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Employee Engagement Strategies to Increase Innovation

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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2019

Abstract

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MS, Drexel University, 2013

BS, Temple University, 2004

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Human resources leaders (HRLs) who fail to embrace employee innovation are at risk of jeopardizing the organization's competitive advantage. Organizational leadership and employees stand to benefit from innovation, as employee innovation can aid in establishing a competitive advantage and survivability. Grounded in the transformational leadership conceptual framework, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore employee engagement strategies HRLs use to increase innovation. The participants included 5 HRLs at small human resource management firms in the northeast area of the United States who used engagement strategies to increase innovation. Data were collected from interviews with the HRLs, company websites, and social media pages. A thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Four themes emerged: cross-team assessment, communication tools, measurement tools, and recognition strategies. The application of the findings from this study could contribute to positive social change by providing insights for HRLs on employee engagement strategy implementation for talent retention that increases workplace stability and employees supporting their families as well as contributing positively to their communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctorate degree to my son, Nafiz, and my family. Nafiz, your encouraging words helped me reached this goal! Telling me “you got this” and “I am proud of you, Mom” was all I needed to get through. Dad, this degree belongs to you; it’s your achievement too. Mom, thank you for the constant phrase, “my daughter has tenacity”; it helped me more than you know. To my brother, although you may not know this, you reminded me that there is light at the end of the tunnel. To my sister, you have personally witnessed my past three years of writing, writing, and writing tirelessly, and I want you to know your words of encouragement kept me focused. To my nephew, I hope this dedication reminds you that you can achieve anything in life with determination. To my grandmother, Etta Mae: I did it! To my extended family and dearest friends, thank you for the warm sentiments of good luck and reminders to keep going. Last but certainly not least, may this academic achievement propel Phoenix Rise Global Group, LLC, into unlimited financial success!

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I want to also acknowledge all my professors, Walden University staff, and colleagues I had the pleasure of working with and wish you all continued success.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Organizational leaders adopt different strategies to foster creative and innovative behavior for competitive advantage and survival (Gumusluoglu, Karakitapoglu-Aygun, & Scandura, 2017). Substantial evidence indicates that the main source of organizational innovation and competitive advantage is employee creativity (Ma & Jiang, 2018). Therefore, organizational leaders seek ways to encourage creativity among employees (Ma & Jiang, 2018). In this study, I explored strategies human resource leaders (HRLs) use to promote employee engagement strategies to increase innovation.

Background of the Problem

Employee engagement has been defined as an individual's sense of purpose and focused energy, evident to others in the display of personal initiative, adaptability, effort, and persistence directed toward organizational goals (Carter, Nesbit, Badham, Parker, & Kuo Sung, 2018). While companies have reported employee engagement and creative culture to be their top people-related challenges, the reality may be buried in a lack of HRLs understanding innovative employee engagement strategies (Matthews, 2018). Some leaders struggle to engage with employees, on both a personal and professional level, to discover what motivates employees and develop a bond with employees to work collaboratively. Leaders unable to engage with employees may be unable to strengthen creativity, productivity, and commitment to enhance business performance (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2015). Engaged employees may become innovators creating a competitive edge for businesses. Organizational leaders may ignore the importance of cross-team innovative behaviors (Gumusluoglu et al., 2017). Innovativeness can be an attribute of culture that addresses the openness to new ideas (Stanczyk, 2017). Creating a climate for innovation may influence improved organizational results and may provide change in patterns of interaction and successively lead to adaptive behavior and performance.

Problem Statement

Leadership's inability to innovate may diminish effective ways to develop creativity and encourage employees to achieve personal progress to achieve better innovation performance (Kostis, Kafka, & Petrakis, 2017). Ninety-four percent of leaders surveyed concluded that people and culture are the most important promoters of innovation in organizations, which is critical in sustaining a competitive advantage, improving productivity and profitability (Fu, Flood, Bosak, Morris, & O'Regan, 2015). The general business problem is HRLs who do not encourage employees to innovate can experience decreased competitive advantage, productivity, and profitability. The specific business problem is that some HRLs lack employee engagement strategies to increase innovation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore employee engagement strategies that HRLs use to increase innovation. The targeted population consisted of five HRLs at small human resource management firms in the northeast area of the United States who use engagement strategies to increase innovation. Implications for social change include greater exposure to innovative products available for consumers, which generates more purchases, driving local economic growth.

Nature of the Study

Researchers use one of three methodologies—quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods—to investigate phenomenon. According to Park and Park (2016), the goal of a qualitative researcher is to understand and explore the descriptive accounts, similarities, and differences of various social phenomena. I decided the most appropriate method for my study was qualitative research. A qualitative method was appropriate for this doctoral study to gain information related to business decision-making processes (Yin, 2018). Conversely, quantitative research involves two primary methods of data analysis: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (Taguchi, 2018). Employing either descriptive or inferential statistics was not appropriate for this study because descriptive statistics provide information about the distribution of data, including frequency counts, means, and standard deviation and inferential statistics involve a set of statistical techniques that researchers use to generalize about the data (Taguchi, 2018). In mixed-methods research, quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques are combined in a variety of ways that range from simple, concurrent forms to more complex and sequential forms (Saunders et al., 2015). Mixed method was not appropriate for this study because mixed methods researchers use quantitative and qualitative methods in combination systematically to reinforce each other to gain a deeper understanding of phenomena (Taguchi, 2018).

The three qualitative research designs I considered were ethnography, interpretive phenomenology, and multiple case study. An ethnographic design focus is the study of groups and communities to observe behaviors, culture, ideologies, beliefs, and language that are shared by a group (Mol, Silva, Rocha, & Ishitani, 2017). Hence, ethnographic research is usually derived from observations of a group conducted by the researcher, who is typically within the community to observe the daily life and interactions of the group to elaborate complex descriptions and to look for patterns that differentiate the studied group from others (Mol et al., 2017). Ethnography design was not appropriate for this study because ethnographers seek to separate a unique population and explore the uniqueness of the culture.

An interpretive phenomenological design is an experience-based and text-oriented approach (Adam & van Manen, 2017). Furthermore, Adam and van Manen (2017) contended interpretive phenomenologists seek to produce cognitive and noncognitive knowledge forms that can contribute to increased insights, thoughtfulness, and tact of researchers. Interpretive phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study because the ongoing and dynamic learning developments in the humanities, the arts, and the social sciences as sources for data and disciplinary methods are typically drawn out, slow, and reflective on lived examples, which can be time consuming. Whereas, multiple case study was appropriate for this research because the design can be used as an in-depth inquiry into a topic or phenomenon within its real-life setting (Yin, 2018). Furthermore, the rationale for using multiple cases is to discover whether findings can be replicated across cases and is likely to produce more evidence from other organizations (Saunders et al., 2015). The multiple case study research design was appropriate because it had the capacity to generate insights from intensive and in-depth research into the study of a phenomenon in its real-life context, leading to rich, empirical descriptions with the potential for developing theory (Saunders et al., 2015).

Research Question

What employee engagement strategies do human resource leaders use to increase innovation?

Interview Questions

1. What specific engagement strategies do you use to cultivate innovation?
2. What engagement strategies do you use to cultivate cross-team innovation and creativity?
3. What communication tools do you use to introduce engagement strategies that increase innovation?
4. What measurement tools do you use to evaluate engagement strategies that increase innovation?
5. How do you recognize employees who increase innovation?
6. What else can you share with me about the engagement strategies your organization uses to increase innovation?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this qualitative case study was transformational leadership theory. Transformational leadership theory is the process of influencing other people, so they are motivated to contribute to the achievement of collective goals (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2015). Haslam et al. (2015) further mentioned transformational leadership involves harnessing the power of others, whether to meet existing goals or move toward new ones. The term *transformational leadership* was introduced as a business concept by Downton in 1973 but gained prevalence as a theory in 1978 through Burns' and then Bass’s (1985) scholarship on transformational leadership (Andersen, 2018). Further, Burns illustrated the relationship between leaders and followers within an organization (Anderson, 2018). Transformational leadership evolved out of critiques of transactional leadership theory in which leaders separated themselves from followers and lacked tenets of influence (Haslam et al., 2015).

Transformational leadership theory has been one of the most researched topics in leadership and is recognized as the style of leadership that enhances consciousness among an organization’s members to achieve collective goals (Raj & Srivastava, 2017). This kind of leadership provides a vision and a mission and encourages problem solving and rationality among followers. Importantly, transformational leadership theory can enhance innovation and secure a sustainable competitive advantage for company leaders (Raj & Srivastava, 2017). Transformational leadership theory was fundamental to this doctoral study because a workplace promoting a culture of employee development, innovation, and enthusiasm aids in enhancing organizational performance, growth, and creativity. Through transformational leadership strategies, leaders and followers focus and collaborate to collectively advance the mission and vision of a company.

Operational Definitions

The following operational definitions provide meaning for some of the specialized terms used throughout the study.

Competitive positioning: A company has a competitive advantage when it is possible to achieve an advantageous position resulting from the superiority of the service offered on the market (Dombrowski, Krenkel, & Willbrandt, 2018).

Innovative engagement strategies: When an employee generates ideas for new products or services to improve firm competitiveness (Osman et al., 2016).

Job satisfaction: One of the most analyzed attitudes in organizational behavior, defined as the degree to which an individual positively evaluates their job experiences (Abelha, Carneiro, & Cavazotte, 2018).

Talent management strategies: A comprehensive, department-wide program designated to improve employees' satisfaction, strengthen workplace learning, and help employees better manage changes and transitions (Bahrami, 2018).

Positive workforce culture: High performance work systems that encourage the belief among employees that greater effort at work will lead to higher rewards, fostering their motivation (Beltran-Martin, Bou-Llusar, Roca-Puig, & Escrig-Tena, 2017).

Self-actualization: The need for personal growth and development that exists throughout life (Tripathi & Moakumla, 2018).

Corporate social responsibility: Actions that "extend beyond immediate profit maximization goals and are intended to increase benefits or mitigate social problems for constituencies external to the firm" (Hoi, Wu, & Zhang, 2018, pp. 648).

Transformational leadership: Influencing others so they are motivated to contribute to the achievement of collective goals (Haslam et al., 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions in research are suppositions not proven (Ellis & Levy, 2009). I made three assumptions for this study. The first assumption was that participants in this study would answer questions honestly. Second, I assumed that participants would openly discuss the topic of innovative employee engagement strategies relative to their firms. Third, I assumed that participants would offer successful engagement strategies and describe how those strategies improved productivity and increased profitability.

Limitations are potential weaknesses outside the researcher's control in a study (Matza et al., 2015). This study had multiple potential limitations: (a) finding leaders to interview who used engagement strategies to increase innovation; (b) time restrictions and limited availability of the participant pool, potentially causing challenges in time, effort, and planning; and (c) geographical limitations for locating leaders within a commutable vicinity. The data collected from participants were based on their personal perceptions of the interview questions and their leadership experiences.

Qualitative study delimitations are those factors used to restrict the scope of the research (Yin, 2018). In this study, three delimitations were examined. First, the parameters of the study only included HRLs in the northeast region of the United States, which excluded other populations outside this demographic. Second, only business leaders in the human resource industry participated in this study. Third, only business leaders who worked in human resource management for at least 5 years participated in this study.

Significance of the Study

The findings from this study could be significant because the leaders' innovative engagement strategies found might contribute to the successful practice of business, especially for small human resource management firms in the northeast region of the United States, the tri-state area of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Small business ownership represents over 59.8% of New Jersey businesses, and Pennsylvania is the 34th largest economy in the United States (Small Business Association [SBA], 2016). The implications for social change from this study could strengthen local workforce commitment and promote gainful employment within the local communities and the U.S. economy. HRLs can use my findings as a reference guide to create a positive workforce culture for encouraging a successful innovative business environment.

Contribution to Business Practice

The discovery and experiences gained from this multiple case study could lead to a better understanding of how HRLs implement successful employee engagement strategies that increase innovation. A firm's innovativeness is one of the most important core competencies needed to secure its sustainable competitive advantage in an ever-changing business environment (Raj & Srivastava, 2016). For innovation to be successful, leaders and employees who champion individual innovations and innovation activities must also take on leadership roles (Ross, 2016). HRLs might be able to apply these successful innovative engagement strategies to improve their competitive positioning in an increasingly difficult business environment.

