argued, despite enormous sums of money spent on engagement consulting, software, and surveys, employee engagement scores have declined over the years, and the gap continues to deepen. Pech and Slade (2006) argued the problem of disengagement suggests that leaders have put more effort into measuring and analyzing significant factors of noncommitment to the workplace than into expanding on the causal or determining factors. Leaders should focus on the reasons of decreased engagement and worker behavior instead of the symptoms of the problem (Pech & Slade, 2006).

According to Grachev and Rakitsky (2013), relevant to the history of productivity, engagement, and commitment, Frederick Taylor took the lead in the early 1920s, challenging the conventional system of management and production in the manufacturing industry. Taylor proposed a theoretical and practical implementation of an improved method of organizational performance management approach (Grachev & Rakitsky, 2013). This concept led to *The Principles of Scientific Management,* which closed the gap between advancing technologies and old management practices in

Taylor’s time (Grachev & Rakitsky, 2013). Through the years, some critics portrayed Taylor in a negative light, accusing him of insensitivity toward the workers’ plight and obsession with efficiency to the detriment of employees (Hoopes, 2003; Lee, 1980; Simha & Lemak, 2010). In the effort to maximize productivity, Taylor’s approach emerged as a fundamental pillar for the technical and rationalization of work and motion. The result improved the productivity of labor and administration (Grachev & Rakitsky, 2013).

At first, Taylor’s methods were controversial in using time-series testing machines to test the speed of production of rigorous work, which led to employee issues and complaints. The employee complaints led to concerns about the human psychological side of work associated with machines. The conflict raised the issues of employees experiencing stress related to excessive overtime; they had to work faster to compete with the speed of the machines without a raise in pay (Grachev & Rakitsky, 2013). The debate about testing employees against the tools that led to the complaints affected Taylor’s bureaucratic system on productivity improvement.

Soon after this controversy, engineer and psychologist Gilbreth (1914) was an enthusiast of motion studies as Taylor emerged. Dersken (2014) and Graham (1997) asserted that Gilbreth created a change in connection to the human psychology side of work and industrial engineering that led to industrial psychology, which in the 21st century has developed into the discipline of engineering psychology. Gilbreth (1914) asserted, “The psychology is the means, the effect of the mind directing work upon the work, and the effect of the undirected and directed work upon the mind of the workers" (para. 1).

Gilbreth (1914) asserted that leaders should focus primarily on the worker and not the outcome of the work, providing tools, equipment, and methods to maximize each worker's output. In short, the worker is central to efficiency (Gilbreth, 1914). In contrast, Taylor's history of management relevant to production created adverse complications with employees' perception of control, and the results of his scientific strategies in the realignment of production outcomes in the manufacturing industry (Bridgman & Cummings, 2014).

Simha and Lemak (2010) argued that organizations are still lagging in continuous improvement in today's sociological and technological information age because they follow Taylor's ideology of scientific management operations based on obsolete manufacturing environments. Taylor created social, economic, and technological changes in the workplace in a postbureaucratic that are not relevant or effective in today's environments where employee engagement is significant to production improvement.

Problem Statement

A lack of employee engagement has cost private U.S. organizations up to $500 billion because of low productivity over the last decade (Galagan, 2015; Miller, 2014; O'Boyle & Harter, 2013). Recent studies show that 70% of U.S. workers have not been engaged or have been actively disengaged (Orr & Orr, 2014; Wilcher, 2018). To counteract this phenomenon, managers of large private organizations such as Amazon have used strong leadership concepts to motivate employees and keep them engaged to increase productivity (Breevaart et al., 2014; Lebel & Patil, 2018). In the public service sector, however, employees still experience low levels of engagement, causing low levels of productivity (Governing the State, N.d., para 5). Most people would agree that the purpose of private sector companies is to make a profit for shareholders, but the purpose of public sector institutions is to serve the public.

The general problem was that managers of public sector organizations remain unaware of the cost of low productivity to tax payers and the need to increase productivity to ensure the best value for spending public money (Henry, 2017). The specific problem was the need to understand the lived experiences of employees in public-sector organizations regarding what motivates their low levels of engagement and performance in work functions (Lavigna, 2015). Researchers have found that managers in the public sector believe that profitability is not a requirement or perhaps productivity is not a major concern (Governing the State, N.d., para, 5). Motivating employees is shown to have a positive effect on increasing engagement in private organizations (Lavigna, 2015), but managers in the public service sector remain unaware of why employees feel disengaged, thus creating a gap in the literature.

Purpose of the Study

Although a plethora of literature about employee engagement and disengagement exists, there was limited information from practitioners and researchers addressing why employees are not fully engaged (Saks, 2006). The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological study was to explore employees' lived experiences of engagement and disengagement and ascertain their perceptions of the leadership behaviors that engage or disengage employees in a public-sector organization. Leaders who engage workers achieve greater organizational results (Miller, 2014).

Research Questions

The overarching question was: What are public service employees' perceptions of leadership behaviors that engage or disengage? The subquestions were as follows:

RQ1: Based on the lived experiences of nonmanagement public service employees, what are their perceptions of leadership behaviors that engage public service employees?

RQ2: Based on the lived experiences of nonmanagement public service employees, what are their perceptions of leadership behaviors that disengage public service employees?

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of the engagement and disengagement framework was to describe constructs on personal engagement and counterproductive behaviors associated with disengagement in the workplace. Relevant theories on involvement associated with motivation and concepts of Maslow's (1943) motivation theory and Kahn's (1990) conceptual framework of an individual or personal engagement and disengagement at work were the guide for this study. The rationale for choosing the constructs of Maslow and Kahn's conceptual frame on the concept of human leadership traits and behaviors is that they relate to motivation, psychological, and physical dispositions of people. Miles and Huberman (1994) referred to the conceptual framework as part of the chosen research design that guides the study: "The framework explains, either in narrative or written form, the main factors, concepts, or variables, and the presumed relationship among them" (p. 18). In contrast, Ivey (2015) asserted that the conceptual framework guides the research based on the purpose and the problem under study.

Nature of the Study

In this traditional qualitative study I used a phenomenological design to explore and report the lived experiences of public service employees based on their perceptions of leadership behaviors that engage or disengage them. The qualitative phenomenological method was appropriate for this study because it involved exploring the psychological aspects of management and employees' actions and to understand the lived experiences of employees' cognitive and emotional perceptions through recurring themes and concepts. The target population for this purposive study included public service nonmanagement employees. The study consisted of 12 participants with 3 to 5 years of experience working in the selected civic service organization. The interview sessions took place in a private setting acceptable to each participant. The goal was to understand how employees view leadership behavioral styles that engage or disengage them.

The data collection, Giorgi's (2009) modification of Husserl's qualitative phenomenological design, was the interpretative analysis approach for this study because it allowed the formation of rich, thick data in a thematic process. Other qualitative methods, such as ethnography, grounded theory, and case study, were not appropriate because they do not strictly involve gathering personal lived experiences of individuals regarding a phenomenon. Based on perception as the first knowledge that validates the sources, phenomenology opens the windows of the discovery of things (Moustakas, 1994, p. 53).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they are used in this narrative to describe the study of employee engagement and disengagement in the workplace:

Amalgamation: A melting pot of a variety of employees combined into one group. It is analogous to a variety of diverse cultures within an organization or a community of people as one group or environment (OED Online, 2016).

Assumptions: Statements of opinion as logic or reasonable beliefs but without proving verification. The premises must be valid, or the research is meaningless (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

Descriptive phenomenological analysis: A qualitative method used to understand participants' perspectives and views of a social phenomenon. The phenomenological study depends on lengthy interviews with selected participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, pp. 108–139).

Disengagement: An act of exiting or detaching oneself that involves two separate, but related processes: leaving (i.e., no longer going to work at the same organization) or disengaging psychologically but continuing to work at the same organization. Psychological disengagement might happen before, after, or during a physical departure from an organization (Rouse, 2016).

Engagement: Kahn (1990) described *employee engagement* as connecting organizational members to their designated roles at work. Kapoor and Meachem (2012) described *engagement* as an employee's desire to exceed management's expectation.

Employee perception: If employees experience positive behaviors within an organization, they will stay loyal and committed to the organization. However, negative attitudes of the company can cause talented employees to leave the firm for employers who have their best interests in mind (Lavigna, 2015).

Employee perspective: An employee's perception of fair practices and credibility related to their well-being. Employees want to feel valued and that their contributions to the success of the organization are of value. They also want to know the expectations leaders have and how well they are performing in their job roles (Piening, Baluch, & Ridder, 2014).

Eupsychian: Maslow's theory of eupsychian management suggested the importance of managers supporting their subordinates to build them up to becoming self-actualized so that all employees had the opportunity to be all they could be (Landis, Hill, & Harvey, 2014).

Federal and local government employees: Federal government employees include the Department of Agriculture, National Institutes of Health, National Aeronautics Space Administration, and the U.S. Agency for International Development. In contrast, local government, public employees are police officers, transportation workers, engineers, state employees, and city officials (Fernandez & Pitts, 2011).

Leadership behaviors: Actions and decisions that influence followers' daily work engagement, which shapes their productive performance outcomes (Breevaart et al., 2014)

Public service employees: Workers who serve public sector employers, such as federal and state government agencies (Fernandez & Pitts, 2011).

Assumptions

Assumptions are statements that are not provable. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) posited, "Assumptions are so basic that, without them, the research problem itself could not exist" (p. 62). The following were assumptions in this study. First, I assumed that the participants would answer the interview questions truthfully without reservation or bias. There was the assumption that the interview questions would get to the heart of the shared experiences of the participants. I conducted a field study to ensure the appropriate processes and protocols were used for creating the interview questions.

Scope and Delimitations

The range of the study includes professional office workers (i.e., support, supervisors, and engineer planners) in a civic/nonprofit organization in the vital north area of Dallas, Texas. From a population of 300 employees, a purposively selected group of 15 participants provided the study data through in-depth interviews to reach data saturation (Francis et al., 2010). This phenomenological design included face-to-face meetings to collect data from the participants about their lived experiences at work. Employee perceptions of organization leaders influence the visibility of the company and the ability to attract talent. Employees' knowledge and perspectives of leadership behaviors in a public service environment were the focus of this inquiry.

Limitations

As suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2005), constraints are factors a researcher has no control over that are, sometimes, unavoidable. A variety of situations might occur or offset the outcome of a study. There are limited sources of literature on employee perspectives on engagement. Also, the inability to generalize the study findings and the possibility of data collection and analysis errors could be a limitation. The principal aim of examining limitations of the study was to offer the opportunity to assess the research for limits and weaknesses. If a significant restriction arose that weakened the review, it would be included in the discussion in Chapter 5 (e.g., in the recommendation for future study).

Significance of the Study

The study branches from the belief that when leaders in organizations succeed in engaging workers, they achieve more significant results (Miller, 2014; Truss, Alfes, Delbridge, Shantz, & Soane, 2014). The target population consists of nonmanagement professionals with 3–5 years of company experience. Engagement has become popular because of the dual promises of enhancing employee benefits and organization performance (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Truss et al., 2014).

This study may be significant to human resource practice in the public sector. The literature on employee engagement is massive, but limited information on employee disengagement suggests a gap in the literature relative to participation in the workplace. MacLeod and Clarke (2010) asserted that a researcher movement is in place to assist government and civic organizations with new strategies for creating effective approaches for managing disengagement in public service organizations. A social implication of this study is that it could result in the inclusion of low-level employee voices in decision-making on matters that impact employees' well-being and careers.

Significance to Practice

This study may be significant to human resource managers and leadership teams. When managers support and embrace effective methods in fostering authentic leadership styles, it strengthens organizations. Studies show that trustworthy managers with authentic management styles provide an image that is good for public relations. Such leaders influence employees to emulate them as capable leaders (Beu & Buckley, 2004).

Significance to Theory

This study of public service employee engagement and disengagement may be significant to the theoretical foundations of social and cognitive dissonance. In addition to the conceptual frames of Kahn's (1990) employee engagement in the workplace, Maslow's (1943) theory of the motivation to work suggests the importance of the concept of personal cognition. Kahn's and Maslow's philosophies are significant because this study may shed light on the applicability of these theories to the understanding of leadership behaviors that lead to public service employee engagement and disengagement. The aim of this research as it relates to philosophy was to explore the premise of a theoretical and conceptual framework to identify how management behaviors and leadership styles affect employees' perceptions and perspectives of engagement and disengagement—more specifically, how they influence public service employees.

A leader's social skill set and style of management influences employees' performance outcomes and perspectives. Previous studies (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1979) have suggested that social cognitive theory relates to Bandura's self-efficacy and self-regulation perspectives. Also, self-regulation and self-reflection are the cognitive perspectives of employees' intrinsic needs for appreciation, inclusion, and motivation in the workplace. Kahn's (1990) employee engagement theory addresses employee engagement as individuality in the identification of their work and skill efficacy.

