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The Impact of Supervisory Roles
on Employee Engagement at a Private Midwest University

by

Brittany D. Brown

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

The Impact of Supervisory Roles on
Employee Engagement at a Private Midwest University

by

Brittany D. Brown

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education


at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

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Abstract

Previous research has confirmed that high performing employees have higher levels of engagement. This study explored factors influencing employee engagement in the context of higher education with particular emphasis on the potential impact of supervisory behaviors. Participants included faculty, adjunct instructors, staff, and coaches. No significant relationships were found between direct supervisor behaviors and the extent to which the research sample was engaged in their work. In addition to meaningful opportunities, recognition and collaboration with others were found to be important motivators through which engagement at work is heightened.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Employee engagement in the United States has a price. “Gallup estimates the cost of poor management and lost productivity from employees in the U.S. who are not engaged or actively disengaged to be between \$960 billion and \$1.2 trillion per year” (Wigert & Harter, 2017, p. 3). Accordingly, employee engagement - the focus of this study - can be an influential factor in any organization's success.

Employee engagement is defined by Kahn (1990) as “harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (p. 694). According to Gupta (2015), employee engagement is “the level at which employee dedication, both emotional and rational subsist in relation to achieve the mission, and vision of the organization” (p.45). Gupta also specified that employee engagement is “the measuring rod that measures the involvement of the individual in the organization . . . it is the extent to which a person is sympathetically connected to his organization and obsessive about his job which is actually important” (p. X).

There are several methods a company may use to engage employees and retain top talent, including providing trusting and challenging environments (Gupta, 2015); offering transparency and recognition (Green et al., 2017); insisting on constant feedback and consistent performance management (Magee, 2002); and developing a personal connection with a supervisor (Fitch & Van Brunt, 2016). Leaders may also directly influence their employees’ ethical behavior (Gok et al., 2017; Bonner et al., 2016). Building on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the perspective that trust is essential to the achievement of a business unit (Searle et al., 2011). Chughtai et al. (2015)

pioneered the idea that engagement could be linked to ethical leadership. The researchers proposed that having trust in one's supervisor is the link that connects ethical leadership to increased employee work engagement, including vigor, dedication, and absorption, as well as decreased emotional exhaustion. Defining work engagement by vigor, dedication, and absorption was borrowed from the work of Schaufeli et al. (2002).

Background

The researcher is a human resource professional in a higher education setting and has been for the past eight years. In the nine years prior to working in human resources, she studied as an undergraduate student, served as a work study student, graduate assistant, and employee in business and financial aid offices. The researcher encountered countless instances over the years spent in higher education where employees expressed discontentment with their current employment based on behaviors of direct supervisors. Accordingly, employee engagement was studied in the context of academia. What is it that academic leaders are doing or not doing to provide the kind of environment that an employee looks forward to coming to every day? Answers may be significant because many employees decide to leave or stay in a job, which may depend on the manager and the degree to which that manager cares about them. For example, a Gallup study revealed that 50% of employees left their jobs to get away from their managers (Harter & Adkins, 2015). In contrast, Fitch and Van Brunt (2016) suggested that managers can improve employee engagement through collaboration, communication, and care. Similarly, Charan et al. (2011), reported that "coaching is the hands-on art of caring . . . when you care, people know it, and this is a very important aspect of leadership" (p. 69). Brusino

and Soyars (2009) found the single most important factor in engagement is the employee's immediate supervisor.

According to Fitch and Van Brunt (2016), money is also a motivator, yet "support, reassurance, praise, and positive feedback tend to have a greater positive impact on an employee's attitude and performance" (p. 33). According to Oehler and Adair (2018), among the highest drivers of employee engagement are rewards and recognition. The Aberdeen Group (2015) found that companies with a formal employee engagement program had 233 percent greater customer loyalty (Minkara & Moon, 2015). Smith and Bititci (2017) found that there is a "causal relationship between performance measurement, performance management, employee engagement and performance" (p. 1207). According to Gallup, there are five best practices to improve engagement and performance:

integrate engagement into the company's human capital strategy, use a scientifically validated instrument to measure engagement, understand where the company is today, and where it wants to be in the future, look beyond engagement as a single construct, and align engagement with other workplace priorities. (Mann & Harter, 2016, para. 19)

Brusino and Soyars (2009) found that "quality of training and learning opportunities" (para. 8) positively influenced employee engagement to a high or very high extent. This snapshot of the literature suggests the success and support of an organization are heavily dependent on the organization's ability to support its employees, which begins with leadership. Leaders must give to engage; leaders must invest to earn.