Implications for Social Change

This doctoral study has implications for social change by enriching the community with local innovators who work to stabilize the local marketplace. Employee engagement leads to consistency in the workplace and longevity in the job. Boosting local economies through employee creativity helps establish a stable and consistent exchange of goods and services, which fuels wellness and prosperity in communities (McBeath, 2015). Social wellness aids in improving quality of life.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore employee engagement strategies that HRLs use to increase innovation. Leadership's inability to innovate may diminish effective ways to develop an entrepreneurial culture that boosts innovative activity and thus maintains a competitive advantage (Kostis et al., 2017). Ninety-four percent of leaders surveyed concluded that people and culture are the most important promoters of innovation in organizations, which is critical in sustaining a competitive advantage and improving productivity and profitability (Fu et al., 2015). While not exhaustive, the articles in this literature review provide a purpose, summary, and research philosophy that supports my research problem.

In this literature review section, I provide a detailed exploration on previous case studies and scholarly articles regarding transformational leadership and employee engagement strategies to increase innovation. The purpose of this literature review was to offer an understanding about the topic of engagement strategies and leadership's role in encouraging employees to increase innovation. In this literature review, I identified various perspectives and gaps in the current body of knowledge. The following topics are highlighted in this literature review: (a) transformational leadership, (b) alternate theories, (c) innovation strategies, (d) organizational strategies, (e) change management and sustainability, (f) performance and social responsibility, and (g) global innovation strategies.

The sources for this literature review included academic peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, books written by experts in the field of innovation and leadership, and academic studies available through the Walden University Library and Google Scholar. My primary keyword search terms were *innovative leadership, employee engagement, organizational development*, *encouraging employees*, *job satisfaction, positive workforce culture,* and *employee performance*. I searched multiple databases for sources through the Walden Library: ProQuest, ABI/INFPRM Collection, Business Market Resource Collection, SAGE Premier, Thoreau Multi-Database, Canadian Business and Current Affairs Database, Psychology Database, and Dissertations and Theses @Walden University. This search produced a profile of 175 relevant sources, with 85 directly contributing to this review. Of those 85 sources, 85% were peer-reviewed journals, and 89% were published from 2015–2019. As shown in Table 1, the summary of the reference types used in this study and their currency by year and percentage.

Table 1

Summary of Reference Types and Their Currency

	Older	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total	%
Peer-reviewed journals	15	19	32	47	45	9	167	95.42%
Dissertations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Government publications	0	1	1	1	0	0	3	1.71%
Textbooks	2	1	1	0	1	0	5	2.87%
Total	17	21	34	48	46	9	175	100%

Conceptual Framework: Transformational Leadership

The theory used to understand workplace dynamics was transformational leadership theory. Transformational leaders may provide insights into strategies to motivate, retain, and enhance the skill sets of employees (Trepanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2012). The basic premise of transformational leadership theory is that a leader possesses the skills to develop successful relationships with followers in an environment where both leader and follower strive to meet organizational goals necessary to fulfill the organization’s vision (Rolfe, 2011). A transformational leader can bring about positive changes in followers’ attitudes, perceptions, and expectations (Tyssen, Wald, & Spieth, 2014).

Transformational leadership theory evolved from the scholarly research of Burns (1978), who provided that transformational leaders foster employee engagement, innovation, organizational commitment and citizenship behavior, job performance, job satisfaction, team performance, and trust (Drcuypere, Audenaert, & Decramer, 2018). Burns indicated the tenets of transformational leadership theory include (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration.

Arthur and Hardy (2014) investigated the impact of transformational leadership theory on companies with poorly skilled leaders and found that providing leaders with skill sets demonstrative of transformational leadership aided in boosting organizational performance, ingenuity, creative culture, and employee motivation, retention, and engagement. Arthur and Hardy (2014) concluded that transformational leaders fostered positivity and collaboration in a workplace. Men (2014) investigated transformational leaders and their impact on employee creativity and job satisfaction and found that leader skill sets had the greatest influence on workplace attitude, collaboration, and creativity. Creativity is essential in businesses whose primary purpose is to innovate as a means of gaining a competitive edge in the marketplace.

Transformational leadership theory has a profound impact on how researchers and business leaders understand organizational behavior and employee motivation and retention. Transformational leaders demonstrate capabilities to engage employees and work collaboratively to harness employee potential and navigate stakeholders successfully to gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Transformational leaders draw creativity and innovation from employees to boost organizational performance (Men, 2014).

Transformational leadership theory is an appropriate framework to understand leadership strategies to enhance innovation and retain employees. Transformational leaders are equipped with the skill sets required to draw these qualities from employees through mentoring, collaborating, motivating, and recognizing appropriate behaviors (Pradhan & Jena, 2019). Based on the tenets of transformational leadership theory as a guide in this doctoral study, findings from transformational leaders interviewed may provide insights on strategies used to strengthen innovation, retention, and organizational performance.

Alternative Theories

Human capital theory. Becker (1962) introduced human capital theory and explained the correlation between the level of training provided to employees and employee credentials and the degree of compensation provided in accordance with these attributes. The expectation is that time and financial investment in training and education create benefits for the employee and the organization. Becker underscored that compensation correlates directly to experience and training, and as training, education, and experience increase, so do pay, recognition, and responsibilities in an organization. Employees gain training and experience to avoid layoffs and to improve employability. Organizational leaders invest in training to improve an organization's performance and standing in the competitive market (Seong-O & Patterson, 2014).

Turnover is costly to businesses; therefore, a business leader may reduce commitment to training expenses fearing that employees may leave the company with the newly acquired skills, thus draining resources from the company and fueling the employee with skills as they leave. This activity clearly benefits the competition and burdens the organization to recruit qualified individuals who already possess the desired training. However, in specific cases, the investment in specific training may ensure job security for employees, enticing them to remain with the company (Seong-O & Patterson).

Business success depends on employee engagement and commitment to the vision and mission of an organization. Human capital is the legacy of work experience paired with sufficient training to equip a company with the skill sets needed to navigate the competitive market successfully (Harpan & Draghici, 2014). Harpan and Draghici (2014) explained that human capital should focus on the financial benefits associated with remaining relevant in the competitive market and on generating creativity and innovation to dominate in the competitive market. Harpan and Draghici (2014) and Gamerschlag (2013) agreed that fortifying human capital through appropriate training, education, and experience leads to sustainable competitive advantage.

Mackey, Molloy, and Morris (2014) highlighted that the scarcity of human capital in most organizations creates long-term sustainability challenges. The scarcity of human capital could result as a natural phenomenon and impose organizational meltdowns. Gamerschlag (2013) indicated that an abundance of employee experience and competency established in a company’s human capital always reflects positively on the company’s market value. Investors gain appreciation for the potential growth opportunities resulting from investment into human capital. This investment, above all others into the company’s strategies for growth, may have the most influence on company reputation, competitive edge, and commitment and retention of employees. Retention of employees lends to the long-term stability of a company.

The challenge for companies who focus on human capital is the risk of employee's separating from the organization and taking the skills provided by the company with them. The investment in training an employee to become talented and valuable to the company, is lost in the costs of training, and recruiting new replacement employees, who may again, require the training to add value to the company. These costs are not often avoidable to retain a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Yongbeom, 2013). Further, the losses negatively impact a company's productivity and profits. As a company increases its investment in employee training, the employee is less inclined to remain with the company once job satisfaction erodes. This results from the increased market value of the employee and their capacity to gain meaningful employment, with more diverse opportunities elsewhere (Yongbeom, 2013. The turnover rate for highly skilled employees exceeds lower skilled employees in high technology industries. Yongbeom (2013) indicated that low job satisfaction related to lack of recognition or engagement with skilled employees, leads to increased voluntary turnover. Most importantly, Wei (2015) argued that a well performing HR practice enhances the develop of employees and improves retention rates of skilled employees across industries.

While human capital theory is valuable when exploring the contribution of training and experience, the focus only on training and experience limits the investigation and does not focus on the influence of creativity and innovation. Human capital remains a focus for business leaders while they look for ways to accentuate the attributes of their employee base. It is equally important to broaden the scope of how to strengthen human capital, through appropriate leadership, engagement with employees to improve communication and establish meaningful relationships with employees; and enhance innovation by building employee skill sets to remain relevant in the competitive marketplace. Therefore, I did not select human capital theory as the conceptual framework for the doctoral study.

Servant leadership. Servant leadership is a style of leadership in which the leader positions himself amongst his followers. While Robert Greenleaf (1970) brought this leadership style into the corporate spotlight, it was not until nearly the turn of the 21st century that it began garnering any meaningful research attention from leadership scholars and experts (Gandolfi, Stone, & Deno, 2017). Servant leaders are as proactive, ambitious, and driven as any other leader (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). As well as focusing on the development of followers and empowering followers through mentoring, servant leaders also stress the importance of creating value outside of the organization by working in the interest of those in the wider community (Newman, Neesham, Manville, & Tse, 2017). In fact, what differentiates servant leadership from other styles of leadership is the primary focus on the follower first (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). The basis of follower first leadership was not appropriate for this study.

Adaptive leadership. As the name of the approach implies, adaptive leadership is about how leaders adapt to respond to problems, challenges, and changes. The theory of adaptive leadership suggests that anyone can be called to lead, whether it be in a Boy Scout troop or Fortune 500 corporation (Woolard, 2018). Hence, adaptive leaders believe concepts of leadership and change are inseparable, and that failure often occurs when leaders fail to recognize the difference between technical changes and adaptive changes

(Woolard, 2018). Moreover, the use of adaptive leadership is about helping others change and grow (Jefferies, 2017). Jefferies (2017) further mentioned the adaptive approach, unlike most other leadership approaches, is more of a process. Adaptive leadership was not used in this doctoral study; however, hints of relevancy are evident regarding the ability to adapt to change as it occurs and resolve through improvement planning.

Path-goal theory. Path-goal theory is about how leaders motivate followers to accomplish designated goals. Path-goal leadership increases the motivation of members due to the payoffs of accomplishing work goals (Bickle, 2017). Further, Bickle (2017) asserted leaders achieve this by understanding member needs and test requirements, and then shifting their leadership style to motivate their members to complete the task. The underlying premise of path-goal theory is effective leaders clearly articulate attainable goals and remove obstacles that stand in the way of goal attainment (Phillips & Phillips, 2016). In brief, path-goal theory is designed to explain how leaders can help followers along the path to their goals by selecting specific behaviors that are best suited to followers' needs and to the situation in which followers are working.

Leaders increase followers' expectations for success and satisfaction regarding path-goal theory. Leaders who apply directive (guidance and structure), supportive (nurturance and support), participative (environment of active decision-making), and achievement-oriented (challenges to excel) tend to encourage greater employee engagement (Bickle, 2017). Path-goal theory although relevant in how leaders accomplished designate goals, the theory was not relevant for this doctoral study.

Innovation Strategies

Innovation performance. Small professional service firm leaders can incorporate innovative performance in operational services and building relationships with customers and partners by incorporating engagement strategies. According to Cheng and Sheu (2017), the mechanisms of collaborative innovation in services include the activation of relevant capabilities, underlying successful innovation that is a deep and broad innovation search trajectory and leadership that is the mobilization of diverse participants. Comparatively, Soken and Barnes (2014) asserted leaders of organizations need to establish clarity of purpose around innovation so that people feel that the organization truly sees innovation as a business priority. The common theme in the literature is leadership adapting skills to groom innovation strategies to remain competitive in the global market. Tunney (2017) remarked innovation as that process companies use to gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace, and to increase their ability to generate wealth. The concept of innovation performance consists of two main components, the promotion of innovation culture and the relationship between company owners, customers, and partners.

Innovation engagement. HRLs strategically utilize innovation engagement to promote cooperation of creativity. Proactive strategic scanning is an anticipatory, self-initiated behavior that aims at influencing the organization's strategy to improve its fit with the external environment, for example, by identifying opportunities and threats (Strobel, Tumasjan, Sporrle, & Welpe, 2017). Moreover, Strobel et al. (2017) asserted proactive behavior is fueled by an individual's proactive motivation, which originates from individual difference characteristics (personality and values), contextual conditions (social context) and the interaction of these two determinants. Conversely, the concept of leader–member exchange significantly influenced job engagement and innovative behavior but did not significantly affect organization engagement (Kim & Koo, 2017). Kim and Koo (2017) emphasized job engagement significantly affected organization engagement and innovative behavior but did not significantly influence job performance. Kim and Koo (2017) retorted the findings in their study suggested that an immediate leader plays a critical role in fostering engagement, behavior, and performance. Inversely, Liat (2017) earmarked perceptions of learning climate fostering engagement refers to the employee perceptions of organization's learning activities from which employees can benefit to create, acquire, and transfer knowledge to meet an organization's strategic goals. Innovative engagement strategy is designed to improve efficiency in the workplace and drive a problem-solving environment.