Significance to Social Change

Researchers have found many reasons for employee disengagement, including bad management. A nonsupportive environment includes behaviors by management that inhibit an employee's ability to be productive (Lewis, 2016). The findings of this study could lead to the identification of leadership behaviors that, when implemented, could improve engagement and reduce disengagement among employees in the public sector.

Summary and Transition

In Chapter 1, I presented the problem that there is a lack of knowledge on how to create effective strategies for engaging employee in private and public workplace organizations. The background of the study included a brief review of the research on employee engagement and disengagement in the workplace. The purpose of this study on employee disengagement and commitment was to report the lived experiences of employees and their perspectives on withdrawal from work tasks in a public service organization. A phenomenological design was appropriate in guiding the research because of the concerns of subjectivity in the interpretation of shared meaning among selected participants (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). The primary technique for collecting date was observation and interviews of nonmanagement professionals in a public service organization. This study was guided by a need to understand how employees cope in an unsupported environment on employee disengagement.

Chapter 2 represents an exhaustive search of articles on employee engagement and disengagement. The collected articles detail issues associated with engagement, motivation, and disengagement in public and service sector organizations and include employees' attitudes and perceptions of the leadership styles that positively or negatively influence employee performance levels. Chapter 3 includes a description of the methodology, procedures, and approach to conducting a phenomenological study on the lived experiences of the participants.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem in the current study was that public service managers lack the knowledge to create effective strategies to engage employees in public service and civic organizations. Miller (2014); a 2013 Gallup poll report revealed 70% of U.S. workers were actively not committed or not engaged in the workplace. A 2015 Gallup poll nationwide report showed an average of 32% of employees was engaged. In contrast, 50.8% were not engaged, while 17.2% intended to disengage. The 2015 report showed that employee engagement is declining and disengagement is increasing. Similarly, Adkins (2015) found that the high percentage of non-engaged U.S. workers persists. Information in the 2015 Gallup report comprised 80,844 interviews of working adults and found workers categorized as engaged, not engaged, and disengaged with intent.

Saks and Gruman (2014) defined the engaged and counter behaviors of employee commitment building based on Kahn's (1990) and Rich, Lepine, and Crawford's (2010) engagement constructs, which described personal engagement as using hands, heads, and heart in the performance of work. Engagement is a complete representation of the inner self, whereas previous constructs defined engagement as job satisfaction or job involvement (Saks & Gruman, 2014). In contrast, non-engaged and disengaged employees experience minimum collaboration with their supervisors and have low attendance. Employees were intending to disengage despite management support, and they still showed up to work but had low attendance and poor performance. This section of Chapter 2 includes the introduction, the reiteration of the proposed problem, the purpose statement, the literature search strategy, and the conceptual framework. This proposed study may be relevant to the impact of disengagement in the workplace because of a paucity of literature on leadership behaviors that lead to engagement from the perspective of service employees. The purpose of this literature review is to provide a general overview of information from journals within the past 5 years related to the topic of employee engagement and disengagement in public sector organizations.

Literature Search Strategy

The purpose of the literature search was to collect resources related to employee engagement. I chose topic-related keywords to search for relevant journal articles and to exclude those that were not relevant to the study. The primary search terms included the following: *engagement in the workplace, employee engagement, employee disengagement, employee motivation, human resource management, qualitative literature, low levels of engagement, public services organizations, leadership roles, manager behaviors, employee perception, phenomenological studies,* and *workplace commitment*. I used the AND truncation with keywords and an asterisk wild card to search terms automatically set in the Walden University databases, which are Emerald Management, ProQuest, Sage Premier, Business Source Complete, and ABI/INFORM Complete to find relevant studies about engagement and disengagement. Also, I counted as extant literature a variety of qualitative articles on the research topic of disengagement and engagement in the workplace as reliable sources to guide the study. The range of articles consisted of classic articles from 1943 to contemporary studies up to 2017. I did not use the Medline search system, as it relates more to the medical and nursing field.

However, the CINAHL proved to be an excellent tool to find qualitative studies related to the psychological nature of engagement and disengagement behaviors.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual frameworks for this study were Maslow's (1943) motivation theory and Kahn's (1990) conceptual frame of engagement and disengagement at work. The rationale for choosing the constructs of Maslow's and Kahn's conceptual frame on the concept of human leadership traits and behaviors was that they relate to motivation and psychological and physical dispositions of people, which aided in conducting the study to understand employee engagement in the workplace.

The purpose of this framework was to explain how concepts of engagement and theoretical frames of motivation set the foundation for this study. Ivey (2015) asserted that the conceptual framework guides the research based on the purpose and problem under study. In contrast, Miles and Huberman (1994) referred to the conceptual framework as related to theories, outlooks, biases, and explanations that informed the research. The framework is a part of the chosen research design that guides the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). "The framework explained, either in narrative or written form, the main factors, concepts, or variables, and the presumed relationship among them" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.18).

This conceptual framework of employee engagement was significant because it guided me as I developed the study. The qualitative phenomenological design aided in the inquiry of employee perspectives on behaviors that engage or disengage them. Engagement and employees' perceptions are relevant to the styles of leadership and the frameworks weigh heavily on Kahn's (1990) psychology of engagement and Maslow's (1964) needs theory and self-actualization. The following is a description of the conceptual and theoretical frames of Maslow and Kahn.

The theoretical and conceptual framework represents a combination of concepts related to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory and safety in the workplace and Kahn's (1990) concept of personal engagement and disengagement as it relates to leadership and employee behaviors in performance and engagement support. These serve as the foundation for this study.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow postulated an arrangement of human needs in a hierarchical flow that accounts for human needs to be accomplished or satisfied when the basic physiological needs (e.g., hunger) and the need for safety are complete, then the higher-order (i.e., intrinsic) needs emerge (Maslow, 1943). The rationale for choosing the constructs of Maslow's (1943) and Kahn's (1990) concepts of human leadership traits and behaviors is that they relate to motivation and psychological and physical dispositions of people, which aided me in conducting a study to understand employee engagement in the workplace. Intrinsic motivation suggests a higher calling for people driven by purpose through self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Maslow's ideas on self-improvement and identification remain a clear perspective in academic research (Krems, Kenrick, & Neel, 2007). Maslow's positive motivation, integrated with the cognitive aspect of actors and leadership's power to sustain and manage engagement could enhance individual self-actualization and employee retention

(Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kahn, 1990; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In summation, the Maslow ideology of the grand management theory (e.g., eupsychian management) rested in self-determination theory from his views on intrinsic motivation.

Kahn's Conceptualization of Personal Engagement

Kahn (1990) described work engagement as how people apply their physical, cognitive, and emotional selves at work. Kahn asserted that disengagement was how people, in the same manner, withdraw from work and do not perform as expected. In relation to personal involvement, Kahn (1990) suggested it was possible for employees to experience both high and low engagement from a psychological perspective (p. 694). However, Macey and Schneider (2008) identified previous studies showing Kahn's constructs of engagement as controversial relative to a theoretical definition, but the meaning remains ambiguous among academics and practitioner researchers.

Studies show the concept of engagement as a bridge between Maslow's theory, the hierarchy of needs, and disengagement. Therefore, theoretical propositions relating Kahn's conceptual frame to motivation theory in association to engagement are still relevant in current workplace research (Galagan, 2015; Miller, 2014; Shuck & Wollard, 2008). In contrast, Brajer-Marczak (2014) argued that practitioners and scholars have not developed a unified definition of the term *employee commitment*, but psychology has grounded the elaborations of the theoretical aspect. Kahn (1990) defined a construct for employee engagement describing how individuals delve into the psychological aspect of their work tasks. Kahn claimed that employees could be committed in multidimensional phases of their work behaviors. In contrast, Brajer-Marczak (2014) argued that employee commitment was conceptualized as a positive double-sided relationship between employee and employer in which all parties respect each other's mutual needs and support for satisfying all.

In a review of Kahn's domain on engagement, the importance of understanding, engagement, and disengagement at work were central to meaningfulness, safety, and availability of career opportunities. The safety aspect is the ability to show oneself without fear or adverse consequences to self-image or status of career. Moreover, in a working environment, the term meaningfulness is defined as the return on investment of an engaging experience and is expected by employees (Kahn, 1990). Serrano and Reichard (2011) assessed Kahn's theory to identify how leaders could leverage employees by linking two factors: energy and involvement in the workplace. Kahn associated engaged employees as assertive employees who express themselves in the workplace as conditions dictate. Kahn posited employees would either become engaged or disengaged at work. Serrano and Reichard (2011) asserted that the ability of organizations to support an engaged workforce is a powerful tool in employee retention.

Studies have shown that Kahn's concept of engagement implies a bridge between Maslow's theory, a hierarchy of needs, and disengagement. Therefore, theoretical propositions relating Kahn's conceptual frame to motivation theory in association with engagement are still relevant in current workplace research (Galagan, 2015; Miller, 2014; Shuck & Wollard, 2008).

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review was to establish an overview of general information on employee engagement and disengagement in the workplace. The aim of this research was to explore the lived experiences of public service employees' perceptions and perspectives on management support and leadership behaviors that practice fairness in collaboration with fair performance rating. Leaders have realized that highly engaged environments improve and enhance job performance in organizations (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011; Fleming & Asplund, 2007; Rich et al., 2010).

This section includes an introduction, the reiteration of the proposed problem, the purpose statement, the literature search strategy, and the conceptual framework. This study may be relevant to the impact of disengagement in the workplace because of a paucity of literature on leadership behaviors that lead to disengagement from the perspective of service employees. Furthermore, this review encompasses discussions on the construct of employee disengagement and essential work performance improvement strategies. This section provides an extensive examination of significant variables and concepts related to employee engagement.

Commitment to Engagement

The existing literature on employee disengagement suggests that employees who have detached themselves from their jobs have the propensity to behave unethically. Moore, Detert, Trevino, Baker, and Mayer (2012) suggested that there are moral reasons some employees disengage at work. The aim of this research was to understand the behaviors of employees who disengage from work. Four studies have been conducted to examine employees with behaviors of moral disengagement. By using this approach, Moore et al. (2012) sought to determine the relationship between moral detachment and engagement.

Moore et al.'s (2012) findings showed that self-reported behaviors of fraud and self-serving decision-making among employees, including supervisors they report to, were evident. Moore et al. (2012) concluded that researchers should seek to understand employees' propensity to misbehave at work. In the implications for theory, research, and practice, Moore et al. recommended that the theoretical framework of moral disengagement in the workplace needed further study, adopting Bandura's (1986) theory of self-regulation as a conceptual framework that may lead the understanding of how different approaches operate and explain engagement and disengagement. Harrell-Cook, Levitt, and Grimm (2017) argued that capturing employee commitment to engagement is vital to organization success. Therefore, the intellectual foundation of employee engagement may have been misplaced or misguided among some practitioners and scholars (Harrell-Cook et al., 2017).

In contrast, Krems et al. (2017) examined engagement and disengagement through the lens of a drive similar to self-determination to examine the functionality of outcomes as they relate to an association of maximum actualization. What could it mean to reach maximum actualization, when the plateau has ended? The findings suggest the heightened sense of self-actualization would unlikely function without cost and benefits. Also, the outcomes of success, status, and money were related to a heightened self-drive.

Krems et al. argued that people do not view other types of well-being (e.g., eudaimonic, or hedonic) as linked to furthering any other functional outcomes.

Kocjan (2015) explored the connection between engagement and passion by examining the differences between the two psychological constructs as they relate to work. The findings showed that the perceptive view of employee passion as it relates to work refers to the individual's identity related to their work, and the concept of engagement is a state of mind relative to work. The most noticeable overlap that exists between involvement and passion suggests a dominant motivational force of employees engaging at work and strong identification with the job (Kocjan, 2015; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002). In contrast to the relationship between motivation and passion, studies have shown the practical value of employee engagement as a two-part model of passion. Kocjan (2015) suggested broader scope theories (such as the self-determination theory) would unify common findings from both theoretical backgrounds and overcome the repetitious risk of multiplication of concepts in positive psychology (p. 241).

On the other hand, Barrus et al. (2010) asserted disengagement in the workplace is an important concept to study along with positive engagement because disengaged employees tend to be counterproductive and thus have a negative impact on the organization (Barrus et al., 2015). More importantly, organizational leaders are more interested in engagement and disengagement behaviors today because there are resourceful strategies available to improve performance in the workplace (Harter et al., 2002; Saks & Gruman, 2010; Shuck et al., 2011).

Employee Engagement

MacLeod and Clarke (2010) asserted employee engagement is a workplace approach that should result in shared conditions of trust for all members of an organization. The idea is to influence employee commitment among the workers to promote the organization's values and goals, which creates the ideal results of employee commitment to the organization's success. More importantly, this implies that engagement and commitment are about trust, integrity, and active two-way commitment between organizations and their members (MacLeod & Clarke, 2010).