Purpose

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore influences on higher education employee engagement with particular emphasis on the potential impact of supervisory behaviors. Among the research sample, employee types included faculty, adjunct instructors, staff, and coaches. The researcher examined relationships between employee's self-reported engagement levels at work and four supervisory variables, including the employee's level of trust *in* their immediate supervisor, the recognition received *from* their immediate supervisor, the quality of communication *with* their immediate supervisor, and opportunities for growth provided *by* their immediate supervisor.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Hypotheses.

H₀₁: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and their immediate supervisor.

H₀₂: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and their level of trust in their immediate supervisor.

H₀₃: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and the quality of communication with their immediate supervisor.

H₀₄: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and recognition received from their immediate supervisor.

H₀₅: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and opportunities for growth provided by their immediate supervisor.

H₀₆: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no difference between engagement at work and employee type.

Research questions.

RQ1: To what extent is the research sample of higher education employees engaged at work?

RQ2: Among the research sample of higher education employees, what influences engagement at work?

Rationale

There are many studies connecting employee engagement and performance management; there is a gap, however, in respect to how immediate supervisor behavior in academia impacts employee engagement. The current study fills this gap, and the findings may offer several advantages to colleges and universities. Research-based measures that immediate supervisors can take to inspire and engage employees could assist higher education administrators as well as learning and development centers in designing supervisor training programs and methodologies. Brusino and Soyars (2009) reported the highest driver of employee engagement is the relationship an employee has with their immediate supervisor. It stands to reason that academic institutions would do well to invest heavily in the development of people managers to ensure they are treating people with the care and respect needed to keep a proper relationship and retain the high performing employees. Increasing employee engagement may also produce higher

satisfaction among an institution's student population. According to Comaford (2017), people are happy to be at work when they are engaged, because they feel that their work makes a difference and aligns with the mission, they provide a better customer experience. Additionally, engaged employees are presumed to stay in an organization when they are satisfied with their jobs and have a supervisor they respect (Decker & Van Quaquebeke, 2015).

Methodology

To test the hypotheses and answer the research questions for this study, the researcher used a random sample of employees at the research site--a private Midwestern university. The researcher gathered self-reported engagement data using a survey. The institution's Human Resources Information System was used to pull employee data and recruit the sample. The primary recruitment tool used was the university's email. The researcher sent initial and follow up emails to participants asking for participation from those who did not initially complete the survey. The Survey Institutes Employee Engagement survey inspired the questions for the research instrument (Sutherland et al., 2020).

The researcher applied the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to analyze the survey data. The PPMC, named after Karl Pearson, "determines the strength of the linear relationship between two variables" (Bluman, 2010, p. 533). In this study, the researcher tested the self-reported level of employee engagement against variables related to the employees' direct supervisor's behavior. The researcher looked at the direct report's level of engagement at work and the impact of the employee's supervisor's level of communication, trust, recognition, and the opportunity for growth. To test and analyze

H₀₆, an analysis of variance was used, commonly abbreviated as ANOVA. An ANOVA is a statistical test used to “test a hypothesis concerning the means of three or more populations” (Bluman, 2010, p. 602). The researcher examined the self-reported engagement levels of each employee type for comparison and to determine if there was a significant difference between the types. Additionally, the employee’s self-reported level of engagement, the report of how happy they were to work for their supervisor, and whether they saw their supervisor as a good leader were also used in support of the analysis of the hypotheses.

Following the survey phase of this study, the researcher contacted those who consented to participate in a focus group and used polling software to arrange a best time for the majority of participants. Focus groups are used in connection with surveys to produce a broader range of qualitative data within a study (Morgan, 1996). The researcher conducted the focus group in a private setting at the university. The focus group lasted approximately one hour. The researcher asked open-ended questions about the level of engagement the participants experienced at work. The focus group was audio-recorded and transcribed by a third-party company. Once transcribed, the analysis of the data began. The researcher coded for themes derived from Gallup’s Q12 meta-analysis (Harter et al., 2016). Finally, the researcher analyzed the overall results to find commonalities and differences in the qualitative and quantitative data.