Competitive innovation. Leaders who apply competitiveness provide a framework of practices on how to develop innovation strategies. By establishing practices of support framework, a leader may provide an open forum allowing innovation training, developing new services, and reengineering existing services. According to Ross (2016) to have effective innovation and sustainable innovation in business, a business leader must proactively establish the right conditions for a holistic and systematic work environment. Comparatively, Ryu, Lee, and Choi (2015) remarked a well-planned service innovation strategy is recognized as a prerequisite for successful service innovation in organizations. Effective and innovative leadership is a major focus of organizational development success.

Gumusluoglu et al. (2017) contended enhancing innovative behaviors across teams is vital for organizations relying on large-scale, complex, and multiteam projects to compete in a dynamic environment of innovation engagement. Further, Gumusluoglu et al. (2017) remarked that to achieve such innovation, leadership is needed to enhance the innovative capabilities of teams through coordination of their expertise and collective actions. Pointedly, Gumusluoglu et al. (2017) described benevolent leadership (BL), as a style of leadership related to workplace outcomes such as organizational commitment, loyalty, and trust in leaders. Benevolent leaders not only motivate their subordinates but also foster a family feeling among subordinates and increase their identification to both their teams and departments which in turn facilitates collaboration within and across teams (Gumusluoglu et al., 2017). Comparatively, Tian and Sanchez (2017) explained benevolent leaders carefully weigh the social implications of their actions and, in doing so, aim to foster a supportive environment that permeates supervisor support, warmth, and friendliness. The BL component of paternalistic leadership has revealed a consistently positive effect on a variety of employee outcomes, including identification and satisfaction with the leader; trust, organizational commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior.

Opposing theories such as destructive and power-based negative leadership, inversely impact the positive outcomes of innovation engagement. Xuanfang (2017) remarked destructive leadership is regarded as power-based negative, or improper behavior by an organization's leader toward the organization's internal or external stakeholders. Hence, this behavior targets both the organization (such as theft and corruption) and subordinates (such as abuse and retaliation) and may be intentional (suppressing or exploiting subordinates) or may simply result from a bad temper (Xuanfang, 2017). Importantly, if employees perceive the failure of a doctoral innovation their perception may lead to abuse or reprimand from a leader, and they may discontinue the process of emotional input to idea development (Xuanfang, 2017). The need to actively embed innovation engagement in the firm's mission and values; empower an innovation culture; fund innovation; support a culture of diversity through proactive recruitment, retention; and reward policies and measure innovation influences ensures successful outcomes (Ross, 2016).

Innovative employee engagement. Employee engagement is fundamentally one of most important elements in increasing innovation across an organization. Rao (2017) contended employee engagement is about connecting the hands, heads, and hearts of the employees with the vision and mission of their organizations. Individuals who experience high-quality working relationships with their supervisors are regarded more innovative as compared to those who experience low-quality exchange relationships and no leader support and encouragement to handle risks in a working environment, which may promote non-innovative behavior (Garg & Dhar, 2017). Further, Garg and Dhar (2017) denoted the unique relationship between the employee and supervisor, builds over time as a consequence of expected roles and fulfillment of those expected roles by the employee and his/her supervisor. Pointedly, Kim and Park (2017) agreed with Garg and Dhar

(2017) and Rao (2017) that employee work engagement leads to enhanced individual and/or group performance. In summary then, leaders should pay special attention to employees who recognize problems in processes and are engaged in offering ideas or solutions towards innovation.

Innovation growth models. Leaders in organizations recognize the importance of growth across all departments within the organization, especially regarding innovation, which is crucial in keeping, and maintaining a competitive advantage. Barch, Cappozzi, and Davidson (2016) posited innovation needs not only to be encouraged, but also managed, tracked, and measured as a core element in a company's growth aspirations. A sample of 600 leaders and professionals indicated that the top two motivators of behavior to promote innovative growth models are strong leaders who encourage employees and protect top executives who spend their time actively managing and driving growth (Barch et al., 2016). Inherently, leaders find more success by engaging employees to work in innovative ways to drive growth for competitive advantage.

Employee innovation performance. Emerging economies strive to become innovation-based and boost employee creativity to increase work performance. Leaders focus on employee performance to accomplish organizational goals and relate their interpersonal behaviors to the organizational norms (Osman, Shariff, & Lajin, 2016). Further, Osman et al. (2016) remarked employee performance improves firm performance indirectly through innovation as employees generates ideas for new products or services to improve the competitiveness of the firm. Sani, Yozgat, and Cakarel (2016) commented if employees' competencies, skills, ideas, and labor are effective in business operations, then employees will experience positive outcomes in performance. Altindag and Kosedagi (2015) countered that to improve the performance of employees, it is necessary to recognize innovative abilities in staff and distinguish between successful and unsuccessful performance in staff. Importantly, employee performance is the conduit and link between employee creativity and increased work performance regarding innovation.

Innovation trajectory. Innovation trajectory is an important concept for leaders to model when benchmarking their company on its relative level of innovation success. The solution to the low-performance impact of isolated innovation strategies may be found in innovation streams or innovation trajectories, in which the pursuit of multiple innovation types is incorporated in a company's long-term strategy (Prange & Schlegelmilch, 2016). Leaders recognize the importance of long-term goals and the trajectory of those goals relative to employee performance to increase innovation.

Organizational Strategies

Organizational innovation climate. A key factor instrumental to improving the organizational innovation climate is knowledge sharing behavior. According to Ullah, Aktar, Shahzadi, Farooq, and Yasmin (2016), noted that knowledge is considered as one of the major assets in the innovative competitive environment in developed countries, since knowledge is the only factor, which can suggest change and innovation in businesses. Yang (2016) asserted a team-level incivility climate can provide context for reduced coordinated work behaviors that are necessary to promote work team-driven organizational innovation. In contrast to Yang (2016) and Ullah et al. (2016), Glisson (2015) contended a collaborative organizational climate is created by employees' shared perceptions of the psychological impact of their work environment on their own personal well-being and functioning. Yang (2016) noted workplace incivility is low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Yang (2016) further remarked examining the relationship between incivility and innovation at the team level is particularly useful given that organizational innovation is frequently considered a collective initiative of members involved in the process. Sethibe and Steyn (2016) mentioned organizational climate plays an important role in the innovation of an organization.

Organizational innovation. A crucial factor to consider in organizational innovation is the direction of leadership's influence to drive innovation. According to Jia, Chen, Mei, and Wu (2018) by introducing supportive organizational practices that influence the innovation capabilities and behaviors of organizational members; leaders create conditions within the firm that facilitates the generation and implementation of organizational innovations. Jia et al. (2018) and Rasheed et al. (2017) concurred with Shanker, Bhanugopan, Van der Heijden, and Farrell (2017) that leaders who understand how to positively impact the climate of innovation and work behavior supportive of innovativeness will create the most opportunities for innovation in their organizations which, in turn, may enhance the overall performance of an organizations.

A positive climate is a key component for employees to feel supported and free to add ideas to the organization. Allen, Adomdza, and Meyer (2015) contended organizational innovation is investigating openness, supporting innovation efforts, and promoting value in employee participation to innovate. Additionally, Allen et al. (2015)

asserted an important management practice in influencing participation in innovation is within managerial control. Contrawise, Stefan and Bengtsson (2017) opined that organizational innovation is linked to managerial mechanisms that support the efforts of the organization performance. Further, Smith (2017) remarked system practices are implemented by management, and that leaders should also integrate innovation as protocols in resources. Importantly, leaders exercise various levels of control over employees and this control is considered an integral part of effective employee management (Smith, 2017).

Smith (2017) conducted a study to examine how stronger focuses on work-learning and its personal enactment of collective activities that comprise individuals' practice and its circumstances can help clarify the work emergent nature of innovation. Additionally, innovation is viewed as a context-dependent of transformation and the practice of that transformation appears in organized activity. Organizational innovators recognize that workers' contributions generate a range of innovations which enhances their work and occupational circumstances. In opposition, Stefan and Bengtsson (2017) focused on the openness to collaborate generates external actors across the innovation process and does however not come without challenges. Furthermore, opening for innovation significantly increases limitation and risks and such risks are present across all stages of the innovation process. Importantly, the relationship between openness and appropriability may have severe impact on the performance outcomes of external search. Contrary to Smith (2017) and Stefan and Bengtsson (2017), Allen et al. (2015) explained human resource support of innovation efforts is a fundamental source in driving organizational innovation.

Creative work climate. In self-leadership, the employee's creativity and workplace innovative orientation moderates the creativity climate of the organization. According to Ghosh (2015) creative work climate and innovation enables an organization to improve its competitiveness and promote long-term success. Creative work climate is an example of conceptual representation of organized information embedded in a social–cognitive context (Watts, Steele, Medeiros, & Mumford, 2017). Leaders who apply a cognitive aspect, creative a work climate perceived and experienced by individuals due to each person's unique history (Watts et al., 2017). Conversely, Arsenijevic, Jovanovic, and Radasvljevic (2017) indicated organizational creativity is made of many related elements, which are often categorized as structure, people, processes, awards, and tasks or working systems that together can make unique organizational skills that are bringing competitive advantage. Similarly to Watts et al. (2017) mentioned innovation and creativity are intrinsically linked, in which creativity is the emergence of new ideas innovation which requires the implementation of those creative ideas (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2015). Leaders want to conceptualize differences between idea creation and innovation to stimulation a creative work climate.

Innovative institution and culture. Leaders have a responsibility to the organization to promote innovation and openness. Shanker et al. (2017), and Altindag and Kosedagi, (2015), and Kostis et al. (2017) collectively explained that innovation performance is linked to stimulating an innovative work environment. Additionally, Shanker et al. (2017) studied why employee knowledge is crucial if organizations are to innovate a competitive advantage. Comparatively, Shanker et al. (2017) mentioned organizations recognize that the ability to innovate is linked to the way leaders, people, climate, culture as well as structures support innovation and creativity. Furthermore, Kostis et al. (2017) noted the grid of values in a society plays a special role in motivating and encouraging its members to innovate. Lastly, Altindag and Kosedagi (2015) referenced a similar position in which there is a meaningful relationship among emotional intelligence, innovative institution culture and the performance of the employees. The covariant between innovation and culture support my doctoral study in theory and practice.

Altindag and Kosedagi (2015) emphasized the importance of constructing an innovative culture within the company and having leaders with high level of emotional intelligence for institutions. Furthermore, Altindag and Kosedagi (2015) asserted specific details on employee performance and the relation to goals or success of fulfilling a job effectively within the culture of the organization. Kostis et al. (2017) posited that the relationship between cultural background and innovation performance is the acknowledgment of the emergence of certain cultural changes that are embodied in social behavior and this in economic decisions. Shanker et al. (2017) asserted employee knowledge is key to innovation and the development of a competitive culture. Leaders who focus on cultural background and behavioral aspects of why employees chose to contribute may find an increase in innovation in the workplace.

Service organization. A well-planned service innovation strategy is recognized as a prerequisite for successful service innovation in organizations. According to Ryu et al. (2015), service innovation strategy has attracted attention from leaders who aim to achieve successful service innovation to enhance their performance. The service innovation strategy is defined as the strategic decision of firms on a change of service innovation dimension or combinations of service innovation dimensions to gain a sustainable competitive advantage (Ryu et al., 2015). Additionally, innovation therefore needs to transcend all areas of operation, production, finance, planning, human resource management and marketing (Tunney, 2017). The leader's ability to proactively plan helps to produce a successful service strategy and improve employee performance.

Small firm innovation. Leaders of small-medium enterprises face challenges with innovation strategies and competitive advantage. Innovation strongly influences the successes and failures of small firms (Dunne, Aaron, McDowell, Urban, & Geho, 2016). Fernandez-Esquinas, Van Ostrom, and Pinto (2017) asserted official innovation surveys frequently exclude smaller firms from their samples and are often not designed to measure specific elements of small firms because they have few formal internal arrangements and systematic procedures to manage knowledge. Comparatively, Glover, Champion, Daniels, and Boocock (2016) remarked problem solving is often a precursor to innovation, yet a small firm's capacity to solve problems is often hampered by a lack of resources from the external environment; such restrictions can have severe implications for small firms, as innovation constitutes a critical source of their advantage. Fernandez-Esquinas et al. (2017) indicated small-medium enterprises' possibilities to innovate are also shaped by their capacity to collaborate and *learn interactively* with other agents in the environment, such as their employees, clients, providers, and training centers. In precis, the ability of small firm leaders to innovate is central to their progress in terms of remaining competitive and achieving growth (Dunne et al., 2016).