MacLeod and Clark (2010) defined engagement as showing the mutual ground of respect for what people can do in the company and given the right context that serves the employee; the consumer in which the company serves and the organization itself (p. 10). Slack, Corlett, and Morris (2015) explored employee engagement using the CSR model to create a social exchange perspective on organizational participation. The objective of applying the social exchange theory was to explore the volitions that individual employees perceived about engagement. Moreover, the rationale for the research was to examine CSR from the perspective of the impediments relevant to engagement. The impediments included poor communication in management, low visibility of the culture, and a lack of strategic alignment in the organization.

The face-to-face interviews showed evidence that employees had different views about CSR that related to levels of engagement and commitment. Finally, the extreme was the dissident or apathetic employees who fell into neither category (Slack et al., 2015). More importantly, dissident, and apathetic employees are one of the reasons companies recognize the importance of attending to employees' needs and psychological development for reasons of enhancing commitment (Simha & Lemak, 2010). Employee needs suggest this study may be a valuable source because it relates to the potential voice of employees' ability to voice their opinions on social engagement perspectives. Moreover, the literature shows this to be a significant factor in engaging employees because of the correlation between commitment and engagement behaviors (Wirtz & Jerger, 2016).

In a previous study, Maslach, Leiter, and Schaufeli (2001) described disengagement and personal engagement in many ways. The aim was to test the theory of engagement by developing an independent construct on an empirical scale. The findings showed mental resilience and dedication as references to vigor and the experience of a sense of euphoria, enjoyment, and pride for engaged employees. However, Brajer-Marczak (2014) argued both practitioners and scholars have yet to develop a precise definition regarding engagement and employee commitment. However, the most recent theoretical ground for employee commitment at work, developed by Kahn (1990), suggests that engagement is going beyond the call of duty to perform work tasks.

Dávila and Piña-Ramírez (2014) argued that the definitions and explanations of employee engagement are abundant as the authors who proposed them. Basically, disengagement and employee engagement inform the association as emotional, rationale, and practical experiences. In contrast, Ram and Prabhakar (2011) asserted that employee engagement is a strategic driver of organizational change and workplace improvement.

Approaches to Employee Engagement

Saks and Gruman (2015) asserted the definition of employee engagement had been a troublesome construct from the beginning of its initial definition. Today, the confusion continues because of a lack of consensus among scholars and practitioners about a distinctive definition. The question is, why are scholars so ambivalent about contributing to a theoretical consensus that will explain the employee and organizational relationships (Saks & Gruman, 2015)? Other research showed the problem is due partly to the overlapping concepts of engagement relative to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job involvement (Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter, 2011).

Avolio and Gardner (2005) conducted a study relative to authentic leadership and morale. The study reflected positive forms of leadership behaviors and styles that are right for the organization. Currently, authentic leadership helps to foster a new self-awareness and genuinely improves the positive relationship with stakeholders, customers, and employees. Public and private organizations for the past decade has experienced challenges in overcoming chaotic environments and constant shifts in domestic and global marketplaces. Avolio and Gardner asserted such challenges require the precipitated focus on restoring confidence, hope and optimism and ability to bounce back to competent and ethical management.

Relative to ethical leadership, Fida et al. (2015) examined disengagement through the lens of morality to understand aggression and deviant behaviors in the workplace. The aim was to understand employee disengagement by observing counterproductive behaviors at work. A structural equation model tested a sample of 1,147 Italian workers.

The data collection included self-administered questionnaires from a sample of 53.5% women at age 40, and the majority were high school graduates, and 30% had a bachelor's degree. Fida et al. argued there are moral reasons employees disengage at work in contrast to committed employees in the organization. Addressing psychological behaviors, and moral disengagement, created specific social-cognitive constructs that reflected social behaviors that showed wrongful, deviant, and antisocial behaviors in the altering of the quality of attitudes in the work environment. The findings showed moral disengagement (MD) as a contributing factor in counterproductive work behavior.

Participation and Attitude

Ineffective management suggests a prevalence of dysfunctional management behaviors that influence employees. Counterproductive behaviors affect employee's attitudes and result in absences, turnover levels, and ideas of the various internal issues with management. Surveys have established links with productivity and sharpening to a high correlation with individual, groups and organizational functioning. Musgrove, Ellinger, and Ellinger (2014) examined the influence of the practices of dysfunctional behaviors in the management of disengagement of employees, which has contributed to the average loss of $1 million of organizations in the year 2014.

Saks and Gruman (2015) said employee's behaviors relative to engagement and disengagement are a management problem. This phenomenon has become the hot topic in contemporary management. However, there continues to be a lack of consensus on the theoretical construct of employee engagement. Also, there are concerns about the validity of measurement results in previous studies on the disengagement phenomenon (Saks & Gruman, 2010).

Employees disposition impacts commitment and job satisfaction. In contrast, Schaufeli et al. (2002) described job satisfaction and job engagement as a feeling positively in a positive state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption at work (p. 74). Other researchers suggested here is a link between effective employee performance and organizational sustainability outcomes. Therefore, job satisfaction represents the antecedent of employee dedication to commitment and self-preservation at work to handle challenges as they arise (Bakker et al., 2008; Matteson & Kennedy, 2016).

Despite a plethora of studies on strategic approaches to encouraging engagement in the workplace, the problem continues to exist. Furthermore, employee attitudes toward engagement and disengagement have worsened in the workplace, because of a decline in the economy, resulting from the market crash in 2008 (Guest, 2011; Shuck & Wollard, 2008). Although there is minimal literature regarding the inclusion of employee opinions or voices on engagement and disengagement, this suggests a gap in the literature because of the missing voices of service employees; more specifically based on their views and perspectives in combination about expressions of a lack of insight of the leader behaviors that engage or disengage public service employees.

The positive aspects of leader collaboration with employees, as suggested by Bakker (2011), the engaged employees experienced better health and more positive emotions while decreasing exhaustion and burnout. In addition, a prior study by Bakker et al. (2008) tested the theory of engagement by defining the concept as an independent construct and developed an empirical test scale that showed vigor, dedication, and absorption, that reflected high engagement, mental resilience and dedication as significant as a sense of pride and challenge" (p. 3). Although the findings were positive, the study showed a correlation between engagement and burnout.

Disengagement

Pech and Slade (2006) noted the widespread disengagement in workplace conditions, reflecting poor morale and deficient performance, which is particularly relevant. In organizations with limited opportunities for recognition, achievements, responsibilities, and advancement (Pech & Slade, 2006). When employees do not experience opportunities to advance, they become disengaged. Consequently, there is a huge price tag on job dissatisfaction and disengagement of over $500 billion per year (Galagan, 2015; Miller, 2014).

Studies by Brockner and Greenberg (1990), Coffin (2003), Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt, and Barrick (2004), Mount, Ilies, and Johnson (2006), Murphy (1993), Nair and Vohra (2010), and Vardi and Weitz (2004) supported this research on engagement as a significant source for in addressing how morality played a significant role in the management of employee engagement and disengagement in the workplace. Their findings suggested that disengaged employees who have detached themselves from their jobs had the propensity to behave unethically. Coffin conducted four studies to examine employees with disengaged moral behaviors. The researchers sought to test the relationship between moral detachment and engagement. The findings showed relevant theoretical constructs of moral disengagement linked to behaviors of fraud and self-serving decision making among employees.

In contrast, Fida et al. (2015) examined disengagement through the lens of morality because it aids in understanding aggression and deviant behaviors in the workplace. The researchers described moral disengagement (MD) as a counterproductive work behavior. The researchers argued there are moral reasons why some employees disengage at work in contrast to those that are committed to the organizations. The researcher aimed to understand employee disengagement by observing counterproductive behaviors at work. In the context of psychological behaviors and moral disengagement, the behaviors were specific to social-cognitive constructs that reflect social behaviors that demonstrate wrongful, deviant, and antisocial behaviors in the altering of the quality of attitudes in the work environment. The authors recommended with regards to proper disengagement research and practice, a theoretical frame for moral disengagement should receive further study.

The focus of employee's perception of positive engagement suggested a sense of euphoria of enjoyment when employees find meaningful work. Moreover, other constructs have been under development since this empirical testing (Bakker et al., 2008). Similarly, meaningful work is significant to employees who have their own personal and life goals. Therefore, an employee's perceptions of meaning with regards to work according to Holbeche and Springett (2003), it is a core link to engagement.

Ayers (2013) asserted public managers wrestle with how to influence organizational performance. Building on the Federal Agency Goal Alignment performance appraisal tool to improve organizational performance, Ayers examined factors that could allow for goal alignment agency-wide. The alignment procedure required two approaches, embedding of strategic goals into employee performance plans, and how the knowledge of their work related to agency goals. Analysis of the data, taken from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) evaluation tool for federal agency appraisal programs, resulted in the outcome that leadership support of the program was the determining factor of plan alignment.

This approach should include a systematic evaluation of the organization's engagement practices conducted preferably through a survey method, to construct a variety of approaches to build engagement improvements over time (Lavigna, 2015). Therefore, the collection of data for this current study is relevant more to the impact of the disengagement in the workplace because of a paucity of literature on the discussion of issues about disengagement from the perspective of service employees. The theoretical and conceptual frame as mentioned in the earlier section, employee performance, engagement, and behaviors of leadership styles in the workplace are the variables sought for in this review.

The literature on disengagement suggests, employees who have detached themselves from their jobs, have the propensity to behave unethically. Moore et al. (2012) suggested, there are moral reasons why some employees disengage at work in contrast to those that are. The aim was to understand the behaviors of employees who disengage themselves at work. There were four studies conducted to examine employees with behaviors of moral disengagement. By using this approach, they sought to prove the relationship between moral detachment and engagement. Relevant theoretical constructs of the morally disengaged network showed a significant contrast.

The findings proved that self-reported behaviors of fraud, self-serving decision making among employees, including supervisors they report to, were evident. The researcher concluded that scholar-practitioners should seek more to understand the propensity to misbehave at work. The implications for theory, research, and practice recommended that the theoretical framework of moral disengagement in the workplace need further study. In contrast, Bandura's (1986) suggested that the theory of self-regulation as a conceptual framework may lead to the understanding of how different approaches operate and explain the theoretical construct. Therefore, the collection of data on this current study is relevant more to the impact of the disengagement in the workplace because of a paucity of literature on the discussion of issues about disengagement from the perspective of service employees.

Job Satisfaction

Budihardjo (2015) suggested motivating employees is a crucial act in the enrichment and fulfillment of workers in the workforce. In contrast, to Wefald and Downey (2009), engagement shows a correlation to job satisfaction, which suggests the possibility of a replicate study. The study showed the 3-factor analysis of vigor; the dedication and absorption were the underlying factors that linked engagement and academic satisfaction. Their data sampling comprised university students using the questionnaire approach to measure vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). At first, Salanova, Agut, and Peiro (2005) said the findings in the study were conclusive. Moreover, the findings suggested the 3-factor structure linking engagement and satisfaction needed more study for validation. Researchers showed engagement as a separate construct of satisfaction and proved not to be a logical link to academic satisfaction (Wefald & Downey, 2009).

This study offered no information regarding the proposed topic regarding employees' perception of leadership behaviors of that result in engagement or disengagement. Previous studies suggest leadership behaviors relate to a conceptual framework that is related to a conceptual frame of engagement and disengagement in the workplace. Therefore, the collection of data for this study may be important in determining the impact of leader's behavior in the workplace because of the paucity of literature on the employee's perspectives on the topic of disengagement at work.

Similarly, Susanty and Miradipta (2013) stated that job satisfaction is an appositive emotional state when it results from a positive job performance review or assessment. Consequently, employees experience pleasure at the moment and when it happens, it increases the level of job satisfaction. Susanty and Miradipta, using a structural equation modeling test on 200 managerial and non-managerial staff at an organization in India, showed the effects of job performance and employee commitment to the organization. The findings suggested that when employees are pleased with positive feedback, their attitude towards work improves thus creating greater organizational commitment.

In contrast, MacLeod and Clarke (2010) suggested there is an association between organization performance and high levels of employee engagement. Higher levels of profits and higher levels of employee engagement result when leaders give employees to a voice in the organization. This in turn increases employees' work ethic, which leads to enhanced organizational outcomes (MacLeod & Clarke, 2010, p. 30). Kahn (1990) who coined engagement as the "harnessing of organizational member selves to their work roles; when engaging, people express themselves in their work." Other literature on motivation, Budihardjo (2015) suggested motivating employees is a crucial act in the enrichment and fulfillment of workers in the workforce. In contrast, Wefald and Downey's (2009) research is a replicated study that challenged the 3-factor in the analysis of engagement and academic satisfaction. Schaufeli et al. (2002) hypothesized engagement as a persistent and positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment linked to engagement, and academic satisfaction resulting from their 3-factor analysis.