Definition of Terms

Adjunct instructor: Part-time employees who teach as their primary job responsibility.

Coach: Full- and part-time employees who coach one or more athletic teams as their primary job responsibility.

Collaboration: In accordance with Gallup's Q12 meta-analysis, collaboration is defined as having associates or fellow employees committed to doing quality work (Mann & Harter, 2016).

Employee engagement: "Harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 694).

Faculty: Full-time employees who teach as their primary job responsibility.

Self-evaluation: A self-reported score on a scale of 0.0 to 4.0 in relation to established performance standards.

Staff: Employees who do not teach as a primary responsibility in their job description.

Opportunity: In accordance with Gallup's Q12 meta-analysis, opportunity is defined as the opportunity to do what you do best every day (Mann & Harter, 2016).

Recognition: Recognition is making employees feel valued and appreciated. Supervisors need to let their employees know their ideas count (Kruse, 2016; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017).

Limitations

The limitations of a study are important for the researcher and those reading the study to understand; limitations assist readers when making broad generalizations about the impact of the results in addition to shedding light on recommendations for future studies (Price & Murnan, 2004). The researcher in this study is a leader in the Human

Resources division of the University and could have unintentionally and indirectly impacted the number of participants in the study. The researcher has sent numerous surveys to employees over the past seven years and participants could have felt obligated to complete the assessment and focus group.

In this study, only employees were asked about their perceived level of engagement at work; not asking supervisors their perception of the employee's engagement is also a limitation of the study. Other limitations included the state of the university at the time of the study. The university was experiencing budget cuts and layoffs for the second year in a row during the time of the study. Additionally, the Board of Trustees removed the presiding president four months prior to conducting the study. At that time, employees expressed fear of the unknown and distrust of administration, which may have led to biased self-reported engagement levels on the survey. Employee engagement is impacted by many factors, such as compensation, the work itself, colleagues, etc., and only asking about supervisor behaviors is a limitation of the study.

Table 1 illustrates the staffing levels over the past six academic years at the research site. From the fall 2020 to fiscal year 2021 there was an overall nine-million-dollar cost savings due to 117 position eliminations. The employees directly affected by the position eliminations were not the only ones negatively impacted; but, those that kept their jobs also felt the loss. They lost friends and colleagues; but, they also had to pick up the additional work that was left behind. All of these factors play into the university's employee engagement levels and serve as limitations of the study.

Table 1

University Staffing Levels

Employee Type	Academic Year					
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Faculty	303	298	293	283	259	209
Staff	525	652	667	658	582	455
Temporary	NA	NA	NA	12	18	5
Adjunct	1225	1125	1001	924	907	513
Total Employees	2053	2075	1961	1877	1766	1182

Summary

At the research site, personnel costs account for 80% of the expenses annually. For 2019, payroll at the private Midwest university was \$85 million. When an organization makes this kind of investment, it stands to reason that investing time and energy into learning what motivates and engages employees should be a top priority for leaders and supervisors.

Based on this data, organizations should spend time researching how to motivate and engage human resources in order to make the human capital as productive, effective, and efficient as possible. This mixed-methods study addresses this need by exploring influences on higher education employee engagement, emphasizing the potential impact of supervisory behaviors.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the impact of supervisory behaviors on employee engagement in an academic environment. Several studies have addressed employee engagement in the corporate environment. Little research exists, however, on employee engagement in the higher education arena. Chapter Two presents a review of the literature on employee engagement, including definitions, methodologies, metrics, and associated influences and influencers.

Engagement

For this study, the researcher defined employee engagement as “Harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). According to Kruse, engaged employees are just as customer-focused at 4:59 p.m. as they are when they walk into work in the morning; engaged employees work just as hard on a Friday afternoon as they do on a Monday morning. The literature, however, defines employee engagement in numerous ways. Deci and Ryan (1985) introduced Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to examine intrinsic and extrinsic motivational foundations in connection to competence, autonomy, and psychological relatedness. Decades after its introduction, employee engagement studies and business leaders referenced SDT for increasing positive attitudes toward employees’ organizations (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), work engagement is defined by vigor, dedication, and absorption. According to Gupta, employee engagement has also been defined as “the level at which employee dedication, both emotional and rational, subsists to achieve the mission and vision of the organization” (2015, p. 45).