Change Management and Sustainability

Resistance to change management and innovation. Getting people to work together is a challenge and strategic failure results from a lack of participation in change. Organizational leaders must encourage people to work together as a group (Blatt, 2017). Blatt (2017) elucidated that change is enforced properly by empowering employees to collaborate in proper manner. Hughes (2016) contended change management is explained in terms of a lifecycle of introduction, growth, maturity, saturation and decline stages and what we are witnessing within these repeated discourses of change death/failure are really the saturation/decline stages of this lifecycle. Matthews, Love, Mewburn, Stobaus, & Ramanayaka (2018) asserted people who collaborate aim to achieve optimal results in a cost-effective and timely manner by bringing together a variety of people and resources, harnessing their collective knowledge and abilities to complete tasks a sole organization would find difficult to achieve by themselves. In summary, change can be managed by leaders who empower employees to work collectively.

Innovation and change management. Lin, Chen, and Su (2017) asserted although a management innovation is always triggered by change of environment and driven by these antecedents; its intention is to recreate routines of an organization. Lin et al. (2017) also noted that as competition intensifies and globalization accelerates, that innovation has become one of the most important and sustainable sources of competitive advantage. Reeves, Fink, Palma, and Harnoss (2017) commented on the need to view innovation not as the conduit of luck or extraordinary vision but as the result of a deliberate search process in change management. Reeves et al. (2017) explained that leaders can draw on a large body of theory and precedent in pursuit of innovation, ranging from advice on choosing the right spaces to optimizing a development process to establishing a culture of creativity for change. Friedel, Clegorne, Kaufman, Seibel, and Anderson (2016) explained more adaptive individuals have a preference to create solutions to problems that work within the existing structure of the organization, hence the ability to manage change. Further, leaders use details and change management strategies to improve efficiencies and prefer the solutions to be implemented at an evolutionary pace.

Sustainability. Organizational leaders strive for sustainability and competitive advantage in the global marketplace. Baue and Wood (2015) attested the sustainability movement has generally focused all its attention on systems, without stepping back to consider the psychology and developmental maturity underpinning those systems. Hahn, Preuss, Pinkse, and Figge (2015) asserted examination of the differences in content and structure of leaders' cognitive frames offers a more sophisticated understanding of the responses to sustainability issues. Further, Hahn et al. (2015) mentioned because human rationality is bounded, leaders do not achieve a complete understanding of strategic situations. Rather, leaders operate in cognitive frames to develop subjective representations of the environment that, in turn, drive their strategic decisions and subsequent firm action. Varadarajan (2015) contended leaders in the corporate sector have the incentive, operational expertise, scalability, and ingenuity to respond to the global challenges of sustainability.

Sustainability and innovative leadership. Rapidly evolving economies, advancing technologies, coupled with increased consumer demand has rapidly altered the business landscape in recent decades. According to Chan, Chen, Hung, Chen, and Tsai (2017), knowledge is advancing exponentially, and various clusters of high professional knowledge are globally distributed throughout innovative leadership models. Further, in the context of growing media reporting of anthropogenic climate change, leadership development program innovators have turned their attention to the need for leaders to hone their ethical and environmental awareness (Heizmann & Lui, 2018). Knight (2018) remarked behavioral competency models are increasingly being used by organizations to evaluate leadership potential and assess the differences between individuals with innovative leadership skills. Therefore, change-oriented behaviors are essential to develop creative, constructive solutions to complex organizational and social problems (Knight, 2018). The theoretical perspective suggested that innovation knowledge is the most crucial innovation criterion for a leader, particularly core knowledge and advanced knowledge (Chan et al., 2017).

Performance and Social Responsibility

Performance work systems. Employee performance is closely related to the employee's behaviors and commitment to service-oriented organizational citizenship. In leadership roles, leaders look for ways to influence higher work performance systems. Riaz and Mahmood (2017) identified that employees' mood and job satisfaction mediated the relationship between perceived higher performance work systems and employee engagement. Conversely, Hamid (2017) asserted at micro level human capital knowledge, skills and abilities are linked with individual productivity, while at macro level skills and abilities leverage to build and sustain competitive advantage. Upon further review, Hamid (2017) agreed with Riaz and Mahmood, whereas Hamid (2017) indicated high-performance work systems consist of a group of separate but interconnected human resource practices designed to improve employee's commitment and skills required to sustain competitive advantage. Comparatively, Riaz & Mahmood, (2017) and Hamid (2017) supported Beltran-Martin et al. (2017) arguing the focus was how high-performance work systems influence employee proactivity. Additionally, the practice of high-performance work systems encourages greater effort at work which may lead to higher rewards, therefore fostering their motivation (Beltran-Martin et al., 2017).

Encouraging performance. A system of human resource management practices influences organizational innovation in professional service firms. According to Fu et al., (2015) achieving higher innovation performance requires organizations to harness the knowledge, skills, abilities, opportunities, and willingness of employees to innovate. Conversely, Tunney (2017) explained for a firm to engage in innovation will require the ability to access the latest information, have the capability to turn information into knowledge, and have processes, procedures, and resources to apply the knowledge to exploit the opportunities arising. The common theme in the literature is employee performance can drive value in creation and goal performance through encouragement. Employees innovative work behaviors are defined as the intentional creation, introduction, and application of innovative ideas within a work role, group, or organization, to benefit role performance, the group, or the organization (Fu et al., 2015).

Social responsibility. According to Haski-Leventhal, Roza, and Meijs (2017) identity refers to self-concept, which consists of the self-beliefs and self-evaluations of individuals, constituting a critical component of their affective and cognitive systems. Subsequently, Raj and Srivastava (2016) proclaimed transformational leaders motivate their followers and bring in awareness about the importance in achieving collective goals as a social responsibility. Further, transformational leaders challenge the status quo (intellectual stimulation); articulate a compelling vision of the future (inspirational motivation); engage in behaviors that build followers' trust and social responsibilities concerning factors of the organization's success (Haski-Leventhal, 2017). These collective goals provide ways of achieving social responsibility outcomes through articulating a compelling vision.

Global Innovation Strategies

Multigenerational/cultural curiosity and innovative effectiveness. Curiosity or inquisitiveness is cited as a crucial element of intercultural effectiveness and multicultural effectiveness which strengthens employee commitment. Curiosity is a positive factor in development and there is limited understanding which cultural characteristics are likely to be conductive to development of cultural knowledge (Mikhaylov, 2016). Addressing the role of curiosity in the learning process suggests that curiosity driven processes of individual learning, mediated by mindfulness in innovative effectiveness spawns a higher level of employee commitment (Mikhaylov, 2016).

Contrawise, Namateves, Turlais, and Dubkevics (2016) contended development and integration of the business processes of a definite business model of the multicultural organization require intercultural cooperation and challenge organizational culture. Mikhaylov (2016) earmarked the reality of multicultural and intercultural relationships is researched using constructivist grounded theory method, with data collected through in-depth interviews, long-term observation and participation, and discussion of the social reality as it was experienced by the employees for effectiveness.

In summary, HRLs can incorporate innovation strategies such as innovation performance, innovation engagement, competitive innovation, innovative employee engagement, innovation growth models, and innovation trajectory to increase employee engagement. Innovation performance can help leaders forge collaborative behaviors with employees to clarify purpose around the organization's business priorities. Additionally, innovation engagement strategies are the anecdotes to groom a competitive advantage in the global marketplace and help HRLs promote cooperation of creativity. Furthermore, competitive innovation strategies can be used to open communicative forums for innovation training and developing new services through the engagement of employee ideas. One of the most essential elements mentioned in the review of academic literature is innovative employee engagement and how leaders can increase innovation through connecting the hands, heads, and hearts of the employees through high-quality working relationship strategies. Researchers in this section of the academic literature explained leader support and encouragement promote an increased innovative behavior in employees. Comparatively, innovation growth model strategies aspire employees across departments and help leaders managed, track, and measure growth towards gaining competitive advantage. Lastly, innovation trajectory is effective ways HRLs can benchmark their organizational innovative success against the global marketplace, while incorporating long term strategies for future employee engagement.

Human resources leaders can also integrate organizational strategies such as innovation climate, organizational innovation, creative work climate, innovative institutions and culture, service organization, and small firm innovation to increase employee engagement. Organizational innovation climate strategy is a key sharing behavior for HRLs. HRLs can use this strategy to emphasize a team-level incivility climate in sharing knowledge and being less ambiguous with employees to encourage engagement. Additionally, organizational innovation strategies are provisions leaders can use to create organizational conditions of employee support and positive work environments. Further, creative work climate strategies are ways leaders can apply a cognitive aspect to incorporate the employee’s unique history and knowledgeable ideas as a method to improve competitiveness. Another essential element mentioned in the academic literature was innovative institution and culture strategies. Leaders have a responsibility to promote innovativeness and openness within the organization. The opportunity of openness in an innovative institution links leader to people and people to climate and culture, which propels employee engagement. Lastly, service organization and small firm innovation strategies are recognized as a prerequisite for enhancing employee performance. HRLs who aim for service innovation and small firm innovation are more likely to produce proactive employee involvement and help employees learn interactively, hence increasing employee engagement and innovation.

Human resources leaders can also combine change management and sustainability strategies such as resistance to change management and innovation, innovative change management and sustainability to increase employee engagement. Resistance to change management strategies are significant key factors for leaders to comprehend challenges that exist in people working together. With proper knowledge, leaders may be able to empower employees to collaborate in an effective manner by illustrating the cost-effective and timely outcomes in collectiveness. Additionally, change management and innovation strategies are mentioned in the academic literature as deliberate forms of a search process to develop a culture of creativity for change. Leaders who employ change management and innovation strategies may influence more adaptive behaviors for employees to create solutions and begin to problem-solve. Lastly, change management and sustainability strategies are ways leaders can develop cognitive frames of action to respond to challenges in keeping pace with an altered and ever-changing business landscape regarding employee innovation.

HRLs can also include performance and social responsibility strategies such as performance work systems, encouraging performance, and social responsibility to increase employee engagement. Performance work systems are unique ways leaders can evaluate employee’s behaviors, moods, and job satisfaction. In turn, the evaluation of performance work systems are tale-tale signs of human capital knowledge, level of skills, and abilities to interconnect employee engagement. Furthermore, encouraging performance strategies are ways leaders can drive value in creation of goal attainment and encourage employees to innovate. Lastly, social responsibility is a key component for leaders to understand how employees' self-beliefs and self-concept plays a particularly critical role in achieving collective goals for the organization.

Finally, HRLs can also link global innovation strategies such as multigenerational/cultural curiosity and innovative effectiveness to increase employee engagement. Multigenerational/ cultural curiosity and innovative effectiveness are strategies leaders can implement to creative a positive employee commitment to the organization. Leaders who implement multigenerational/ cultural curiosity, according to the academic literature can help develop an intercultural cooperation amongst employees and spur effective engagement.

Transition

In Section 1, I explored the concept of engagement in the workplace, and how the absence of engagement may create obstacles to business performance and employee retention. I investigated the literature related to organizational constructs that may influence employee engagement, and how leaders apply innovative strategies to strengthen employee commitment to the company and its initiatives. I discussed the vitality of leadership in navigating a business and its employees within the competitive market. In Section 2, I discuss the logistical considerations to explore this phenomenon within a business setting, I provided interview questions, and the process employed to collect data from business leaders related to employee engagement and leadership style. I discuss data analysis to gain a deeper understanding how leadership may foster an engaged, creative, and committed workforce. In Section 3 I provided the findings of the study, sharing the opinions and experiences of those who have successfully engaged employees to boost business performance. I discuss the findings of the study and how these findings impact social change, and business practice. I conclude Section 3 with recommendations for further research and summarize my reflections on the research process.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore employee engagement strategies HRLs use to increase innovation. The targeted population consisted of five HRLs at small human resource management firms in the northeast area of the United States who have used engagement strategies to increase innovation. Implications for social change include greater exposure to innovative products available for consumers, which can generate more purchases and drive local economic growth.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, researchers are aware of the socially constructed nature of reality embedded intimately in the context of the study, research setting, participants, and data being collected (Yates & Leggett, 2016). Yates and Leggett (2016) asserted that the qualitative researcher is a reflexive practitioner, aware of political and cultural perspectives, yet willing to engage in self-questioning and self-understanding. The main role of the researcher is to protect the integrity of the investigation (Collins & Cooper, 2014). The interview process involves various groups of people in a systematic, consistent, and comprehensive manner through prior delimitation of the issues to be explored (Yeong et al., 2018).