The study showed the 3-factor analysis of vigor; the dedication and absorption were the underlying factors that linked engagement and academic satisfaction. Their data sampling comprised university students using the questionnaire approach to measure vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). At first, Salanova et al. (2005), said the findings in the study were conclusive; the findings suggested the 3-factor structure linking engagement and satisfaction, however, needed more study for validation. Therefore, the researchers suggested engagement is a separate construct of satisfaction and proved not to be a logical link to academic satisfaction (Wefald & Downey, 2009). This study offered no information regarding the current topic on employee attitudes and the behaviors associated with management's support on engagement. The study proved to be vigorous for a quantitative study with varying degrees of specific results, and it was interesting. However, the phenomenological approach does not require this kind of vigor.

Meaningful Work

Vigoda-Gadot, Eldor, and Schohat (2013) examined employee engagement to understand what it means for public service administration in theory and practice. The researchers sought to understand whether employee engagement is meaningful or not. In a constant comparative analysis approach, the researchers examined the foundation of the project. The data collection involved a cross-sectional survey of 593 employees from a private sector company. The findings showed employee engagement is gaining recognition as an added value in obtaining support as a valid operational process in the study of engagement in public sector management.

Okhuysen et al.'s (2015) research focused on the theory of work in the area of organization and management. The objective was to study different lenses in a variety of disciplines to examine how different disciplines approached the questions about work and a dynamic, engaged work environment. Okhuysen et al. (2015) argued the workplace serves the context of individual psychological processes such as the construction and the development of identity. Also, within the context of work, it can be treated as an enabler or disabler of creative activity, and as either supportive completion of the task. Creativity enacts agendas, goals, social interaction, and organization missions. Thus, in the context of work-related issues and the work itself, requires responding to a call for attention to the task at hand to encourage engagement and an agenda for a dynamic workplace (Okhuysen et al., 2015).

Public Service Leadership

Public managers struggle with how to influence organizational performance. Lavigna (2015) asserted public leaders realized employee engagement and well-being, linked as drivers of commitment resulted in actual attendance and fewer health-related absences. Organizational leaders are more interested in engagement and disengagement today because it is a helpful strategy to improve employee work performance (Saks & Gruman, 2010; Shuck, Reio, & Rocco, 2011). Highly engaged environments improve and enhance job performance in organizations (Christian et al., 2011; Fleming & Asplund, 2007; Rich et al., 2010; Richman, 2006). Therefore, dedicated employees have the intense sense of pride, significance, inspiration, and determination to approach challenges as they arise.

Schaufeli et al. (2002) described job satisfaction and job engagement "as highly energized, willing employees performing at work with work-related state of mind that demonstrates vigor, and commitment. Conversely, the disengaged employees with bad attitudes can affect the working environment, thereby causing friction and poor morale.

Christensen, Paarlberg, and Perry (2017) investigated the concerns of public service leaders on how to effectively motivate service employees. The objective was to improve job performance. The researchers used the motivation selection tool to review previous lessons on practice to create new strategies. The researcher found new strategic plans for motivating employees in a cooperative environment. In contrast, Maczulskij (2017) argued that public service organizations require qualified leaders to motivate and engage employees in the workplace. The engaged workforce is on the decline, and disengagement continues to persist in the organization. The literature showed that engaged workers are on the decline and that disengagement persists in the organization. Maczulskij asserted whether qualifications are significant in public service leaves many unanswered doubts. There are many unanswered questions about the qualifications needed among public service leaders to engage employees (Maczulskij, 2017).

Lavigna (2015) reported some areas in the public-sector organizations have carefully conducted strategies to improve the working environment; however, there was evidence that revealed limitations on the part of management initiatives, and that there is no one concrete way to improve disengagement. Although the evidence showed there is no concrete way to improve disengagement, the findings implied employee recognition as one of the main links to performance improvement. Therefore, recognition, in addition to positive actions associated with improvement are factors that can be effective in formulating a plan of action.

In the review of these findings, created an awareness of management, that employee recognition could potentially be the primary link to performance improvement. Therefore, an effective system can be a powerful tool for improving individual and organizational performance when it is authentic (Lavigna, 2015). The strategies for building goal alignment into federal agency performance appraisals are an approach to enhancing effective performance results (Ayers, 2013). The researcher examined the extent to which federal agency organizational factors allow for strategic performance appraisal goal alignment (Ayers, 2013). The data taken from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management’s evaluation of federal agency appraisal programs showed findings that leadership support of the program was the determining factor on plan alignment (Ayers, 2013).

Therefore, Ayers study supported the relevance of this study because it provides insights into understanding how public service officials can effectively collaborate with employees during performance reviews in the public sector. Ideally, when engagement relates to an amalgamation of enthusiasm, the organization gains (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). Other studies show that highly engaged environments improve and enhance job performance in organizations (Christian et al., 2011; Fleming & Asplund, 2007; Richman, 2006). Therefore, organizational leaders are more interested in engagement and disengagement today because it is a useful strategy to improve employee work performance (Saks & Gruman, 2010; Shuck et al., 2011). Conversely, the disengaged employees with bad attitudes can affect the working environment, thereby causing resistance and poor morale.

In contrast, Shuck et al. (2011) using a case study design, investigated a new model grounded on a contemporary model that integrated with previous and contemporary theories of engagement such as Maslow and Kahn’s engagement models. The findings showed the new emergent model could shed some light on the critical roles of employees and managers in the development of cultural relationships in the workplace that is critical to learning how to interpret their concept of an engaged environment. Conversely, the disengaged employees with bad attitudes can affect the working environment, thereby causing resistance and poor morale.

Public service leaders realized that employee engagement and well-being are drivers of commitment, resulting in actual attendance and fewer health-related absences (Lavigna, 2015). Therefore, recognition, in addition to positive actions associated with improvement are factors that can be effective in formulating a plan of action. In the review of these findings, this strategic system is a powerful tool to improve individual and organizational performance if it is authentic. This approach should include a systematic evaluation of the organization’s engagement practices conducted preferably through a survey method, to construct a variety of approaches for enhancing engagement over time (Lavigna, 2015).

Adkins (2015) asserted a Gallup report that showed employee engagement is on the low, and the disengagement behavior is on the increase. The poll involved tracking 80,844 interviews of working adults and found workers categorized as disengaged, engaged, or unengaged. From 2015 through 2016, the study showed an average of 32% was engaged, and 50.8% were disengaged, while 17.2% were actively disengaged. The findings suggest limited improvement within the past year, in contrast to all three categories of employee behaviors relative to engagement and disengagement (Adkins, 2015).

Christian et al. (2011), Fleming and Asplund (2007), Rich et al. (2010), and Richman (2006) asserted organizational leaders are more interested in engagement and disengagement today because it is a smart strategy to improve employee work performance. Conversely, the disengaged employees with bad attitudes can affect the working environment, thereby causing friction and poor morale. Organizational leaders are more interested in engagement and disengagement today because it is a smart strategy to improve employee work performance (Harter et al., 2002; Saks & Grumman, 2010; Shuck & Reio, 2011).

Leader Behavior

Asencio and Mujkic (2016) examined transactional and transformational leadership styles and employee perception of leadership behaviors and trust that impacted leader's relations in public service organizations. The finding showed the correlation between employee trust in leaders and perception of transactional and transformational leadership climate. On average, transformational leadership behaviors reflected the illusion of interpersonal trust. Therefore, the researcher implied higher levels of interpersonal trust and the association of transformational and transactional leadership styles of management practices.

In contrast, prior studies showed different leader behaviors were affected by internal organizational culture. Zhang, Waldman, Han, and Li, (2015) argued that organizations internal cultures have become increasingly dynamic, and competitive to the point where leaders face intensified contradictory, or seemingly contradictory, demands. Zhang et al. claimed contradictory leadership is an inappropriate way to manage people because of the employee's perception of conflict as paradoxical leader behavior. This type of behavior results in internal competitiveness and other interrelated internal conflicts.

Zhang et al. (2015) measured paradoxical leader behavior in people management using confirmatory factor analysis to support a multidimensional measure of paradoxical leader behavior. The approach included five dimensional measures; (a) combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness; (b) maintaining both distance and closeness; (c) treating subordinates uniformly, while allowing individualization; (d) enforcing work requirements, while allowing flexibility; and (e) maintaining decision control, while allowing autonomy (Zhang et al., 2015). The second evaluation involved examining the outcome of paradoxical behaviors and the influence of this style of managing people. The findings showed that when supervisors engage in holistic thinking as it relates to the five dimensions of complex management, there was a correlation between conflict or chaos management. Also, this suggested a dark side to transactional leadership. In contrast, other studies showed leader behavior relative to how leaders react to power and control (Tourish, 2013). Krog and Govender (2015) argued that studies on project management usually focus on understanding the role and power position of the project manager, with hardly any research dedicated to understanding the effect of the leadership styles that affect the success of the team's project.

The researchers aimed to understand the relationship between leadership traits (e.g., altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom,) and organizational stewardship. Also, to understand the servant leader's style and ability to persuade employees to support team commitment. The findings showed a correlation between the project managers behaviors of influence and motivation, taken from a survey of the probability sample of 48 team members out of a population of 257 IT professionals. The results suggested that persuasive mapping had the most substantial influence on employee motivation and innovation behaviors. On the other hand, the examination of wisdom in contrast to organizational stewardship showed a negative effect on how employee perceived empowerment (Krog & Govender, 2015).

Summary and Conclusions

This literature review included information on related studies on the topic of employee engagement in public service organizations. The specific and general problem were the focus of collecting related articles on employee engagement and disengagement and the leadership styles public service leaders. There is a plethora of literature on employee engagement and numerous strategies that organizations have continued to implement to engage employees. However, disengagement is described in the literature as counterproductive behavior that is prevalent even among those that are engaged at different times in their careers. With that said, the literature on how organizations address disengagement is scarce.

Hence, disengagement was a worthy phenomenon on which to conduct research. The literature in this report supports the reason for conducting this study of how public service employees perceive and respond to leadership styles that support their engagement in performance improvement of disengage them from the process. Chapter 3 contains information on the research design and rationale, method, participant selection criteria, instrumentation, procedures for data collection, data analysis plan, and issues of trustworthiness related to a proposed phenomenological study of public service employees' perceptions of leadership behaviors that engage or disengage employees.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This qualitative study involved an exploration of the experiences of public service nonmanagement employees based on their perceptions of the leadership behaviors that engage or disengage employees in a public-sector organization. Chapter 3 includes the research design and rational for this phenomenological study. The discussion includes descriptions of the data collection, which involved face-to-face participant interviews, data transcription, and interpretation using Husserl's interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), as modified by Giorgi (2009).

Research Design and Rationale

The tradition guiding this study was qualitative, using a phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of a selected group of employees in a public service or nonprofit civic organization. A phenomenological design was appropriate for this study because the aim was to determine the meaning of an experience common to the participants (Lewis, 2015). The rationale for selecting the qualitative phenomenal approach in contrast to a quantitative approach was because "qualitative research is conducive to promoting a deep understanding of a social setting" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 38). This design is flexible because it requires nonnumerical data unlike quantitative research. The grounded theory approach is similar to the phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach, however, has a focus on in-depth exploration of a phenomenon, while grounded theory is a way conceptualizing a theory to explain the phenomenon based on the data collected from the participants.

Shenton (2004) asserted that most grounded theory studies fall short of producing actual substantive formal theories from which specific hypotheses can develop for later testing. Conversely, the phenomenological approach does not seek theories to test or justify. Rather, the purpose in this study was to examine employees' perceptions of leadership behaviors that engage or disengage employees in a public service organization.

The overarching question was: What are public service employees' perceptions of leadership behaviors that engage or disengage? The subquestions were as follows:

RQ1: Based on the lived experiences of nonmanagement public service employees, what are their perceptions of leadership behaviors that engage public service employees?

RQ2: Based on the lived experiences of nonmanagement public service employees, what are their perceptions of leadership behaviors that disengage public service employees?

Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) asserted that research traditions contribute to decisions regarding design and methods. Moreover, strategies and inquiries involve the use of either quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. Quantitative methods involve a postpositivist perspective, and qualitative inquiry involves a constructivist perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Mixed methods are a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in the same study.

The research tradition for the current study was qualitative, using a phenomenological design to conduct research on employee engagement and disengagement in public service organizations. This tradition was appropriate for the study because it is a humanistic approach for conducting scientific research on human feelings, behaviors, and emotions, which a quantitative study would not allow. A phenomenological research design allows the researcher to explore the perceptions, perspectives, understandings, and feelings of people based on their lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990). In addition, applying the phenomenological method properly requires that a researcher have a high regard for human experiences and a desire to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

The phenomenological approach refers to a person’s description of an experience that dictates meaning to a phenomenon (Leedy, 1997). The basics of the design approach include showing ethical concern related to recruitment materials and processes and having a procedural plan to address them (Leedy, 1997). This is important when using a qualitative method of data collection as it allows the researcher direct access to information on the participants’ lived experiences.