Employee engagement is “the measuring rod of the involvement individuals demonstrate to the organization...it is the extent to which a person is sympathetically connected to his organization and obsessive about his job which is actually important” (2015, p. 45). The Aberdeen Group defined employee engagement as, “a state of positive work-related attitude, characterized by high levels of energy, emotional commitment, and satisfaction derived from the work itself. When employees are engaged, they feel a vested interest in the company’s success and are both willing and motivated to perform to levels that exceed the stated requirements of their job. Engaged employees positively influence the buying behaviors of customers, leading to higher customer loyalty and profitable growth” (Minkara & Moon, 2015, p. 2).

Dr. George Gallup studied employee engagement, it was traced back to the 1930s when he researched human needs and satisfaction (Harter et al., 2016). Gallup’s work fits nicely with Donald O. Clifton’s work and his study of what makes people successful and prosperous and in the early research it was revealed that “change happens most at the local level” (Harter et al., 2016, p. 4). The local level refers to one’s direct reports, or the employees that someone manages on a daily basis. In the 1970s, Gallup reported that less than 50% of North American employees were highly satisfied with their work (Gallup, 1976). A more recent, longitudinal study has connected the role and behaviors of people managers with the increased levels of engagement of their employees (Knies & Leisink, 2014).

Engagement Methods.

There are several methods a company may use to engage employees and retain top talent, including providing trusting and challenging environments (Gupta, 2015;

Kruse, 2016); offering transparency and recognition (Green et al., 2017; Kruse 2016); insisting on constant feedback and consistent performance management (Kruse 2016; Magee, 2002); and developing a personal connection with a supervisor (Fitch & Van Brunt, 2016). According to Osborne and Hammoud (2017), organizations may enhance the emotional, physical, and cognitive engagement of its employees by providing snacks, allowing longer breaks, providing books as rewards, celebrating employee successes, scheduling annual on and off-site company events, awarding time off, hosting dinners, and giving bonuses. Hanrahan et al. (2019) claimed that engagement should not be reactive, but rather proactive, and proposed that when something or someone was not working out, supervisors should consider what needs solving or changing in order to save the highly engaged. According to Kruse (2016), many top executives will say their most important asset is the people that work for them, but when they sit in cabinet-level meetings, they will rarely hear the morale of the employees as a topic of discussion; the executives are more concerned with profit margins, increased sales, and recruitment rather than the commitment their current employees have for the organization. Contrary to what Scott (2017) was taught in business school, she learned that “staying centered herself so that she could build real relationships with those who worked for her, built morale and value more than maximizing shareholder value” (p. 113). Based on the literature, executives would do well to spend time considering how they might heighten employee motivation and morale.

Recognition.

Recognition of employees—making them feel valued and appreciated—may also support engagement. Supervisors need to let their employees know their ideas count

(Kruse, 2016; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Arming employees with dedicated and meaningful work may also increase employee engagement. When leaders nominate individuals on their teams to participate in enhanced development opportunities, those individuals experienced greater motivation to perform at a higher level and exceed expectations (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). According to Charan et al. (2011), top level leaders want marketable employees and stay in their jobs because they want to, not because they could not get a job anywhere else. Having a successful company full of marketable employees means that top executives must learn to value skills like employee development and recognition programs. "If the company's leadership doesn't value skills like coaching, planning, and rewarding employees, people will either quit or (even worse) stay and perform poorly" (p. 28). According to Oehler and Adair (2018), among the highest drivers of employee engagement are rewards and recognition.

According to Scott (2017), employers have rock stars and superstars. Rock stars are on a gradual growth trajectory. Rock stars enjoy the job they currently hold, they do not feel the need to move right into the next job that comes along, and they enjoy their craft. Rock stars are employees that are stable and reliable. They don't need promotions to motivate them, but rather, to be honored and rewarded. In contrast, superstars are motivated by ensuring they are continuously learning and given new opportunities that challenge them. According to Scott, not every superstar has the dream of managing others. Google, for example, created an individual contributor path that was completely separate from the manager pathway and even more prestigious. Scott also reported that Google has a safeguard in place, when employees are on the individual contributor path, managers are not included in the promotion process and therefore unable to ensure

loyalty/kissing up with promotions. Rather, a committee determines promotions at Google, not the manager. Managers are able to appeal the decision if they disagree with the committee's decision, but they are not the deciders. Additionally, a boss is unable to block an employee from switching to another team. At Google, the work is paramount and the fluid movement from team to team recognizes that some people do not get along, and forcing the issue will only defeat the end goal. The process that Google uses promotes growth and recognition for working hard and prevents favoritism from playing a part in promotions.