I have 20 years of experience in leadership, human resource management, and innovative employee engagement strategies with small and large businesses. In my role as an HRL, I have led teams to strategically develop innovative ways to engage organization employees in advancing their careers through professional development offerings, training, focus groups, and mentorship. Additionally, my teams have been encouraged to use engagement strategies to motivate and influence employee creativity and spawn a cross-team culture in the organization. My years of experiences support a higher level of self-understanding regarding the interview questions and data collected in this study. However, this commonality of experiences had no bearing or relationship affiliation with any of the participants in this study. I established a working relationship with the selected participants through e-mail and local association venues and events, both online and in person.

In my role as researcher, my relation to ethics and the Belmont Report protocol are outlined by three basic ethical principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The first ethical principle, respect for persons, is defined as two moral requirements: individuals are treated autonomously, and with diminished autonomy, individuals are entitled to protection. My strategy regarding respect for persons considered the participants' opinions and choices without obstructing their actions and without passing judgment. The second ethical principle, beneficence, is defined as two general rules of action: (a) do not harm and (b) maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harms. My strategy regarding beneficence was to make every effort to secure the well-being of all participants while diminishing risk or harm. The third ethical principle, justice, is defined as equals being treated equally. My strategy regarding justice ensured each participant had equal share, need, effort, societal contribution, and merit. Additionally, I explained to the participants the research subject selection criteria and ensured they were aware that no cultural biases were used in this study.

To gather data, I used an interview protocol as a guide to ensure consistency in my approach to contact and greet participants, interview participants, and close the interview meeting. The rationale for using the interview protocol was to enhance the trustworthiness of the study by using consistent approaches. Asking each participant, the same questions and following the same steps to conduct each interview limited bias by keeping all techniques and instruments the same throughout the entire interview process. Rigorous techniques in qualitative inquiry increased the confirmability and trustworthiness of an investigation. Reducing potential bias in a study adds validity to the interview process, further protecting the integrity of the research.

I limited bias in this study by using the interview protocol to ensure consistency to elevate validity of the research. I applied member checking to ensure my interpretation of the interview data was accurate. Member checking involves reviewing the participant contribution with the participant to identify any errors in the information reported and make changes to ensure data accuracy (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I applied triangulation in the data collection process. Methodological triangulation is a technique used by researchers to explore a phenomenon through different lenses, such as interviews, physical artifacts such as company websites or available documentation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I triangulated the study by incorporating interview data, documentation, and physical artifacts into the data analysis to avoid influencing the study with biased opinions not provided by the participants or organizational information. I achieved saturation as a means of concluding the interview process. Saturation is the point in which the collection of data no longer provides new information (Yin, 2018) and the analysis renders no new codes or themes. These strategies, along with my own professional restraints to apply open-mindedness to the research process, helped reduce bias in the development of the doctoral study. In the data analysis stage, I drew on additional sources of information to confirm or disconfirm my findings and to ensure alignment between my central research question and themes that evolved in the research.

Participants

Participants for this study were drawn from five HRLs at small human resource management firms in the northeast area of the United States who have used engagement strategies to increase innovation. Innovation is defined as a business purpose and space where creativity flows as a means of staying relevant. Innovation is measured through communicated or shared ideas (Bahrami, 2018). Innovation leads to new product ideas or services that set a company apart by reputation or profitability. The HRLs in this study met the following criteria: (a) a minimum of 5 years business leadership experience, (b) strengthened organizational collaboration through proven employee engagement strategies, and (c) a focus on innovation. Engagement strategies were evidenced through productivity and performance measures.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Choosing an appropriate research method and research design is critically important to a study. The three research methods are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed (Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014). The most appropriate method for this study was qualitative research. Qualitative research is appropriate for a doctoral study to gain information related to business decision-making processes (Yin, 2018). Using the qualitative method supported the exploration of multiple sources of information to identify new understandings of employee engagement phenomena (Yin, 2018). Furthermore, qualitative researchers focus on applied and theoretical findings or discoveries based on research questions through field study in natural conditions (Park & Park, 2016). The benefit of using a qualitative approach is using open-ended questions to understand a phenomenon rather than proving or disproving a hypothesis (Taguchi, 2018).

Comparatively, quantitative researchers use hypothesis testing to achieve the research goals in controlled and contrived studies. Quantitative researchers use a rigorous and controlled design to examine phenomena using precise measurements (Ruthberg & Bouikdis, 2018). Using a controlled design to measure phenomena was not the intent of this study. A mixed-methods approach is used to test and substantiate a doctoral research model by combining quantitative data collected through a survey and qualitative data from interviews (Srivastava & Chandra, 2018). Participants in this study were only asked interview questions; hence, the mixed-method approach was not appropriate for this study.

Research Design

The five most frequent designs for the qualitative inquiry are narrative, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Multiple case inquiry was the most appropriate design for this study. The three-qualitative research designs I considered were ethnography, interpretive phenomenology, and multiple case study.

Bass and Milosevic (2016) denoted ethnography is a qualitative research approach characterized by in-depth exploration of social phenomena as they take place in a particular temporal and cultural context. The primary reason for not conducting an ethnographic study was the population is not unique to the main population and the behaviors are not explainable in cultural or unique terms (Mol et al., 2017). In an interpretative phenomenological analytical (IPA) the researcher is committed to the exploration of how people make sense of their major life experiences. The advantageous elements of the study quadruple because of the bonding relationship that the approach allows for the researchers to develop with their research participants (Alase, 2017). The IPA approach can afford new and novice researchers the opportunity to explore, in more detail, the lived experiences of the research participants (Alase, 2017). Interpretive phenomenological research design was not appropriate because the study was not intended to understand the context of the lived experiences of people and the meaning of their experiences. Whereas, the most appropriate research design was multiple case study, which investigates a social phenomenon that involves individuals living within a social context as separate units of study (Yin, 2018). Using this multiple case study design allowed for comparing data within and between cases (Yin, 2018).

Data saturation occurs when the collection of data from interviews no longer adds new information, and at that point, the interview process stops (Fusch & Ness, 2015). For this study, I drew participants from a candidate pool of at least twenty (20) HR business leaders and conducted interviews until the interview process reached data saturation, then, I stopped interviewing participants. If I did not have enough participants to reach saturation, I would have continued to draw from the established candidate pool of those who met the criteria and were willing participate in the study. If I exhausted my candidate pool, I would have used snowball sampling to identify other leaders as suggested by previous participants to ensure I gathered enough information to achieve saturation.

Population and Sampling

The population for this qualitative study included a sample size of five HRLs who have successfully used engagement strategies to increase innovation in the northeast region of the United States. Cleary, Horsfall, and Hayter (2014) mentioned five to seven participants have adequate exposure to experience phenomenon and can produce highly relevant information for analysis. Whereas, Fusch and Ness (2015) endorsed that the researcher should choose a sample size that has the best opportunity for the researcher to reach data saturation.

The main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on characteristics of a population that are of interest to the researcher. Topp, Barker, and Degenhardt (2004) asserted purposive sampling is characterized by using judgement and a deliberate effort to include presumably typical groups in a sample. Further, purposive sampling involves the researcher deliberately and purposefully selecting the sample they believe can be the most fruitful in answering the research question (Farrugia, 2019). The non-probabilistic typology of purposive sampling was used to explore the central research question.

In this study, I used the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a technique to identify individuals who meet the criteria eligibility to participate in the study, and who may also possess extensive leadership skills and experience that may add tremendous value to research (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I selected participants using purposive sampling and gained in-depth knowledge that assisted me in answering the central research question. Further, I evaluated each participant's tenured years of experience in the human resource industry and their knowledge about increasing employee engagement to innovate.

Ethical Research

I approached each organization and gained the contact information of the business leader. I contacted the business leader and introduced myself and the doctoral study. I explained my intent to conduct interviews with HR managers who met the established criteria. I explained the purpose of the research, the protection of the confidentiality and integrity of the research, the data collection, recording, and analysis procedures and the storage of all data for five years before destroying all data in a shredding machine. I gained authorization from the business leader to interview the HR managers, recorded the interviews, and had access to related documentation and artifacts that supported my investigation.

The participants in this study was asked to complete an informed consent to participate in this study and the information obtained will be kept confidential. For this study and before conducting any interviews, I worked collaboratively with participants throughout the research process to build trust and rapport ensuring participant comfort. In conducting research on humans, respect for human dignity requires investigators to obtain informed consent (Mumford, 2018). Obtaining written, informed consent from participants before initiating research is a universally honored and only after they have ascertained that they have understood what the study entails (Figer et al., 2017).

I explained the purpose of the research and the participant's role in the research process, and then I invited each participant to complete an informed consent agreeing to engage in an interview process. The informed consent provided details about the research process including the collection of data, storage of data, confidentiality of participant and data, and the eventual destruction of the data after 5 years. The consent form also informed the participant of their rights including the right to answer none, all, or some of the interview questions without consequence, and further indicated there is no compensation for participating. Participants opting to leave the interview process need only to e-mail me and inform me and any collected data will be stored for 5 years and destroyed.

The Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978) provides the ethical framework for research with human participants, delineated three basic principles: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (Ross et al., 2018). Further, Ross et al. (2018) asserted respect for persons requires recognizing individuals as autonomous agents with unalienable rights for self-determination.

According to the Personal Data Protection Act, any person has a right to have his/her personal data protected (Surmiak, 2018). Surmiak (2018) further mentioned personal data shall mean any information relating to an identified (mostly name, surname, address) or identifiable (for instance, someone's photo) natural person. To protect the participants from harm, I abided by the IRB requirements, throughout, beyond and during the research. I did not conduct research nor contacted any participants until I received authorization from the IRB and was provided a research identification number. Once I received IRB approval to conduct my research, (08-23-19-0662952) I followed all specified guidelines for conducting research. I contacted organizational leaders and gained a letter of cooperation to approach HR managers to conduct interviews. I used purposive sampling to recruit HR managers who met the stringent criteria for the doctoral study. I ensured participants understood all risks involved in the interview process and protected their confidentiality using pseudonyms (P1, P2, etc.), secured a safe interview location, and protected all collected data by storing electronic data on a password protected database, and kept all hard copy materials related to the investigation in a locked cabinet accessible only by me. I will destroy all data collected after five years following the completion of the research using a shredding machine.

To ensure the interview remained confidential, the names nor businesses appear in the final study. I identified the businesses as companies operating in the northeastern region of the United States. The final doctoral study includes the Walden IRB approval number. The consenting process required participants to provide an *I consent* statement with their signature on the consent form. Consenting ensures both the interviewer and interviewee understand the requirements moving forward with the interviews, the confidentiality procedures, storage, and destruction of all data 5 years following the publication of the study.

Data Collection Instruments

The researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative research because the researcher gains access to the participants' natural environment and is the main research instrument used to collect and analyze data. The first task in conducting qualitative interviews was to establish and follow the interview protocol. An interview protocol (Appendix A) is a document providing step by step instructions to conduct each interview in the same way and asking the same questions. Consistency in the interview process strengthens the credibility of the case study, I conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews as my data collection technique.

With the interview protocol developed, I contacted the organization and spoke to the business leader with the capacity to provide authorization to conduct interviews with HR leaders and managers within the company. I explained the purpose of the study, and my responsibility to protect the integrity of the investigation, the expectations of participants, collection, analysis and secure storage, and eventual destruction of all related data by shredding, after 5 years. I obtained site authorization from the business leader, then I phoned each HR leader, explained the purpose of the research, and gained a meeting with them to discuss the study further and gained consent for an interview. Cellucci and Peters (2013) asserted that business leaders who are willing and eligible to participate, may engage in the interview process once they review the purpose and benefits of the study.

With authorization from the business leader to contact HR managers to conduct my research, I phoned each candidate and arrange a meeting to explain the research, review and sign the consent form. The consent form explained the research process, the rights of the participant to answer any, all or none of the interview questions without consequence. In the consent form, I explained the interview process, the recording process, confidentiality process, data collection, data analysis, and safe storage and eventual destruction of all data collected. Then, I established a working relationship with the selected participants through frequent e-mail correspondence, requesting an opportunity of a worksite visit if appropriate. Once the consent forms were signed, I set up interviews in a location suitable and time efficient to the participant needs. I used the interview protocol to ensure each interview was conducted the same way to enhance the reliability of the interview process. I reminded participants that the interviews are recorded, as outlined in the consent form, set up the recorder, and timed the interview to remain with the expected parameters. I asked the six initial interview questions, added any probing questions that arose from participant responses to ensure thick rich data collection.