IPA, the research design chosen for this study, is a qualitative approach that enables detailed examinations of personal lived experiences. Smith and Osborn (2015) asserted that “in the IPA approach, the researcher understands the interpretative approach to qualitative research is to make sense of human sense making. Therefore, the researcher’s aim is to learn from their participants about their experiences with a phenomenon event” (p. 41). IPA informs the concepts of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and paradigm philosophies. Smith and Osborn (2015) suggested IPA is a qualitative approach that researchers use to examine, analyze, and report lived expertise or experiences related to a phenomenon. Qualitative interpretative analysis is about emergent accounts of lived experiences to describe current situations in the natural environment rather than introducing prior theoretical concepts.

Smith and Osborn (2015) described the idiographic of IPA as an obligation to elaborate on several experiences of accounts before moving to additional general claims. The IPA method is a helpful approach in exploring ambiguous topics that relate to emotions and consciousness. An example, such as pain, may be a prime model of such a phenomenon: elusive, involving advanced psychosomatic interactions, and troublesome to articulate (Smith & Osborn, 2015). In contrast Finlay (2014) described the idiographic worldview nature of IPA based on people's perceptions of geographical environments as the intentionality of the people in it and denotes a person's consciousness of something in the world. This suggests people always know their world views and perceptions (Finlay, 2014).

Comparative to Giorgi (2009), who modified Husserl's IPA based on inducting the data for interpretative analysis using the self-reflection approach, I sought knowledge from the participants. In addition, this approach requires a bracketing process, which is a self-elimination of all supposition and prior knowledge of the phenomenon to allow meaning to surface to the open mind. Phenomenology appears in the conscious mind in an emerging phenomenal experience (Heidegger & Lovitt, 1977). Similarly, Moustakas (1994) created a radical approach to conducting research by isolating himself while seeking knowledge through human science using his self-reflective abilities. In contrast, another approach to consider is transcendental phenomenology, which is an intimate experience of intentionality, which Husserl, as cited in Moran (2012), posited that the mental orientation of the self-perception of unconsciousness surfacing to the conscious mind. The interpretive form takes place enabling the object to become clear (Moran, 2012, p. 29).

I chose traditional IPA as an approach to this phenomenon under study because it was an approach to qualitative research that was well-established in psychological and social research. I did not choose the quantitative approach because it involves testing hypotheses based on existing theories by analyzing measurable variables in the process of investigation of cause-and-effect situations without the rich text data that relates to experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Therefore, the rationale for selecting the qualitative phenomenal approach in contrast to quantitative was because using qualitative research methods helps researchers to arrive at a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role in a phenomenological study is that of an instrument. As the instrument, the researcher collects data from the participants by conducting face-to-face interviews. During the data collection process, the aim is to delineate the process through listening and interpretation of information in a natural setting or working environment where participants provide information for the research study. The most significant role of the researcher is to complete the research study. It is the responsibility of the researcher to adhere to high ethical standards throughout the study process (Bengtsson, 2016).

According to the 1979 Belmont Report, people deserve respect and protection when taking part in research studies of any nature. When using people to gather data and other personal information, it is important for researchers to proceed in ensuring transparency with their research objectives. To maintain transparency, researchers should use bracketing to remove doubts and biased opinions about the phenomenon and take part at the same level of communication with the participants in the interview sessions. Researchers should organize the data using a type system, such as letters or number labels, as identification indicators for the participants to protect their anonymity during the data collection process (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015).

Such that a researcher remains unbiased, the member checking, bracketing, or the epochal process should be used to remove any preconceived ideas because it is necessary to suppress bias (Groenewald, 2004, p. 18). In addition, it is significant for the researcher to maintain a diary and confidentiality forms (e.g., the inform consent and organization agreement documents to enter their facility, signed and filed for record).

Methodology

The methods section includes a discussion of applied actions in the research process. I explain the rationale for specific procedures in the processing stage of conducting the research. In addition, the method reflects the techniques used to identify themes and answer the research question. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) stated that the methods section is where the research process moves from the theoretical construct to the specifics of various paradigms in qualitative research, and strategies are developed for studying people in their natural setting, which requires certain techniques for collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting the findings. The end results contribute to a disciplinary field of study that can represent diverse disciplines, such as sociology, education, medicine, communication, anthropology, public policy, and business (Patton, 2002a, p. 214).

In addition, the researcher must focus on applied methods and cite any sources that inform the decisions and approaches to the method of the study. Strategic techniques will allow all new discoveries by the researcher to reflect the final findings or discoveries in the data analysis stage of the process. Guba and Lincoln (1994) described the question of credibility and appropriate methodology, by asking “how the inquirer can (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes is clear or can be known” (p. 108). Just any method is not appropriate, but it justifies a predetermined approach.

The terms *method* and *methodology* have different meanings. The literature suggests the differences between the two terms are that method term addresses the questions of why, what, from where, when, and how the researcher will collect and analyze the data. In contrast, while the term methods create the concern for asking questions, about how an inquiry can take place about known beliefs; “method is the operational frame in which they organize the data to show meaning of the collected data” (Patton, 2002b, p. 104). By comparison, Crotty (1989) suggested the term method refers to a strategic plan of action in conducting research that lies behind the choice and use of research methods.

Participant Selection Logic

Participant selection is concerned with the sampling process for conducting a research study. Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) asserted that the researcher selects a group of potential candidates to represent a target population. A sample is a small group selected from an entire population and the sample group represents the participants. Thus, researchers determine what is needed to conduct research based on the approach to selecting candidates. The sampling approach for this study was the purposive technique. I chose this approach because it allows the researcher to use a non-random selection process where the population or target does not require a specific number.

The researcher makes deliberate choices of participants with unique qualities of experiences related to the phenomenon understudy (Patton, 2002b). While in this study, three approaches were under consideration for use, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, and convenience. For this study, the expected purposive sample consisted of 12 employees at a government agency or nonprofit service organization in the Dallas metropolitan area. Face-to-face interviews with the participants provided the study data. The qualification conditions for participation in this study were (a) have up to 5 years or more of experience in their current position in the workplace, (b) hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree and at a maximum of a master's degree, and (c) must work in public service-oriented organization, or a nonprofit organization.

The selection criteria for qualification was service employees who have up to 5 years of experience in their workplace environment where they work and must have commonality of their experience in the workplace relative to employee engagement or non-engagement. The participants must work in a nonprofit municipal or public service organization. Therefore, the demographic profile must show a cross section of such employees (Bungay, Oliffe, & Atchison, 2016) and (Chen, Friedman, & Simons, 2014). In addition, Sargeant (2012) suggested the one most important task in the study design research phase is to identify appropriate participants. The selection process involving in identifying qualified participants based on the research questions, theoretical perspectives, and evidence informing the study. To this end, I worked with a partner organization to gain access to and enroll the study participants.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) asserted that Fraelich in 1989 solicited participants through a convenience sampling approach by writing invitation letters to potential candidates. In contrast, the logic of purposeful sampling is to select rich contextual information to bring about understanding of the phenomenon under study. The term contextual information refers to the culture and environmental setting at work. The demographic information provided a profile of the whereabouts of the participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 148).

Instrumentation

An in-depth purposive sample of 15 participants was selected from a target of 300 public service employees in the North Central area of Texas. I used a qualitative instrument, an interview protocol (see Appendix A), and an audio recording device. The researcher uses these tools as the instrument in qualitative research to collect the data for analysis and interpretation. With that said, my role as the instrument in qualitative research was also about understanding how to analyze the data and informedly explain the results (Morse, 2009; Xu & Storr, 2012). It is imperative that researchers fully know how their ontological and epistemological position underpins the research. Therefore, what is a paradigm? Paradigms comprise the following components: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and, methods.

The ontology perspective of a study suggests the approach to a phenomenon about being. Also, ontological assumptions that reflects concepts that makes up reality and what is what. Researchers need to take a position regarding their perceptions of how things are and how things work (Crotty, 1989). It involves epistemological assumptions with how knowledge is communicated what it means to know. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 108) explained that epistemology asks, what is the nature of the relationship between the would-be knower and what can become clear?

In a qualitative study, I interviewed candidates using a face-to-face design, and using a line of questioning that encompasses a semistructured or structured open-ended question (see Appendix B). It is significant for a researcher to develop the capacity for independent, honest, and critical thought in the role of the instrument to remain cognizant of the purpose within the research. Morse (2009) stated, in a subjective analysis, the central part of the investigator’s work is interpretive. In this way, exactness must be profound. Also, analysts translate the information, as they should apply all hypothetical comprehension, and aptitudes, convictions, qualities, and expectations to find something intriguing. Considering the reality of working with delicate information (e.g., people groups’ memories, beliefs, states of mind, dreams, and their memories of human mistakes, and perceptions of change) it is essential to get it right. When the researcher is looking inside from the outside (Morse, 2009).

Pilot Study

For the current study, the pilot test was a pre-test of the interview questions and instructions (see Appendix A and B). The aim was to use two or three people to respond to this face-to-face activity to ensure the information is clear and concise, so that the participants understand the process before conducting the actual study. Researchers suggested the pilot study is an essential stage in a qualitative study and the process involves testing the feasibility of recruitment and protection of the subjects (Hassan, Schattner, & Mazza, 2006).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Miles and Huberman (1994) asserted purposive sampling is a non-probability approach to selecting participants and collecting data. The basis for this selection process is appropriate when a certain number of participants are necessary to reach saturation. So, the question is when will saturation occurs? In a qualitative study, because the primary emphasis is reaching saturation to get a comprehensive understanding, the researcher must continue to sample until data saturation at a certain point, and the researcher must describe the reasons no new information emerges from the data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The interviewing session is the primary technique for collecting qualitative data for this study. Data were collected from a purposive sample of non-management employees in the public service workplace. The instruments for this study are the interview protocol, and a digital audio recorder. In this process, the researcher is required to remove all preconceived ideas, prejudices, or biases before beginning the study (Moustakas, 1994). This requires the researcher to disclose of preconceived ideas, and biases moving forward with the research. Next, the researcher must explain all accounts of the interview in the story-telling process more than one time to understand the sense associated with the phenomenon. The final interpretation of the data requires analysis, which involves arranging or categorizing the information into meaning, or a variety of themes in answering the research question (s) regarding the phenomenon under study. This process continues until data saturation occurs at a specific number or when the questions produce no new data (Francis et al., 2010; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data Analysis Plan

Giorgi (2009, 2012) changed Husserl's approach to IPA guided the data collection process. The intent was to describe the data in employee experiences of perception as it relates to behavioral attitudes influenced by the management and leaders of the organization. The process includes attitude reduction of the researcher and creation of descriptive textural definition of meaningful units and themes. In addition, the researcher collects data for the analysis approach using the recorded information collected through face-to-face interviews, from participants. Also, included, the action plan involved the use of computer-aided analytical tool, NVIVO, if necessary. This is in contrast with a manual process for managing the emerging qualitative data for efficient analysis that aids in the inductive process of interpretation of the data. I also included a collaborative technique in the transcription session to include bracketing to confirm the accuracy of the data for validation.

The descriptive interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach is used to analyze the data. The researcher's role is to take on the attitude of phenomenological reduction from a psychological perspective with sensitivity toward the phenomenon understudy. However, the reduction process is not the transcendental phenomenological reduction that philosophers use; but, relative to the changed approach that Husserl used (Giorgi, 2012). Meaning in the qualitative research relates to the attitude of the researcher based on his/her discipline of study. In addition, the meanings reflect the inner understanding that the researcher brings to the study.

In this study, the intention was to understand emergent meaning associated with the data description as described by Giorgi's and Husserl's (2009) changed approach to analysis. The phenomenological reduction process involves the following five steps: (a) Read the whole description in the data, to gain a full understanding in its entirety. (b) Repeat the first step focusing on the units or parts. (c) Next, transforms the data into basic units of words based on the information collected from the participants. The method is subject to free imagination and requires three to 12 variations for completing this step. (d) Structure each of the creative expressions for review and assessment. (e) Complete the process when there is clarity of structure based on the interpretation of the raw study data. The critical aspect of the phenomenological perspective is to discern with accuracy the intentional object of the researcher's experience. To allow for key phenomenological perspectives to emerge, the researcher should repeat this process (Giorgi, 2009, 2012).

Giorgi (2009) claimed no aim for meaning units are in the description, but they develop because of the psychological sensitivity that the researcher brings to the task. If or when this sense comes to mind, the consequence, the perceived invariants will emerge instantaneous. The schema process can only take place when a unit meaning transforms into the life-world experience of the phenomenon. Therefore, it is how the meaning units become transformed and how they integrate into the structure of the experience phenomenon. The planned schema or meaning of interpreted acts—(a) signifying acts, (b) precise fulfilling acts, and (c) acts of identification (Giorgi, 2009).