Growth Opportunities.

Ensuring organizations retain competent employees is critical and strategies include providing the necessary resources and training opportunities to individuals and teams. The strongest response rate on a survey conducted by Brusino and Soyars (2009) found that "quality of training and learning opportunities" (para. 8) positively influenced employee engagement to a high or very high extent. Providing culture awareness seminars, team development opportunities, and communication training, for example, can grow more competent employees that stretch for additional challenging assignments and therefore have heightened levels of engagement at work (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). "The best developmental approach provides carefully selected job assignments, job assignments that stretch people over time and allow them to learn and practice necessary skills" (Charan et al., 2011, p. 27). Successful managers also put others first, which starts by defining and assigning the work of their direct reports and supporting their growth.

Coaching is the hands-on art of caring; it bonds people (especially potential leaders) to each other and the organization. When you care, people know it, and

this is a very important aspect of leadership...When coaching and caring are largely absent and pressures are intense, turnover is high and people leave to find organizations that seem to be better places to learn and grow. (Charan et al., 2011, pp. 69-70).

In *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, Senge (1990) proposed, “an organization’s commitment to and capacity for learning can be no greater than that of its members” (p. 7). Senge proposed the ability of a team to learn begins with communication and dialogue. When asked about their jobs, most people describe their daily tasks, not their purposes. When employees focus on their positions rather than the greater picture, they feel little responsibility for the results produced. Senge asked the reader to view the problems of this world as globally interconnected and to recognize businesses are becoming more complex and dynamic. Based on these acknowledgments, Senge recommended that organizations should become “learningful” organizations in order to create a vision and implement a system to solve an issue or improve something as a whole. “The organization that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization” (p. 4). Senge also advocated for teamwork, defining a team as a group of people “who function together in an extraordinary way, who trust one another, who complement each other’s strengths and compensate for others’ limitations, who have common goals that are larger than individual goals, and who produced extraordinary results” (p. 4). Lencioni (2016) is also a proponent for teamwork to accomplish the work, in *The Ideal Team Player*, Lencioni describes the three virtues needed to be a successful, thriving team player, you should be humble, hungry (highly

motivated), and people smart. According to Senge, the great teams did not start that way; they “learned” how to become great. The global companies that have been the most profitable have found a way to bring people together around a common identity and a shared destiny. People do not respond well to top-down hierarchical demands; instead, they perform and succeed because they are motivated to do so, not because a supervisor uttered a command. A key to a learning organization, therefore, is genuine commitment and enrollment, not compliance. No matter how sincere, supervisors will not be able to motivate their employees by dictating a vision, teamwork is a proven working strategy (Lencioni, 2016).

Advancement Opportunities.

In addition to growth and empowerment in their current positions, employees may also want to know there is potential for career advancement. According to Charan et al. (2011), it is necessary for CEOs to have high achieving direct reports and be secure enough to pick the right people for the position, despite knowing that some of them may want their job. Readiness for professional advancement and corresponding responsibilities, however, was reported to vary among individuals. Peter and Hull (1969) described "The Peter Principle" as the result of people being promoted above their level of competence or leaders pushing their employees to grow too fast. The employee who is victim to the Peter Principle is unhappy and so are those around them. As a potential solution, Charan et al. (2011) proposed that when an employee is good at their current job and they receive a promotion, but not trained or may not have the skills and ability to manage or lead, they should be rewarded for the job they can do well and be moved back to the original position with a raise. The raise will recognize their outstanding

performance and moving them from a position where they did not fit will benefit them in the end. Charan et al. (2011) also recommended that first-time managers must have a supervisor that holds them accountable for their time and how they spend it; the boss should hold the first-time manager accountable by using performance evaluations.