To enhance credibility of the study, I mitigated bias by limiting any preconceptions or opinions about the interview questions and responses. I conducted each interview the same way, capturing nuances with pencil and paper, while recording the discussion. I conducted enough interviews to reach saturation. Saturation is the point in which the addition of new data adds no new information during the interview process, and the interviews cease (Yin, 2018). Credibility in the data collection and analysis processes by member checking to confirm the interpretation of the collected interview data is an accurate representation of each interview (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Upon completion of the interview, I thanked each participant and requested a follow-up meeting to member check. Member checking is a process whereas the participant verifies the accuracy of my interpretation of the data collected in the initial interview. During the member checking interview, the participant accepted or rejected each statement and I made changes to the data to gain trustworthiness in the data collection process. To further enhance credibility, I triangulated the study by incorporating additional data sources to the investigation. Sources of additional data for triangulation included company documentation and physical artifacts.

Data Collection Technique

To enhance trustworthiness of the data collection process, I conducted a field use expert panel to review the interview questions for alignment with the purpose of the research and made changes to strengthen the interview questions based on the panel review. I gained authorization through a letter of cooperation from business leaders to contact HR managers, to conduct interviews. I explained the purpose of the doctoral research, the population I intended to interview, how I will protect the integrity of the research, conceal all data, and destroy it using a shredder 5 years after the research period. I attained IRB approval before conducting research or contacting participants. With IRB approval, I sought participants who met the criteria to participate in the doctoral study using purposive sampling. I had each participant read and sign the informed consent to establish an understanding of the research process, informed participants about confidentiality of their identities, collected data, and data storage. I informed participants of their right to answer none, all, or some of the questions without consequence as well as their right to withdraw from the study. I worked with participants to schedule an interview. I followed the interview protocol to ensure consistency in the interview process and applied member checking to ensure the accuracy of the interview data.

The interviews took place at a private location or at the participant’s workplace. The location provided security for the participant, for instance, the space had a closing door and remained uninterrupted for the duration of the interview. I opened the interview discussion confirming each participant met the criteria to participate in the study. I recorded each interview and took notes on any nuances observed during the interview process.

There are several advantages and disadvantages to using interviews as a data collection technique. Advantages of using interviews include (a) targeted, focuses directly on case study topics, (b) insightful, provide explanations as well as personal views, perceptions, attitudes, and meaning (Yin, 2018). Disadvantages of using interviews include (a) bias due to poor articulated questions, (b) response bias, (c) inaccuracies due to poor recall, and (d) reflexivity, the interviewee gives what the interviewer wants to hear (Yin, 2018). A pilot test for this research was not necessary as the technique of asking semistructured open-ended questions provide room to explain or re-word questions for clarity (Weller et al., 2018).

Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016) explained member checking as a means to confirm the researcher’s interpretation of the collected interview data. Participants were asked to update any misleading or incorrect information and provide any further details or explanations to enhance the data collection process. I used member checking to assure accuracy of my interpretation of the data and made any changes the participant suggested building trust in the collected data. I triangulated the study by incorporating additional data sources to the investigation. Sources of additional data included company documentation and physical artifacts. I gained evidence from the detailed literature review and aligned my research with the conceptual framework, all to add validity to the research methods.

Data Organization Technique

For this study, each interview participant had different code and labeling to ensure differentiation. Additionally, a log of the research and all notes pertaining to the study’s progress were documented. Yin (2018) denoted organizing helps researchers to find and access their own field notes and materials, ensuring organization and management of the data from interviews. I had two recording devices at each interview to ensure I had a backup recording system, one was a Samsung android smartphone, the backup recorder was a mobile recording machine. I kept all recorded interviews and fieldnotes that are in my handwriting. During the interviews, I used my Samsung android smartphone for recording the interviews and used an audio to text automated transcription software to transcribe the interviews into text and back up the data to my computer’s external jump drive and Google cloud drive. According to Zhou, Fu, Yu, Su, and Kuang (2018), cloud storage is essentially a large data center and due to the restrictive performance of traditional devices, cloud computing emerges as a convenient storage and computing platform for big data analysis. The importance of guaranteeing confidentiality when dealing with vulnerable groups is key in consideration of the participants privacy of information (Petrova, Dewing, & Camilleri, 2014). The stored data has password protection for confidentially and data will be kept for five years according to Walden University policy on the retention of research.

Data Analysis

The shift from collecting data to beginning the process of organizing data into patterns, then translating the patterns into themes is an enlightening process. Scharp and Sanders (2019) denoted thematic analysis is a qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data. Yin (2018) described data analysis as involving five distinct steps. The first step is to compile data. I compiled data from interviews, documentation, physical artifacts, the conceptual framework, and evidence from the literature. The second step is to disassemble the data (Yin, 2018). I used NVivo software to disassemble the data into various repeated terms and segments of terms and marked each term or segment with a code to accumulate repeated terms. Yin (2018) indicated the third step is reassembling the data drawing terms and segments of terms into related clusters. Once the terms form into clusters, researchers can identify patterns in the repeated terms and are able to derive meaning from the analytical process. The fourth step is to interpret the data (Yin, 2018). This is perhaps the most challenging step for the research, and this may take time to identify and draw interpretive meaning from the evolving ideas. The fifth step is to draw conclusions from the interpreted data. In analytical terms, this is the process of moving data, to codes, to clusters, to meaningful themes. The process of thematic analysis exposes themes that answer the central research question.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

The researcher must strive for trustworthiness and dependability in research. Trustworthiness in qualitative research means that a researcher must be both authentic and rigorous in the development and protection of data throughout the research (Morse, 2015). Dependability derives from the use of member checking, transcript reviews, and a pilot test of the study. To strengthen dependability, I used an expert panel to review the alignment of the interview questions, I made changes as suggested by the panel to improve the dependability of the interview questions. The member checking is sufficient in capturing the authenticity of the participant contributions, thus rendering the transcript review redundant.

Several techniques help to ensure the consistency and trustworthiness of qualitative research (Cypress, 2017). A case study researcher establishes and follows an interview protocol to ensure consistency in the interview process (Morse, 2015). I created an interview protocol which outlines the need to ensure each participant met specified criteria to qualify for the interview process. Each participant was provided and signed a consent form to understand their role, the confidentiality process, and their rights throughout the research period and beyond. The interview protocol contained the interview questions and instructions for conducting member checking to authenticate the interpretation of the interview data.

To further ensure confirmability and trustworthiness in the interview process, qualitative researchers continue to interview participants until the addition of new data produces no new information and at that point, the interview process reaches saturation and the interviews stops (Cypress, 2017). Saturation is essential as the process exhausts the interview process to ensure the research captures significant information from all interviews to draw meaningful conclusions. I continued to interview participants until I reached saturation to ensure the data collected produced a thorough and trustable source to understand strategies business leaders use to apply employee engagement to increase innovation.

To ensure the data I collected demonstrated I had various lenses to explore the phenomenon, I triangulated the data collection and analysis processes. To ensure I triangulated the data, I used interviews, drew information from available documentation from the workplace, and reviewed physical artifacts such as company websites and bulletins. Methodological triangulation helps to fortify the data to broaden the investigation and confirm consistency in the context of the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

The interview process creates risks of bias that threatens the authenticity of the data collected. To mitigate this and increase the trustworthiness of the data collection process, researchers conduct member checking. Member checking is the process of reviewing interview contents with each participant, in a follow-up interview, to ensure the interpretation of the data collected is accurate (Yin, 2018). At this point, the participant may update any statements for accuracy. The research may use this meeting to clarify content and strengthen their understanding of the data. I used member checking by conducting a follow-up meeting with each participant to ensure my interpretation of the interview is trustworthy. I also developed an audit trail to report all steps taken in the research process. The audit trail creates a repeatable process for conducting the qualitative study and thus limiting the intrusion of potential biases related to data collection and analysis procedures (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Following through with established methods in the data analysis process, further ensured the confirmability of the research. By engaging in thematic analysis to capture meaning from the data ensured that the steps were taken establish themes from the findings, are representative of the intent and purpose of the participants providing the data (Yin, 2018). I used thematic analysis to protect the trustworthiness, confirmability, and credibility of the research process from beginning to end.

Validity

Qualitative researchers must demonstrate trustworthiness in the development and implementation of their studies. Thoroughness and rigor are required to ensure research is both reliable and valid. A valid study must meet the stringent requirements of credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability.

Credibility. To demonstrate a study is credible, a researcher must exhaust the research process by engaging in consistent interviews, guided by an interview protocol, until the collection of data no longer adds any new information, and at that point, the interview process ceases (Yin, 2018). To verify both the exhaustion of the research approach, and mitigation of bias in the research approach is vital in validating research. One way of ensuring limited bias is to conduct member checking. A qualitative researcher conducts member checking during a second interview with each participant to review the recorded interview data and ensure the researcher's interpretation of the data is correct (Fusch & Ness, 2018). This process strengthens the accuracy of data collected and may provide an opportunity to clarify and add details to provide a robust account of each interview further adding credibility to the research process.

Confirmability. Confirmability in research results from rigorous activities throughout the data collection and analysis processes. Member checking is the first step to building confirmability by ensuring the data collection process provides an accurate representation of each participant's interview contribution (Yin, 2018). Using a data analysis software, such as NVivo, demonstrates credibility by advancing the understanding of the data collected through an organized and progressive method of drawing meaning from the data collected. Using member checking and data analysis software adds rigor to the research aiding the reader's trust in the research processes.

Transferability. A research reader has confidence in the procedures and findings of a study as a result of rigorous and trustworthy research practices. To ensure transferability in research, a researcher uses an interview protocol and provides an audit trail to establish clear instructions on how to duplicate a study in such a way, that may produce similar findings. The repeatability of a research strategy adds value to a study

(Cypress, 2017). In the doctoral study, I used an interview protocol and kept a clearly written audit trail to ensure transferability and repeatability of the research approach.

Dependability. Establishing valid practices at the onset of research by using an interview protocol to keep all activities consistent, along with ensuring saturation in the data collection process by exhausting to interview process are two methods of increasing the dependability of research (Yin, 2018). I ensured dependability by using an interview protocol and ensuring saturation in data collection to demonstrate that I had exposed as much information as I can through rigorous interviewing. Enhancing dependability through triangulation and member checking further substantiates the research by drawing on additional sources of data beyond interviews and ensuring that the interview process is accurate, and that the researcher strives to limit bias in data collection. Strengthening the research process by using data analysis software provides an objective and valid approach to adding meaning to the collected data and ensure the findings are reasonable.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included a detailed discussion of the separate phases of the research project. The phases include discussions on the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, participants and population, and research methods and design. I also discussed the data collection instruments, techniques, and data analysis. The most appropriate research method and design were the multiple case study to explore employee engagement strategies HRLs may implement create a positive workforce culture for encouraging a successful innovative business environment. The data collection technique was through semi structured interviews and a review of the company artifacts. Section 3 will include the presentation of findings, discussion of the application to business practice, the implications for social change, recommendations for actionable next steps on how the results will encourage further research, and my summative conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore employee engagement strategies HRLs use to increase innovation. The data came from HRL interviews, related evidence from documents, and physical artifacts from firm websites. The findings presented strategies that HRLs have used to engage employees to increase innovation. In this study, implications for social change include greater exposure to innovative products available for consumers, which can generate more purchases and drive local economic growth.

My findings uncovered four themes of employee engagement strategies for increasing innovation: (a) cross-team assessment, (b) communication tools, (c) measurement tools, and (d) recognition strategies. All the participants mentioned transformational leadership as a critical component in implementing employee engagement. Participants reported that cross-team assessment and communication tools are key in transforming an organization's culture and increasing employee creativity. Employees feel more compelled to innovate when leadership creates a safe workplace environment that encourages transparency, open-mindedness, and collaboration. Participants reported that organizational support through cross-team assessment, open communication, sharing measurement results of their innovative ideas, and recognition enhanced retention of talented employees. Additionally, because of the need to innovate for competitive advantage in the marketplace, building strong employee engagement strategies helped to sustain the talented employee retention levels (Rao, 2017).