In context, to determine meaning of units is the heart of the process and can be very extensive. This can be a challenge because the descriptive analysis is more accessible than the implementation because of the epistemological claim, the results showed the precise experiences featured in the conscious mind. Therefore, the literature shows that experiences reflects what they can perceive the meaning as a single lived experience (Giorgi, 2009, 2012). In addition, Giorgi's method offered a comprehensive schema of Husserl's theory of meaning, suggesting that consciousness enacts a signifying act, which establishes a purpose that seeks fulfillment (Giorgi, 2009).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Cope (2014) suggested a most important undertaking for researchers is to strive for exceptional quality when reporting research. Noting that in contrast to quantitative research, which requires rigor and validity, qualitative research requires credibility and trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is an assessment tailored and promoted by using Lincoln and Guba (1985) approach to quality research. Researchers have described trustworthiness in view as the quintessential framework for exploring qualitative research. Four elements of the framework include unique trustworthiness; credibility (truth), dependability (consistency), transferability (applicability), and confirmability (neutrality). In addition, they advocate authenticity of discussion, a fifth component for by some qualitative researchers as an essential evaluative form of researching a phenomenon (Polit & Beck, 2012).

Murphy and Yielder (2010) stated trustworthiness is not inherent in a study; it results from rigorous scholarship that ensures that the findings reflect the participants meaning of the phenomenon as closely as possible. A review is trustworthy if and only if the reader of the research report judges it to be. This provides several measures of rigor, an audit trail and reflexivity. The documentation in all forms should include the raw data, field notes, summaries, and technical notes.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the reality of collected information views and the interpretation outcome of the data as the aid of the researcher conducting the study (Polit & Beck, 2012). A researcher can improve credibility disclosing his or her biases using the bracketing procedure and ensuring confidentiality behaviors with the participants. Sandelowski (1986) stated a qualitative study is credible because the association of the human experience recognized by individuals that share the identical journey, which describe the participants (Sandelowski, 1986).

Transferability

Transferability suggests the generalizability of the results of a study to the degree in which researchers can replicate a study in similar settings and contexts (Houghton, Casey, & Shaw, 2013; Polit & Beck, 2012). Leung (2015) asserted, they can assess the quality of a qualitative research in terms of the validity, reliability, and generalizability (p. 325). These criterions guarantee the replicability of a study with a different focus. Cope (2014) stated researchers should provide enough information from the interviewees relevant to the context of the research that allows for a transferable fit that other researchers can replicate the information in other studies. This enables the reader to assess the findings' capability of being "fit" or transferable (Cope, 2014). In contrast, Sandelowski, (1986) suggested the conditions of transferability depend on the intentions and purpose of the research and may be relevant, only if the researcher's reasons are to generalize about the subject or phenomenon (Sandelowski, 1986). As this study process is well documented, the process may be transferable; however, the findings may not be given the small sample size and other limitations as described in Chapter 1.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the contrast of the statistical over similar conditions in a different study (Polit & Beck, 2012; Tobin & Begley, 2004). The concept suggests an opportunity of replicability. However, the question is whether a study achieves the same results when conducted in a different context or method. For example, in the case of a quantitative study, dependability of measurable outcomes suggests two different outcomes, while in a qualitative study, measurement is unnecessary as a dependability criterion. A thorough description of process and findings of the study should concentrate on the replicability of a new study. Therefore, the dependability of a qualitative study emphasizes the need for the researcher to adjust for any changes in the context when it occurs. This requires the researcher to describe the conditions of the changes in the settings, and how it impacts the research approach to the study.

Vagle (2014) suggested the term validity, for years a topic of discussion in the minds of qualitative researchers, was disputable in scientific research. "There is no single way to validate issues relative to qualitative research other than framing through dialogue, bracketing and triangulation" (p. 66). However, it is significant to demonstrates ethics in qualitative research and a detailed discussion of trustworthiness, credibility, relevance, and confirmability ensures the quality of a qualitative research study (Freeman, DeMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007).

Depending on the type data collected, the researcher has a variety of ways to support validity, credibility, and transferability in a consistent way (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). For example, the researcher spends extended time in the field, (e.g. second round of in-depth interview session) to gain additional data to substantiate or dis confirm findings regarding a phenomenon.

Confirmability

In this section, the researcher must confirm the accuracy of the data collection, truth in the voice from the participants and present ethical reporting. Patton (2002b) asserted in the process of meeting the confirmability criterion in qualitative research, requires the researcher's ability to be reflexive about his or her authenticity and truthfulness in analyzing the data and reporting true results. Similar, Baskerville, Kaul, & Storey (2015) asserted credibility and confirmability ensures a thorough rich thick description and by providing a chain of evidence linking the data and the observations to the results. In contrast, the lesser criterion for neutrality is confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

In contrast to other studies, confirmability as the researcher's ability to respond in displaying ethical research that reflects the exactness of the participants responses without injecting is or her personal biases (Polit & Beck, 2012; Tobin & Begley, 2004). As the researchers' role in the study is to be the instrument, he/she must be open about biases and a variety of assumptions that could influence the outcome of the study. So, confirmability is when the researcher practices the phenomenologist attitude of reflexivity in textual expressions.

According to Vagle (2014), confirmability is reflexive textual expressions of multi-perspective, multi-voiced, positioning, and destabilizing, including their own opinions or voice. So, reflexive method is a way for the researcher to critique data, since his or her role in the research process should not include biases. A reflexive process continues throughout the study in exploring the lived experiences. So, critiquing approach is necessary in analyzing contextual data (Vagle, 2014)

Ethical Procedures

Phenomenological research is an approach that views the participants as peer-level communicators in a research study. The aim is to explore meaning of a variety of experiences that all have in common with the phenomenon understudy. After the approval of the IRB, the student can conduct data collection for the proposed study. The steps start with each participant reading and signing the consent form. It is important to protect participants anonymity and confidentiality. The legal requirement is to provide each participant the appropriate agreement forms as required by the IRB regulations.

Raina and Britt Roebuck (2016) asserted that ethics means to do the right thing and respect the rights of others. The do-good approach toward the participants is fair play, and it references the conscious mental ability of being human with an inherent ability to be ethical. However, in research there are basic principles in ethical approaches required in conducting research by research authorities such as NIH. It is important for graduate students to understand previous harms that could be dangerous to human subjects. Quigley (2016) suggested novice researchers without the training can damage to a research study and cause potential risk of exploiting protected groups. Also, the researchers are that they design and conduct their research under IRB policy. This means using the principles of showing respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Raina & Britt Roebuck, 2016).

Respect for others. The principle of respect for other persons is a two-part convention, the need to acknowledge autonomy and the requirement to protect those who do not have the same privilege. For this study, I did not identify participants with their organization.

Beneficence. it describes wrong treatment to others regarding demands in situations when people experience the burden of unfair treatment and disrespect resulting from other people's decisions. The term beneficence relates to individual investigation of sociality at large research. The idea is to not harm other and to maximize benefits and decrease harm.

Justice. Sense of fairness and distribution of study benefits. An example of injustice in this sense would remove a deserved benefit without good reason. There are considerations of ethical processes and procedures in doing a phenomenological study before starting. First, to meet the ethical requirements, it is important to protect the privacy and rights of others from harmful outcomes in a research project. Walker (2007) argued putting to rest unethical issues is important before starting a phenomenological study.

Summary

Included in Chapter 3 is a discussion on the process and ethical compliances of conducting a phenomenological study. The purpose of the study was to examine and explore participants' experiences in the workplace about their performance in relations to leadership behaviors that engage or disengage employees. The study involved the application of Husserl's classic approach to collecting qualitative data, such as the IPA approach cited in Moran (2012) and Heidegger and Lovitt (1977) for conducting phenomenological research.

I also discussed the IPA research method I chose as a qualitative method extended from Giorgi's (2009) approach using Husserl's alternate phenomenology approach to collect and interpret the data. In addition, I discussed the role of the researcher as the sole instrument for data collection in this qualitative study using Giorgi's phenomenology process of collecting, categorizing, and analyzing the data as collected from the participants, and I discussed selection criteria and strategies for identifying participants through purposive sampling. I examined issues of trustworthiness related to conduct of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Leaders who engage workers achieve greater organizational results (Miller, 2014). The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of employees on engagement and disengagement and ascertain their perceptions of the leadership behaviors that engage or disengage employees in a public-sector organization. Interviews of a purposefully selected group of 12 nonmanagement public service employees provided the study data. Analysis of the data involved coding the interview responses related to the research questions and appropriate to the study based on the conceptual framework of engagement based on Kahn's (1990) personal engagement framework and Maslow's (1943) motivations theory. The central research question of this study was: What are public service employees' perceptions of leadership behaviors that engage or disengage? The subquestions were:

RQ1: Based on the lived experiences of nonmanagement public service employees, what are their perceptions of leadership behaviors that engage public service employees?

RQ2: Based on the lived experiences of nonmanagement public service employees, what are their perceptions of leadership behaviors that disengage public service employees?

This chapter includes a description of the study, including the pilot study, research setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, and a description of trustworthiness in terms of the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study. Also included is a description of the process of arriving at the study findings using

Giorgi’s (2009) four-step process of phenomenological data collection and analysis and the constant comparative method.

Pilot Study

The pilot study began with testing the interview questions to determine the feasibility of obtaining effective rich, thick information in full disclosure from the participants. The purpose of the pilot study (see Appendix C) was to test the appropriateness of the open-ended interview questions (see Appendix B). I selected a sample of three participants who met the same criteria as those selected for the full study to participate in the pilot. Each of the participants signed an informed consent before participation. The initial time for completing the interviews was 1 week, but due to an uncontrollable event, the time extended an additional week. To minimize the chance of this happening, I created time schedules for the participants in the pilot test. I did that also in the final study. In this way, the pilot test helped me to make simple changes that improved the process.

The pilot study sample size of two women and one man provided ample information in the interviews. I evaluated the transcripts of the three volunteer participants and discovered that I needed to modify the questions by using probing questions to obtain more feedback on leadership behaviors that influenced engagement or disengagement. The final pilot interview indicated the potential of the interview questions, supplemented with appropriate probing questions, to provide important insights into the answer to the research questions based on the participants’ knowledge and experiences of the phenomenon under study.

Research Setting

The full study interview setting was an online one-on-one communication platform that allowed for a telephone interview, data recording, data transcription, and online video. Previous studies substantiate the significance of conducting a phenomenological study in a natural setting (Klenke, 2016; Ngulube, 2015). Moreover, qualitative research is inductive in nature, thus the researcher generally explores meanings and insights related to the participants' lived experiences in that setting (Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow, & Ponterotto, 2017; Yilmaz, 2013). In this study, the inductive approach allowed the participants the opportunity to express their concerns about the workplace phenomenon under study safely and openly. When researchers conduct interviews in a natural setting, it allows for rich, thick data to emerge during data collection (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Demographics

In describing the demographics of the final study participants in Appendix D, I listed their gender, job category, and tenure at the organization. I did not include age, education, or income as criteria for participation because I narrowed the scope to nonmanagement employees. This qualitative sampling approach was purposive in that the selected participants met the basic criterion of having the knowledge, based on firsthand experience, to help answer the research questions using the qualitative phenomenological design and the constant comparative method. The literature suggested purposive sample sizes based on the data points allow for saturation during simultaneous reviewing and analysis (Ulin, Robinson, & Tolley, 2012).

Data Collection

After receiving approval from Walden University IRB Internal Review Board (approval code number 05-20-19-0106472), I started by conducting the pilot study. After modifying the interview protocol and participant interview set-up process slightly based on my findings in the pilot study, I began the full study using an online web platform that allowed me to record the interviews, create a web video, which I did not use to collect data for this study, and obtain data transcription. This approach allowed for privacy and anonymity of the participants such that they could provide full disclosure without being threatened. The community partner conducted an internal e-mail solicitation on my behalf. After the notification, participants replied to the request by e-mailing me inquiries. Out of 30 volunteers, I selected 12 participants for the study, not including the three pilot participants.

The full group of participants in this study represented a sample population of one public service agency in the northern region of Texas. The participants represented nonmanagement employees in this civic public agency. The sample consisted of eight women and four men representing one department in an organization with 300 service employees. After receiving the informed consent letters, I created an appointment log for each participant. I conducted the interview sessions after work hours so as not to interfere with participants' job responsibilities and to avoid any loss of wages from having to take time off for the interviews. Throughout the interview process, I followed the planned interview protocol for data collection as approved by the IRB, which involved using Giorgi's (2009) modified Husserl approach to identify potential themes and the constant comparative method to identify the final themes at the point where I reached data saturation.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the interview data collected from the participants using a manual open-coding process and the iterative constant comparative analysis process. First, I read the transcripts several times and compared them to notes taken during the interview sessions. The themes emerged in a back-and-forth process of a combination of open coding and axial coding for inductive and deductive thinking in categorizing thematic units and the emergent final themes. Next, I used axial coding to contrast the initial open codes identified to create and categorize themes. I was able to code the data using relevant words, phrases, and full sentences. Lastly, I analyzed individual words and phrases that were similar in meaning to capture associated themes.