Presentation of the Findings

The objective of this qualitative multiple case study was to answer the central research question: What employee engagement strategies do HRLs use to increase innovation? To answer this question, I used semistructured interview questions developed from the conceptual framework and disciplines of transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978). The interview questions were open-ended to allow the participants an opportunity to discover what employee engagement strategies they have used to engage employees to increase innovation. Five participants agreed to participate in the study, which was the projected and initial participant size. I apportioned each participant a unique identifier (i.e., P1, P2, etc.) to protect confidentiality. The data coding was comprised of common terminology and keywords that emerged from the interview transcriptions and secondary data sources. My data analysis included interview transcriptions, interview notes, and related evidence from company documents and physical artifacts. Through data analysis, I discovered substantial evidence that HRLs are using employee engagement strategies to increase innovation. Moreover, the data analysis showed that HRLs are fully aware of the strategies that need to happen to increase innovation but may only be using some strategies to meet organization goals.

The major, minor, unexpected, and serendipitous themes identified throughout the findings confirm that HRLs are using employee engagement strategies to increase innovation. The four major themes discovered were (a) cross-team assessment, (b) communication tools, (c) measurement tools, and (d) recognition strategies. As shown in Table 2, the themes by frequency and percentage of occurrence.

Table 2

Frequency of Themes for Engaging Employees to Innovate

Theme	*n*	% of frequency of occurrence
Cross-team assessment	30	27.30%
Communication tools	52	41.31%
Measurement tools	33	16.03%
Recognition strategies	41	21.71%

Note: n = frequency

The participants provided consistency in responses to the research question that—in combination with the conceptual framework, literature review findings, and triangulation—helped me identify themes during the analysis.

Theme 1: Cross-Team Assessment

HRLs in this case study identified cross-team assessment as a major theme. All five HRLs agreed that cross-team assessment provides the organization with valuable information in understanding each employee as an individual and how they are motivated and influenced. Further, cross-team assessment determines levels of contribution from each employee and how each employee may feel in relation to their specific job and/or the organization. Yang (2016) proclaimed that teamwork behavior is effective way to create synergy in work teams. According to the participants, cross-team assessment helps to increase innovation throughout the organization. The evidence of the documented programs, such as pulse surveys, culture advisory group, DISC and Myer-Briggs assessments, help the organization understand what drives employees to innovate. P2 and P4 conferred that pulse surveys were a unique cross-team assessment that matches employees across different departments to learn more about one another, and this program creates inclusivity in the organization. Although this may be a simple strategy, the HRLs believe pulse surveys are evidence-based and they work.

This theme resonates with literature findings of Cote (2019) that for organizations to be successful in motiving a multigenerational workforce, strategies need to be designed, developed, and implemented to accommodate the specific needs (intrinsic and extrinsic) for each employee. Yang (2016) also denoted that when team members experience high-quality learning by engaging in innovative tasks that are naturally subject to an interdependent work structure, they are likely to perceive high levels of organizational support geared toward organizational innovation. Gland (2019) remarked that as individuals, teams, and organizations evolve, greater transparency and interactivity are needed from the organization through cross-team interactions. Methodological triangulation of the interview data and information from the participating company's website occurred, such as "making the world a better place to work together" and "together, we can accomplish far more than we can individually followed by a commitment of group decisions." The theme cross-team assessment draws on tenets of transformational leadership and the importance of understanding what influences employees. No analysis of transformational leadership will be conceptually and functionally successful without a proper analysis of employee social influence (Haslam et al., 2015). Haslam et al. (2015) asserted that transformational leadership is essentially a process of group-based assessment of social influence. Thus, this theme aligned with the conceptual framework of transformational leadership theory. Table 3 contains participant statements about cross-team assessment in their organizations.

Table 3

Theme: Cross-Team Assessment

Participant	Comments
P1	"Having an assessment of the individual you know from a few different perspectives can help with determining what levels of engagement strategy are going to work for an individual because individuals have … 'hot buttons.' Personality only assessments are going to be as useful for engagement because the psychology behind them tells us that there may be some things that matter to this person more than we normally would have been made aware of."
P2	"We're gathering feedback from our employees and we have a cross-functional group called 'culture advisory group,' Pulse survey to match employees for lunch across departments, and then we more recently started using the DISC profile."
P3	"Total quality management that's one of the gurus of management, the idea was having people involved in problem solving teams that were cross-sectional. Each of those people has a different perspective on what the problem is and how to solve it—for example, DISC or Myer-Briggs. And it was a very effective and I still believe that cross-sectional approach."
P4	"I think a part of being able to work successfully cross-functional is just having a relationship and knowing people. So, I think helping people to tap into that but then to recognize like in order to do that like we have to work together like a part of working together is like getting to know and understand people. For example, what we call a Pulse survey, drawing on inclusion and belonging."
P5	"And so constantly reminding people that look at the person that's the most adjacent to you that could potentially have the answer and try to get it from them which then in and of itself increases engagement because then you have people just call it different departments go into each other trying to figure and do problem solving together, which then creates a big a stronger bond between employees. It creates a lot more trust. And then people just feel more accountable to each other."

Theme 2: Communication Tools

HRLs referenced communication tools 22 more times than cross-team assessment and noted how communication was the leading conduit to a culture of accountability. Ravazzani (2015) remarked that not recognizing employees voice as important can lead to a communication failure. According to the HRLs in this study, using communication tools in the organization was the foundation of creating an environment of culture. All HRLs, P1 through P5, mentioned using communication tools, such as one-on-one meetings, all-hands meetings, and monthly meeting to ensure open lines of communication. Further, P4 and P5 mentioned the use of a communication tool called Slack, a culture channel used to reiterate important takeaways from meetings. Conceptually, this app platform ensures that employees know that management is listening, accessible, and willing to make changes in relation to their feedback.

The communication themes confirm literature findings by Ravazzani (2015) asserted companies should be aware of cultural variability when developing communication messages and channels. In my examination of the participating companies' websites, I identified statements such as "communication is pivotal for success at any organization" and "healthy communication is not about someone winning, but rather, it's about each having a voice." Regarding tenets of transformational leadership, Tyssen (2014) remarked paying special attention to everyone also fosters a two-way exchange and communication, hence enhancing the nature of the collaboration. Further, Shanker (2017) explicated communication should be encouraged; asserting that a key aspect of managing innovation is transformational leaders creating the appropriate climate so employees can share and build upon each other's ideas and suggestions. HRLs described in the interviews a communicative responsibility to set expectations, motivate, coach, and influence employees through active engagement of dialogue, relative to transformational leadership theory. Thus, this theme aligns with transformational leadership theory in that communication tools aid in the delivery of providing foster employee engagement, innovation, organizational commitment and citizenship behavior, job performance, job satisfaction, team performance, and trust. Table 4 contains a summary of statements made by participants regarding the communication tools used in their organizations.

Table 4

Theme: Communication Tools

Participant	Comments
P1	“Good old-fashioned dialogue. And I say that because sometimes we can get so wrapped up in some tools particularly on a technology standpoint. That. We minimize. The personal interaction component that really can be. The most basic but the most heartfelt component and really draw people in.”
P2	“At the company level and we have a weekly All hands meeting, it is typically a brief meeting, about 15 minutes. We introduce topics and we talk about what came out of the come in surveys. Cadences frequent and fast. Then we have a monthly. Company at lunch which is more content driven and it’s like an hour. Half of its lunch, but the other half of it’s a presentation.”
P3	“Company effectiveness no matter what the size basically boils down to the quality of communication. And that’s in terms of formal communication as you know or informal communication. And as you also know if there’s not good formal communication informal communication will fill the void. And informal communicators will become the leaders if the leaders don’t lead.”
P4	“I always say communicate three different times three different ways. I’m saying it out loud, I’m saying in an e-mail and I’m saying and in our company’s Slack channel. And I think that the big reason for that is being a part of engagement is feeling like your voice is heard.”
P5	“Slack is our main communication tool. Our team to communicate in real time is using Slack. And with slack it is the central core that’s the source of truth of communication. Then we also try to bring people together.”

Theme 3: Measurement Tools

HRLs mentioned surveys as their main measurement tool. However, a few HRLs interviewed had mix feelings regarding the validity and subjective nature of the responses from surveys. Further, several HRLs denoted that surveys do not always provide a predictive outline nor measure the impact of engagement. Managers who understand how to positively impact the climate of innovation through measuring work behavior, may ignite innovativeness and enhance the performance of organization (Shanker, 2017). P4 recommended a measurement tool called Culture Amp as a preferred measuring tool over other surveying methods. Culture Amp according to the HRL is a unique HRIS tool that extracts meaningful data to measure employee engagement and provides trends and performance indicators across teams and departments in the organization. Lastly, P4 explained that to create a culture of innovation, the organization must have lots of data from measuring engagement and results of that engagement.

This measurement tool theme confirms the conclusions of Riaz (2017) that implementing high performance work systems and employee services are developed through the validity of measurement tools. Further findings, Altindag and Kosedagi (2015) contended measuring performance is a concept describing how a person can use their own potential or real knowledge, skills, and abilities to reach their own goals or expectations. The methodical triangulation of the interview data and the information from the participating company's' websites such as "turn your data into useful information, but sometimes you need a little more help to turn your unique information into actionable insights" and "the data-driven view across the entire employee life cycle." Additionally, P1, P2, and P3 also noted creating a culture of innovators can be identified in the survey data. But more importantly the creator of the survey must append the right questions to discover the employee's professional and emotive needs to innovate regarding employee engagement. Based on literature findings, transformational leaders actively measuring employee engagement will discover ways to enhance performance and employee commitment (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2015). Comparatively, Pradhan (2019) stated transformational leadership as a multifactor leadership questionnaire by Bass and Avolio (1990) was used to assess the extent to which employees attribute transformational leadership to their superior. Furthermore, Jaiswal (2015) remarked to measure employees' perception about their leader's transformational leadership style, a short version of the multifactor leadership questionnaire can be implemented to included four items for each behavioral component, i.e., individualized consideration, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation. The measurement tool theme thus aligned with transformational leadership theory. Table 5 contains a summary of related statements made by the participants on measuring tools used in their organizations.

Table 5

Theme: Measurement Tools

Participant	Comments
P1	"So three ways. First, we do a/b testing, because metrics matter. Number two survey oriented, responses rather than just a simple metric answer. Third and lastly, in this organization employees have an outlet to talk to some superstars in H.R. who don't know them and know me. They're hearing from someone else and they have an opportunity to engage with someone who is further along in their career."
P2	"Specific to measuring innovation, our survey asked if new ideas are encouraged and we then measure that based on not just our historical view but since our last survey. So, for us twice a year, we're looking at survey data in Q2 and Q4. Basically, each calendar year and we're measuring it against how we performed. Also 30 60 90 day check in with our employees."
P3	"I would use mainly humanly definable. Metrics like. And I'm not big on employee opinion surveys that kind of stuff. Metrics generally have to be, and this just has to be really substantively and rigorously examined that whatever the metric is has to tie back to the strategy or the purpose and vision mission and values of the company."
P4	"We use our tool culture amp for our engagement surveys. The tool pulls information so everybody gets like unique survey link that can extract meaning from data like engagement survey becomes much more powerful and I can filter it by gender, I can filter it by department, I can filter it by tenure, and I can filter it by what they're working on."
P5	"Conversations. Connectivity. How are you doing. How connected do you feel to the project? Are there any blockers consistently checking in and asking? Are there any mental blockers or technical blockers in the way that's keeping you from doing your job? My co-founder does a really good job of assessing whether or not someone is actually hitting some type of mental blocker."

Theme 4: Recognition Strategies

Finally, HRLs mentioned the use of recognition strategies to celebrate the efforts, creativity, and ideas employees share to help the organization's growth, productivity, and profitability. Ross (2016) commented the firm that wishes to encourage innovation can do so by providing formal awards and recognition both financial and non-financial to innovators within the organization. HRLs in this study discussed the importance of celebrating every moment and individual that should be recognized with praise. Praise as mentioned by all five HRLs, P1 through P5 is spending time with employee, getting feedback from the employee, and taking the time to pause and say thank or a job well done. A primary focus on team-based recognition is the best way to encourage institutional innovation by rewarding collaboration (Ross, 2016). P,1, P3 and P4 mentioned praise can also posited as a form of celebration. P2 noted a Hot Noms is a software app that management and employees both use to boost each through praise and recognize someone in the organization who is doing a great job. The tool allows management and employees to nominate someone who is making an exceptional contribution to the organization’s bottom line. Hot Noms are displayed during weekly meetings, departmental meetings, and in all-hands meetings, which help to generate a culture of open-mindedness and teamwork. According to the triangulation of data obtained from the P2, Hot Noms programming is evidence-based and relevantly noted as a recognition strategy theme broadcasted across office locations via the company’s featured broadcasted television channel. According to the transformation leadership theory, Anderson (2018) remarked personal recognition (recognizing the performance of followers) to the four characteristics of transformational leadership proposed by Bass (1985). Furthermore, Jaiswal (2015) noted through the organizations’ rewards system, transformational leaders should use facilitation of promotion and recognition for creative performance and assure stability to their follower in case of any failure while working differently. The recognition strategies theme thus aligned with transformational leadership theory. Table 6 contains a summary of several key related statements made by the participants about the organizations reward of recognition strategies theme.

Table 6

Theme: Recognition Strategies

Participant	Comments
P1	"From a recognition standpoint it is it's important to celebrate. Celebration is a retention strategy, absolutely. I take the team out and celebrate and celebrate it which gives them elevated around it."
P2	"Our product has a built-in recognition tool and so that anyone in the organization, peer to peer, manager to employee, senior leader to employee or employee to senior leader can go in and give what we call a hot nom. It is a nomination, so in our weekly meetings, all-hands, and culture wall we display the hottest items and nominations that have happened since the last meeting."
P3	"Beyond money there's a there's all kinds of other non-monetary awards and recognitions and I think those are very important including promotion including personal development. Training is probably the most important things."
P4	"You have to praise employees and taking a moment to pause and celebrate like celebrating and recognizing and rewarding individuals like and also in a way that's like best for them."
P5	"We recognize employees through personal phone calls, to the e-mails, one on one meetings and Zoom calls. We use them for video calls a lot. Between slack and zoom. Lunch or dinner that might just be a one or one check in just to see what's going on. But we do recognize people on their milestones."

Applications to Professional Practice

The findings in the qualitative case study may provide HRLs a practical application of engagement strategies to increase innovation. Therefore, HRLs can apply the findings to aid in solving the specific business problem that some HRLs lack employee engagement strategies to increase innovation. The study findings included four underlying themes: (a) cross-team assessment, (b) communication tools, (c) measurement tools, and (d) recognition strategies. Additionally, the findings and conclusion can help HRLs mitigate against loss of profits and improve productivity. In the transformational leadership theory, transformational leaders serve as an inspiration to their followers by engaging in effective communication that encourages trust, commitment, and consequently greater satisfaction (Abelha et al., 2018). In general, HRLs who use cross-team assessment and communication tools may empower followers to have increased organizational loyalty, motivation, and job satisfaction with decreased absenteeism, promoting a positive work environment (Rolfe, 2011). More so, an effective way of keeping enterprises and organizations competitive is by developing an entrepreneurial culture through using measurement tools and recognition strategies that boosts innovative activity and thus maintains competitive advantage (Kostis et al., 2017). HRLs could adopt and implement these successful employee engagement strategies to increase innovation and improve their competitive positioning in an increasingly difficult business environment.

Implications for Social Change

The findings in this qualitative multiple case study suggest potential implications of tangible improvements for employee engagement and business innovation. The implications for social change may aid human resource firms and HRLs with strategies that support stabilization in organizational retention. The lack of knowledge of the appropriate strategies such as cross-team assessment, communication and measurement tools, and recognition strategies can cause high talented employee turnover and, loss of performance for the organization. HRLs can understand and apply the new strategies to increase innovation through employee engagement.

Engaged employees earn a source of income and can provide for their families, hence contributing to the larger community, spurring economic growth. Additionally, the implications for social change may enrich local communities with local innovators who create economic boosts fueling wellness and prosperity within the global marketplace. McBeath (2015) remarked progressive social change initiatives can challenge the status quo and enhance understanding of organizational practice. HRLs can adopt the results of this study to improve their knowledge of methods to influence, motivate, and increase job satisfaction. The research study contributes to the body of knowledge about employee engagement strategies to increase innovation.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore employee engagement strategies HRLs use to increase innovation. HRLs in any industry should decide whether the results of this research study coincide with their existing strategies of employee engagement to increase innovation. Based on the findings of this study, I propose several actions HRLs leaders can take to increase innovation through employee engagement strategies. HRLs need to understand four core issues for influencing their success: (a) cross-team assessment, (b) communication tools, (c) measurement tools and (d) recognition strategies.

The first action organizations should adopt is using a cross-team assessment to discover the ability, personality, and motivating factors that drive each individual employee to innovate, while identifying solutions. The data can be aggregated to determine each employee's level of skill and strengths. Then the data must be evaluated by HRLs and shared with the organization in multiple styles of communication channels to encourage cross-team dynamics that influence contribution. Additionally, frequently using surveys, specifically pulse surveys help to determine the culture of the organization and hot buttons. Hence, pulse surveys in some cases lead to enriched training needs developed from the employee's feedback. Therefore, a better understanding of what influences the development of cultural curiosity would be likely to improve cross-team exchange (Mikhaylov, 2016). HRLs should keep in mind that sharing the information from the cross-team assessment perpetuates a sense of belonging and emphasizes that the employee's voice is being heard.

The second action organizations should adopt is implementing effective communication tools to ensure the organization is promoting open dialogue, hence one of the key factors in employee engagement. HRLs should recognize trust develops from disciplines of transformational leadership in transparency, motivation, and influence. Importantly, HRLs should plan to over communicate through one-on-one meetings, team meetings, all-hands meetings, and new hire 30-60-90-day meetings. High levels of communication and social support may provide an atmosphere of mutual encouragement, in which employees feel safe engaging in risky proactive behavior that is highly valuable for the organization (Strobel et al., 2017). HRLs should examine ways to sit amongst their teams to encourage transparency and open communication, rather than being behind closed doors in offices.

The third action HRLs should adopt is utilizing measurement tools to acquire further knowledge regarding employee engagement strategies to increase innovation. HRLs should evaluate productivity of employee engagement at least twice a year using survey tools and processing the data with HRIS metrics. Importantly, HRLs should share the results of the data collected from the interviews in one-on-one performance meetings and/or in all-hands meetings to uphold transparency. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to investigate if objective and subjective measures of employee creativity may generate convergent results on innovation. By sharing the results of the metrics employees feel more connected to ideas of innovations disclosed in the survey. Furthermore, sharing the results helps to spur a creative and safety environment, hence allowing the employee to proactively innovate.

The fourth action organizations should adopt is recognizing their employees for their creativity and employee commitment to the organization’s goals. HRLs should plan to celebrate employees often and consistently. It is vitally important according to the HRLs to figure out ways to stop, applaud, congratulate, and reward their employees. HRLs should implement an employee of the month program, recognize employees through a culture channel, and promote employees based on their contribution to the organization’s vision and mission. This can be accomplished through *hot noms* or creating a culture wall where employees are recognized for their phenomenal contribution towards innovation. Moreover, HRLs should implement a culture of recognition formed around celebrating wins. Rasheed and Shahzad (2016) denoted employees’ decision to involve themselves in any of the voice decisions depends in some cases on the praise and recognition they may get from top management for each type of voice decision.

The HRLs in any field of business who want to improve employee engagement strategies to increase innovation must consider the findings of this doctoral research study. Organizations seeking new ways to engage employees to innovate should take the results of this study into consideration. I provided a synopsis of the findings of this study, and its importance in future leadership and people development seminars, employee engagement and culture workshops, change management trainings, and human resource management forums interested in improving employee engagement strategies to increase innovation.

Recommendations for Further Research

I conducted a qualitative multiple case study on employee engagement strategies HRLs use to increase innovation. The population for the study consisted of five HRLs in the in the northeast area of the United States, specifically Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and the small size is one of the limitations of this study. Although many variables might affect employee engagement strategies, the information shared by participants during the interviews process were of their personal experiences. Because employee engagement is a vital component to the success of an organization, future researchers should be inclined to continue exploring other employee engagement strategies to increase innovation. Again, further research from the employee’s point of view may expand the pool, hence stretching saturation and findings. Additionally, future researchers can use mixed methods and conduct qualitative interviews on a larger population pool as well as use quantitative research method to develop hypothesis to test correlation between variables of each theme identified in this study. Notably, future researchers who interview employees may offer a new insight, hierarchical perspectives and understanding in the scholarly knowledge of employee engagement strategies to increase innovation.

Reflections

My educational journey began three years ago and has been abundant, rewarding, fulfilling, and treasured. Despite the challenges of being flooded by Hurricane Harvey, impacted by a reduction in workforce and laid off, relocating to a new city, selling my home, buying a home, tearing my ACL and medial meniscus, and started a new career in education management. Although, I was faced with a multitude of challenges, I prevailed. Importantly, my journey has helped become the academic scholar I always hoped to be and more. My writing has not only improved as a Walden University student, but also in my career. Inherently, I anticipated my doctoral journey would be hard work and that is exactly what Walden University delivered, hard work. Time management was the key factor in this journey, but more importantly staying dedicated to the goal, not matter how difficult things became around me. Because things happen all the time, and to pursue a goal you have to get out of your own way.

My 24 years of business management experience prepared me for this research journey and allowed me to have a significant amount of insight regarding employee engagement strategies to increase innovation. In retrospect, I had initial personal biases before I started the data collection, however the biases quickly disseminated once the participants began to discuss strategies that I was either unfamiliar with or had not used in my tenured experience as an HRL. After completing my research study, I must admit, no one person knows everything, and I learned that research enhances confirmability, transferability, reliability, and creditability in one's thinking. Significantly, the findings from this study have provided me a roadmap to develop leaders in the importance of employee engagement strategies to increase innovation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore employee engagement strategies HRLs use to increase innovation. Responses from the interviews and review of the physical artifacts provided insights into the aspects of employee engagement. The focus of employee engagement to increase innovation is the alignment of the central research question. What employee engagement strategies do human resources leaders use to increase innovation? To achieve such innovation, leadership is needed to enhance the innovative capabilities of teams through coordination of their expertise and collective actions (Gumusluoglu et al., 2017). HRLs should implement employee engagement strategies that give employees a safe place and environment to be creative. Employee creativity is a result of combinatorial play on Einstein's various environmental factors, such as creativity, encouragement, autonomy or freedom, resources, and even pressures (Ma & Jiang, 2018). For example, the study's findings included four major emergent themes (a) cross-team assessment, (b) communication tools, (c) measurement tools, and (d) recognition strategies. The conceptual framework for this research study was transformation leadership theory. Using the concepts derived from the study, HRLs could implement new strategies to engage employees to increase innovation, giving the organization a competitive advantage in the global marketplace. According to Gumusluoglu et al. (2017) to respond to the increasing need to develop new products, processes, and breakthrough innovations, organizations must use systems which enhance innovative behavior both within and across teams.

The findings of my study emphasized employee engagement strategies could have a direct positive impact on organization innovation. Using the results of this study, HRLs can understand the importance of employee engagement strategies among business processes. Importantly, this study can provide a foundation for HRLs currently implementing some of the strategies identified but may lack strategies which can improve employee engagement to increase innovation. I concluded that improving employee engagement strategies to increase innovation are essential to an organization's productivity.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Introduce the interview, research topic over coffee and explain the purpose and scope of the study. I will review each participant meets the established criteria to participate before beginning the interview process. Assure the participants that I will keep all the collected information confidential, ask that I record the interview, and inform the participant of the right to stop the interview. I will inform the participants of the storage and destruction process as a means of enhancing confidentiality. I will provide each participant with a blank copy of the consent form and will keep the signed consent form in a locked cabinet for five years.

The questions for the interview are as follows:

1. What specific engagement strategies (ES) do you use to cultivate innovation?
2. What ES do you use to cultivate cross team innovation and creativity?
3. What communication tools do you use to introduce the ES to increase innovation?
4. What measurement tools do you use to evaluate ES that increase innovation?
5. How do you recognize employees that increased innovation?
6. What else can you share with me about the ES your organization uses to increase innovation?

Following the interview, I will thank each participant for their time and contribution. I will arrange a follow-up meeting for member checking. During the member checking session, I will test the accuracy of my interpretation of the data collected and make any changes each participant wants to increase the validity and reliability of the data. I will ask clarifying questions to add richness to the interview data.

I will inform participants they will receive a complimentary summary of findings after the completion of the study.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What specific engagement strategies do you use to cultivate innovation?

2. What engagement strategies do you use to cultivate cross-team innovation and creativity?

3. What communication tools do you use to introduce engagement strategies that increase innovation?

4. What measurement tools do you use to evaluate engagement strategies that increase innovation?

5. How do you recognize employees who increase innovation?

6. What else can you share with me about the engagement strategies your organization uses to increase innovation?