The focus of the data coding was extracting the perceptions of the participants regarding leader behaviors that resulted in employee engagement (RQ1) and disengagement (RQ2). Further coding checks for accuracy included a follow-up interview and rereading individual verbatim transcript recording. I extracted from 15–38 pages of data per transcript, which led to 50 potential themes taken from the transcript analysis prior to the reduction process. The final phase of data analysis involved comparing potential theme data based on the number of participants who mentioned the potential theme, causing a reduction in the data. Because of this weighting process, eight significant themes emerged for RQ1 (see Table 1) and nine themes emerged for RQ2 (see Table 2). In each case, data saturation occurred before the final interview.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described trustworthiness as the quintessential framework for exploring qualitative research. The four elements of their framework for ensuring trustworthiness are credibility (truth), dependability (consistency), transferability (applicability) and, confirmability (neutrality). In addition, authenticity of discussion is a fifth component for by some qualitative researchers as an essential evaluative form of researching a phenomenon (Polit & Beck, 2012).

Credibility

According to Polit and Beck (2012), a researcher can improve credibility by ensuring confidentiality behaviors with the participants, which I did in all phases of the process from participant requirement through data collection and analysis. Sandelowski (1986) stated a qualitative study is credible because of the association of the human experience recognized by individuals that share the identical journey, which describes the participants in this study who all have firsthand experience of the phenomenon (Sandelowski, 1986).

Transferability

As stated in Chapter 3, transferability suggests the generalizability of the results of a study to the degree in which other researchers, or readers, can replicate a study in similar settings and contexts (Houghton et al., 2013; Polit & Beck, 2012). Cope (2014) stated researchers should provide enough information from the interviewees relevant to the context of the research to allow other researchers to replicate the study. This enables the reader to assess the findings' capability of being "fit" or transferable (Cope, 2014). I did this by describing the nature of study participants, the methods of participant selection, and the method of data collection and analysis.

Dependability

As stated in Chapter 3, dependability refers to whether a study has the same results when conducted in a different context or using a different method (Polit & Beck, 2012; Tobin & Begley, 2004). A thorough description of process and findings of the study should concentrate on the replicability of a new study, which I have endeavored to do in this and the previous chapter.

Confirmability

As stated in Chapter 3, confirmability is when the researcher ensures the accuracy of the data collection, the truth as viewed by the participants, and reports the study findings ethically and accurately (Polit & Beck, 2012; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Confirmability depends on a chain of evidence linking the data and the observations to the results (Baskerville et al., 2015), which I have created as the process unfolded and saved in written form. The process of meeting the confirmability criterion in qualitative research requires the researcher ability to be reflexive about his or her authenticity and truthfulness in analyzing the data and reporting true results (Patton, 2002a), which I have attempted to do at each step of the process.

Study Results

Using a constant comparative approach to data coding and analysis led to a variety of emergent themes to understand how public service employees understood and coped with leader behaviors that influenced their careers and job performance and led to feelings of engagement or disengagement. In this section, I have listed the findings for each research questions, which are the themes that emerged from the data collection and analysis process. Based on the conceptual framework of employee motivation and personal engagement for this study, the findings in this study showed that employees thrived on the need for recognition, respect, inclusion, and career opportunities. The open-ended interview questions allowed for participants to express themselves based on their perception of experiences at work, and their perceptions of the leadership environment.

Across the hierarchical structure of the organization, employees in this one section of the organization shared a variety of negative and positive observations of the leadership. Their perceptions suggested that despite the behaviors of some of the leaders, they appreciated the opportunity to be a part of making a difference in the community as public service employees. I present the study findings for RQ1 and RQ2 in the charts below based on the thematic analysis during the interview sessions

RQ1: leadership Behaviors That Engage Public Service Employees

Table 1 contains a list of the findings for RQ1.

Table 1

Leadership Behaviors That Engage Public Service Employees

Theme	%	Leadership behavior
1	75	One-on-one leader/employee collaboration
2	75	Leaders are civic minded
3	67	Leader support for employee ownership of projects
4	50	Leaders recognition of employee efforts
5	42	Working directly with leaders
6	42	Having long-term relationships with leaders
7	25	Leader fairness
8	25	Leader honesty

Note. Column 2 is the percentage of the total participants who mentioned the theme.

Theme 1: One-on-one leader/employee collaboration. Seventy-five percent of the participants described one-on-one collaboration on projects with their leader as one of the main leadership behaviors that engage them as public service employees. Participant 1 described leader support in the form of collaboration as significant given the demands of the job. From an employee perspective, collaborative leaders recognize their employees and support them at public meetings. “Because we are a small group, leaders share more face time with our department than others.” Participant 7 stated, “when leaders are involved with my work through collaboration, I feel engaged.”

Theme 2: Leaders are civic minded. Seventy-five percent of the participants stated leaders who demonstrate responsible attitudes in providing democratic governance in the communities they serve inspire and engage them. Participant 2 stated that the leaders who are in tune with the needs of the public and understand the significance of their fiduciary responsibilities in utilizing taxpayer monies engage their followers.

Theme 3: Leader support for employee ownership of projects. Sixty-seven percent of employees suggested they feel more engaged in their work when their leaders allow them ownership and control of individual projects and support the outcomes. Participant 3 stated that when leaders allowed him ownership of his work, he felt more loyal and engaged. Participant 4 stated that although she is not a management employee, she is a specialist and when she drafts information, she uses sound methodology. As a result, she feels uncomfortable when upper management modifies her work. Conversely, she feels engaged when leaders support her work and acknowledge it as hers.

Theme 4: Leader recognition of employee efforts. Fifty percent of employees stated they feel engaged when they received recognition from management. Participant 9 stated the leaders recognize what I do based on the level of my responsibility and effort. When they show appreciation in this manner, it engages me.

Theme 5: Working directly with leaders. Forty-two percent of the participants suggested they feel engaged when leaders allow them opportunities to interface with the upper leadership in special assignments and receive respect as planners rather than low-level employees. Participant 6 stated, “It makes me feel more engaged knowing that I am making a difference in the community when I work directly with the leaders on community projects. I see their dedication and civility as leaders really engaged in their work.” Participant 9 stated, “My job requires me to work closely with executive leaders and management mainly because my task is compliance reporting. When the leadership acknowledges my work and effort, it encourages me to engage more.”

Theme 6: Having long-term relationships with leaders. Forty-two percent of the participants indicated the importance to engagement of having long term relationships as a result of leaders who encouraged them think of the organization as family. Participant 7 stated that he had worked for 20 years as an individual contributor for the organization since graduate school. “I am comfortable with the culture and have no plans to leave.” Participant 9 said, “There is a lot of longevity in this company and we all feel like family. This is important because the work I do requires me to know individuals in all the departments.”

Theme 7: Leader fairness. Twenty-five percent of the participants stated they observed leader fairness when they were made aware of an open-door policy, which made them feel more engaged. Participant 4 stated that leaders are fair and ethical when they are open to hearing the views of their staff and are willing to accept ideas from the bottom up. Fair leaders encourage employee engagement. Participant 5 stated,

> As a supervisor myself, I practice open-door support rather than leaving my direct reports on their own. Conversely, I feel safe because my leaders do the same with me. I can share personal issues with my leaders without their sharing them with the team.

Participant 9 stated, “My leaders are fair to me because they acknowledge and trust the work I do. I feel engaged.”

Theme 8: Leader honesty. Twenty-five percent of the participants felt inclined to stay with the company when they perceived leaders as being honest with their direct reports. Participant 8 stated, “Leader honesty goes a long way with me. I experience support at supervisor levels and at the management level. I believe they are honest because they are good at providing me with feedback when I ask for it." Participant 6 said that leader honesty is the number one thing that engages him at work. "I feel that high degree of honesty when leaders share knowledge and involve me in the big picture of planning projects."

RQ2: Leadership Behaviors That Disengage Public Service Employees

Table 2 contains a list of the findings for RQ2.

Table 2

Leadership Behaviors That Disengage Public Service Employees

Theme	%	Leadership behavior
1	80	Lack of positive feedback
2	70	Micromanagement by leaders
3	70	Ambiguity in leadership directives
4	60	Extremely high workload
5	60	Unclear leadership expectations
6	50	Limited opportunity for advancement
7	50	Inadequate resources to meet work demands
8	40	Inability to use earned compensatory time
9	40	Uncertainties related to high employee turnover

Note. Column 2 is the percentage of the total participants who mentioned the theme.

Theme 1: Lack of positive feedback. Eighty percent of the participants experienced disengagement because of a lack of positive feedback from their first-level supervisor relative to their performance. Participant 4 stated that not all supervisors conduct performance reviews in the traditional manner. "So, it depends on who your supervisor is in this organization, if you get any feedback at all." Participant 7 said there was a time he experienced performance anxiety and burnout because of extended waiting time for feedback on his work. "I had to work through this issue and come to terms with why I did not get the expected feedback that I needed." Participant 11 stated, "I need ownership of my job by way of feedback." More specifically, she said she received only limited feedback on performance progress from her supervisor.

Theme 2: Micromanagement by leaders. Seventy percent of participants stated that being micromanaged by leaders deflated their self-esteem, and consequently made them feel that the management did not trust them to perform the simplest tasks of their job (e.g., writing emails). Participant 1 suggested, "Micromanaging leaders have caused excessive turnover in our department. Employees do not have much autonomy to make the smallest of decisions." Participant 2 stated that her director highly monitored her department because of deadline issues related to compliance, causing her to feel disengaged from the process.

Theme 3: Ambiguity in leadership directives. Seventy percent of participants suggested they feel there is not enough participative guidance from their leaders, which creates a sense of ambiguity where there are no clear goals to work toward. Participant 1 stated, "The employee's perception of leader environment is an ambiguous hierarchy of authority below the director level. The chain of command, if it exists, is not really utilized efficiently and it's very confusing about who can make what decisions." Participant 2 stated, "Leaders don't realize that it is the direct supervisor that causes lower level employees to become disengaged. The leaders turn a blind eye to what is going on with this problem." Participant 8 stated, "There are no goals and objectives set related to my job tasks." She expressed disappointment at this type leadership behavior.

Theme 4: Extremely high workload. Sixty percent of employees said that they experienced more workload task than other employees in other departments. Participant 7 stated, “I take my job seriously, and I’m committed to my job despite the excessive work hours.” Participant 9 stated that if leaders were knowledgeable of the depth of work that she provided, she would feel engaged:

> They don’t know what I do because they continue to add more work, making me feel like a machine. This type of leadership does not motivate me in my work. I would do a better job if the workload was reasonably assigned.

Participant 10 stated the same employees get overtime over other employees who would appreciate the opportunity. Note. These employees stated the overtime work is excessive and thus would go elsewhere if given the opportunity.

Theme 5: Unclear leadership expectations. Sixty percent of the participants mentioned that employees find it difficult to perform their jobs because there are no clear set guidelines from the human resource management staff related to employee/leader collaborations. Therefore, there is a feeling of no direction. So, they create their own procedures when working. Participant 3 stated, “I am at a low ebb in my current job because of unclear leader expectations and having no autonomy to be creative.” Participant 7 stated he experienced performance anxieties that affected his health. This was due to having no direction in his job.

Theme 6: Limited opportunity for advancement. Fifty percent of the participants stated they experienced feelings that there were no opportunities for advancement because the leaders do not set achievable goals that would potentially open doors for advancement. Participant 3 stated, "Most career opportunities go to the top of the food chain. We at the lower level get overlooked." Participant 11 stated that leaders never mention goals for providing advancement opportunities in the meetings she attends. When they are mentioned they are stated in general terms, and it stops there.

Theme 7: Inadequate resources to meet work demands. Fifty percent of the participants echoed the leaders had provided overtime to some employees but not others. Participant 7 stated, "I do have more work than I can reasonably finish and there are times I feel disengaged when in excess of overtime is considered as comp time which is scrutinized as to when it can be used." Participant 11 stated,

> The leaders should provide us with the resources that we need to complete our assignments effectively. They should trust us to do the work, instead of holding the information and avoiding sharing it. It is okay to scrutinize us but they need to provide feedback so we will feel confident that we are doing a good job.

Theme 8: Inability to use earned compensatory time. Forty percent of the participants stated they work an excess number of hours without overtime pay. Leadership considers it as comp time, not overtime. Some departments allow different sets of rules for using the accumulated comp time. Participant 2 stated, "

> I don't want to work 50 hours every week and get paid for 40. I end up working a lot of extra time and I don't get paid for it, but I need the income because I'm a single parent.

Participant 5 stated, “I have a problem with the idea that I cannot use my comp time when I need it. I work excessive hours beyond a 40-hour week. I should at least get one day off every other week.”

Theme 9: Uncertainties related to high employee turnover. Forty percent of the participants felt that high employee turnover created an atmosphere of great job uncertainty, leading to employee disengagement. Participant 8 stated, “The turnover rate is over 25% rate, which is rare for all corporations. You only see this type of turnover rate in restaurants. So, this is not seen in a typical office environment. The rate may be even high as 100% in certain groups.”

Summary

The reason for the interview questions was to gain an understanding through one-on-one interviews of how participants perceived their leader’s behaviors and whether those behaviors resulted in employee engagement or disengagement. A recent study showed that leadership behavior can create a significant impact on employee behaviors (Inceoglu, Thomas, Chu, Plans, & Gerbasi, 2018). Eight leadership behaviors that lead to engagement and nine that lead to disengagement (listed in Table 1 and Table 2) emerged based on how the interviewees described their observations of leader behaviors in their organization. An interpretation of the findings, and a discussion of their implications as well as recommendations for future research, are in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of public service nonmanagement employees' perceptions of leader behaviors in a public sector organization. Exploring the lived experiences of the participants led to insights into leader behaviors that engage or disengage employees. The phenomenological method and design guided the study and I used constant comparative analysis with the data. The phenomenological method is an inquiry into the philosophy of meaning based on the investigation of experiences as people live them. Using the qualitative phenomenological approach as a methodology allows for any problem to be studied (Van Manen, 1990). Giorgi's (2009) modified Husserl method of phenomenology guided the data analysis. This process allowed me to break down and assess the collected data reflectively. This approach characterized meaning units in the initial coding, thematizing, and selection of new data in reaching saturation of the analysis process. Therefore, the qualitative paradigm allowed for the feasibility of describing and interpreting the essence of the lived experiences of public service employees as followers in a service initiative environment. This chapter concludes with a discussion on the interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and practical social application of the results and conclusion.

Interpretation of Findings

This section contains a descriptive interpretation of the results of leader behaviors identified in this study based on the participants' lived experiences of engagement and disengagement. Relevant emergent themes developed from qualitative selective coding, and thematic analysis are included in this interpretation section. The 12 study participants provided rich information related to their experiences as public service employees.

Leadership Behaviors That Engage Public Service Employees

Leader/employee collaboration. The participants described one-on-one collaboration, indicating the valuing of their feedback and presence, as the most engaging leader behavior. Collaboration provides guidance and recognition of them doing a good job. Based on the literature, the positive aspects of leader collaboration as a method of engaging employees is that it enhances employees' experiences of positive emotions and better health while decreasing exhaustion and burnout (Bakker, 2011). Bonner, Greenbaum, and Mayer (2016) conducted a multisource field survey study to confirm their theoretical model, organizational citizenship behavior, by studying the influence of leader behavior and employee perception of engagement. The study findings confirmed that morally disengaged leader behavior adversely affects employee job performance.

Leader support of project ownership. Sixty-seven percent of participants stated that leader support of project ownership increased their engagement. Participant 3 stated that he experienced ownership of his projects based on the fact he is the focus in the technology department and that opportunities were available. Because leadership appreciated his skill set, they allowed him to enjoy autonomy at work. Participant P3 asserted that when he attended public meetings, he was recognized for the services he provided to the community and the organization, and this increased his sense of engagement.

Other participants expressed concerns about the behavior of the leaders in meetings. When they shared information at the meetings and the leaders altered the information, they felt undermined about their work. Such experiences created an attitude of disengagement. These findings confirm literature findings that showed employees experienced enjoyment and engagement when they felt appreciated by their leaders (Holbeche & Springett, 2003).

Leader honesty. Thirty eight percent of the participants stated they were inclined to stay with the organization when they perceived the leaders as being honest. Participant 8 stated leader honesty goes a long, and Participant 6 asserted that honesty is “number one.” Both experienced a high level of honesty in their leaders sharing knowledge. When employees perceive the support of honesty from their leaders, they believe their work is meaningful and significant to the organization. This conforms to Holbeche and Springett’s (2003) findings that employees’ positive perceptions of leadership is a core link to engagement.

Leadership Behaviors That Disengage Public Service Employees

Leader micromanagement. Seventy percent of participants stated that being micromanaged by leaders deflated their self-esteem and consequently made them feel that management did not trust them to perform the simplest job tasks (e.g., writing e-mails). Some participants stated they experienced excessive micromanagement based on how they produce written materials required for federal reporting. Serrat (2017) asserted that micromanagement is a form of direct control over employees and systems oversight in a social setting. Micromanagement behaviors take away the ownership of job tasks from employees. Micromanagers constantly check and double check job functions of their subordinates.

Adverse leader behaviors. Christian et al. (2011) asserted that leaders should support engagement in a timely and efficient manner because of the significance of positive leader behaviors. Per the themes identified in Table 2, they often behave quite differently, leading to employee disengagement. When asked what leaders do to disengage her at work, Participant 8 responded, "I get a sense that upper level leaders such as executives and directors don't know what I do daily, and this is problematic for me." Concurrently, Participant 11 and Participant 8 asserted employees want to be recognized beyond the supervisor or manager level and acknowledged for doing a good job.

Employee responses to task assignments, autonomy, and opportunities involves them being allowed to use their skills in significant work. When asked what were some leader behaviors that disengaged him at work, Participant 3 asserted, "My loyalty and engagement are at a low ebb right now. Some work assignments are not interesting or motivating but must be done to satisfy federal regulation compliances. Planning projects involves essentially a lot of red tape." I am inspired to be engaged when I am assigned meaningful work projects.

Nathan (2017) found that non-management employees in non-profit or public service organizations are motivated in different ways than their leaders or executives. Engaged leaders beget engaged employees. When leaders fail to recognize this, their efforts in enhancing or inducing engagement become misguided and create disengagement among the people they lead. More importantly, when employees feel ignored, they experience boredom, and they start to manifest disengagement in a variety of ways, such as excessive tardiness, absenteeism, and disgruntled behaviors (Barnes, & Spangenburg, 2018; Nathan, 2017).

It is far more important for leaders in public service agencies than in any other industry to successfully engage people in the organizations, so as to make a greater impact on the results such as their service deliveries, positive revenue stream, and employee retention (Nathan, 2017). Conversely, adverse leader behaviors such as excessive workload, work–home conflicts, emotional and physical demands lead to disengagement (Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, & Lens, 2008).

Limitations of the Study

The principal aim of examining limitations of the study is to offer the opportunity to assess the research for limits and weaknesses. There were limitations in the study, which included participants opting out of the interview sessions due to some personal scheduling issues, and misunderstandings of the informed consent letter. The letter provided the participant the option to opt out for any reason and without penalty. As stated in Chapter 1, I assumed that the participants would all participate and answer the questions to the best of their knowledge. However, several opted out of 30 potential participants. The final group accepted for the study consisted of 12 non-management public service employees. I mitigated the problem of the participants confusion in understanding some of the research questions by including probing questions, which allowed for richer and thicker data. These were constraints that were out of my control as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2005). Although other potential restrictions could have occurred (e.g., inability to generalize the findings), there were no issues relative to collecting the data after finding a solution to those participants that opted out of the study

Recommendations

I limited this study to the analysis of public service employee participants' experiences of engagement and disengagement at work. The methodological approach was Giorgi's (2009) modified Husserl interpretive approach using the constant comparative analysis of the data. The aim was to investigate how leader behaviors influenced the employee's engagement or disengagement. The findings in this study are not generalizable beyond the participants interviewed in this study. However, I recommend a future research study consisting of a quantitative design using a larger, representative population in a for-profit organization to examine the relationship between the factors/themes/leadership behaviors identified in this study and employee engagement on a scale from fully engaged to fully disengaged.

Implications

The implication of this study for social change rest on the potential of dramatically improving employee engagement while simultaneously decreasing employee disengagement by implementing the eight leadership behaviors that lead to improve engagement (see Table 1) and eliminating the nine negative leadership behaviors that lead to disengagement (see Table 2). Higher employee engagement would lead to more engaged employees, a better working environment, happier and more productive employees. The recommendation for practice is that human resource management take more control in the hiring, training, and development of leaders in public sector organizations based on the leadership behaviors identified in the study to enable them to behave in ways that maximize engagement and minimize disengagement.

Although public service agencies do not have to worry about competition, the social implication in the case of governance would reflect positive transparency to the public on the responsible use of public funds and how they support their employees in a positive manner. Tangible improvements could show that the issue of ineffective management on enhancing employee engagement and mitigating employee disengagement behaviors as a real success.

Conclusions

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of public service non-management employee’s perception of leader behaviors in a public sector organization. Exploring the lived experiences of the participants led to insights into those leader behaviors that engage or disengage such employees. The seventeen identified findings indicate specific leader behaviors that, if put into practice, have the potential to improve non-management public service employees' engagement dramatically, and to the extent that these leader behaviors are generalizable, the engagement of employees in for-profit and other organizations as well, thereby improving employee productivity and satisfaction while lowering turnover cost.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Good morning (afternoon). My name is Beverlyn Banks. Thank you for choosing to participate in my study. This is an individual one-on- one interview process for up to 45 minutes to an hour. The purpose of this interview session is to get your perspectives on engagement and disengagement behaviors in your working environment. I will ask you a series of questions about your experiences as a public service employee at your current workplace and about your perception of the behavior and leadership style that oversee your performance. Some probing questions may be asked for clarification when needed.

Part 2. The researcher describes how the sessions will be conducted. The interview sessions will be recorded using a digital audio recorder. I assure you; the recorded data will remain confidential without reference to any person that you know. All original data will be stored and secured on a password protected USB drive that I will lock away in a file cabinet in my home under a lock and key for a period of 5 years. After the 5-year period, I will then destroy the USB drive by crushing it with a hard object, thus making it inoperable.

Part 3. The researcher describes the importance of the informed consent. You will be asked to sign an informed consent form to participate in the study. To protect your privacy the consent form is the only area that discloses the name of the participant. After signing, the participants name will be replaced with a code on the transcript to protect their identity. Although participants may not be anonymous to me**,** their identity will remain confidential in accordance with the school policy. Do you have any further questions? Before we get started, please take a few minutes to read and sign the consent form.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Open Ended Interview Questions

1. Based on your experiences as a public service employee, what things do your leaders do that engage/involve you in your work, thereby increasing your loyalty to the organization and your commitment to doing your best work?

2. Based on your experiences as a public service employee, what things do your leaders do that disengage/alienate you from your work, thereby decreasing your loyalty to the organization and your commitment to doing your best work?

Probing Questions

3. Follow up with probing questions as necessary to examine in-depth public service employee perceptions of leadership behaviors that engage or disengage them from their organization and their work.

Appendix C: Pilot Study

The purpose of this current pilot test (instrument) is to pre-test the interview questionnaire using 3 participants in a face-to-face setting to ensure the information is clear and concise during the interview process, moving forward to the actual study. Prior to the scheduled date for the pilot test, the community partner will send out emails inviting employees to participate in the research study. The participants will be allowed enough time to respond to the invitation. The community partner will maintain a list of volunteers and contact me when the desired number participants are accounted for. Next, I will provide the community partner with a schedule date for appointments with the participants.

Step by step procedures include the following steps for each day of the interview sessions in the pilot and actual study:

Daily Activities

- I will setup the conference room assigned by community partner with the necessary materials for use in the interview session (i.e. interview question questionnaires, digital recording device, informed consent forms secured in an envelope) on the conference table.
- I will meet with each participant in a conference room and introduce myself to them.
- I will ask participants to read and sign the consent form and provide a copy of the consent to each participant
- To begin the interview, I will turn on the tape recorder
- I will read the instructions for taking the survey to the participant
- I will ask participants if the instructions are clear and take any questions.
- Next, I will ask the first question, followed by any clarification needed such as when participants use slang or jargon when responding to questions.
- I will repeat when I heard the participant say to make sure I understand what was said. I will ask the participant if there is any more information they would like to add before moving to the second question
- Once all interview questions have been responded to, I will thank the participant for volunteering in the study and indicate to them that this is the end of their participation in the stud. I will then turn off the recorder and participant will leave the conference room.

Appendix D: Demographics

Gender	Name	Tenure (Years)
F	P1-Employee	3.5
F	P2-Employee	8
M	P3-Employee	11.5
F	P4-Employee	10
M	P5-Supervisor	16
M	P6-Supervisor	3
M	P7-Employee	20
F	P8-Employee	5
F	P9-Employee	10
F	P10-Employee	5
F	P11-Employee	3
F	P12-Employee	8