Engagement Metrics

Since the year 2000, Gallup has measured employee engagement, and while there are some slight changes from year to year, less than one-third of employees in the United States are engaged on a consistent basis (Mann & Harter, 2016). According to Gallup, many problems with employees' level of engagement can lead back to the measurement tool (Mann & Harter, 2016). Free online tools allow companies to create engagement surveys asking questions about employee perceptions, but unfortunately when the tool is not grounded in research, companies can end up receiving a lot of data that is difficult to act upon. Mann and Harter (2016) also described a challenge that arises when organizations define engagement as "a percentage of employees who are not dissatisfied or are merely content with their employer instead of a state of strong employee involvement, commitment, and enthusiasm" (para. 10).

Employee engagement has been measured many ways, but Gallup has found the companies that have the most positive impact on employee engagement are those consistently concerned about the level of interest employees show in their work. Some companies dedicate one or two times a year to an employee engagement survey, but do not act on the results (Mann & Harter, 2016). In order for organizations to be dedicated to continuous improvement, leadership has to deem employee engagement an ongoing priority in decision making and in communication to all levels of the company (Mann &

Harter, 2016). The results of employee engagement and satisfaction surveys need to be measured and reported in ways the leaders and decision makers can not only understand, but also be able to act upon the results (Harter et al., 2016).

In 2016, Gallup used their Q12 survey to measure employee engagement. Gallup found that results from the Q12 correlate to performance (Mann & Harter, 2016). The Q12 questions were derived from Gallup's early work in the 1950s that focused on "strengths verses weaknesses, relationships, personal support, friendships, and learning" (Mann & Harter, 2016, p. 5). Following the research of the 50s, Gallup refined their research and used the equation, "Per-person productivity = Talent x (Relationship + Right Expectation + Recognition/Reward)" (Mann & Harter, 2016, p. 6). Themes continued to emerge from the research that included "individual perception, performance orientation, mission, recognition, learning and growing, expectations, and the right fit" (Mann & Harter, 2016, p. 6). The first iteration of the Q12 survey was developed in the 1990s and the final iteration was completed in 1998 and has been used on over 30 million employees around the world (Mann & Harter, 2016). The Q12 survey "measures employee perceptions of the quality of people-related management practices in their business units" (Mann & Harter, 2016, p. 8). The Q12 survey has been validated for over 30 years and its results have yielded practical results for supervisors as they look to impact and create change in the workplace. The Q12 instrument (Appendix E) measures actionable issues for supervisors, e.g. "satisfaction, loyalty, pride, customer service perceptions, and intent to stay with the company" that can produce change from the manager, such as, "role clarity, resources, fit between abilities and requirements, receiving feedback, and feeling appreciated" (Mann & Harter, 2016, p. 9).

In Higher Education, The Faculty Survey of Faculty Engagement (FSSE) measures faculty expectations of student engagement in educational activities that have been associated with high levels of learning and development. According to Georgia Southern University (2019), “the FSSE also collects information about how faculty members spend their time on professorial activities, such as teaching and scholarship, and the kinds of learning experiences that an institution may emphasize” (para. 1). While this survey hints at the engagement of faculty in higher education, there are tools that can be used to further focus on the employee engagement levels in institutions of higher education.

The Aberdeen Group (2015), states that the voice of the employee (VoE) is one of the most common approaches to measuring employee engagement. Strategies for capturing the VoE are used to gather information such as how fulfilled an employee is with their work and how connected the employee feels to the company values and strategic plan (Minkara & Moon, 2015). There are many other tools on the market to measure engagement and work satisfaction in a less formal manner. For example, Dulski (2013) created the Individual Motivational Pie Chart to measure engagement at the most basic level. The pie chart starts with a circle filled out by each individual employee, then they answer what motivates them with corresponding percentages. Color codes (red, yellow, green) are then applied for each item/slice of the pie, illustrating how each motivator is being met.

Engagement and Service

Customer service training and employee engagement go hand in hand (Granatino et al., 2013; Kruse, 2016); tying an organization’s processes to its mission, vision, and

values will increase quality service, but also drive engagement (Disney Institute, 2018; Hanrahan et al., 2019). According to the Disney Institute (2019),

by strategically focusing on leadership excellence, employee engagement, and quality service—in that order—combined with a continuous improvement mindset and a clear understanding of your brand and your organization’s goals, you can set your organization on a path to the sustained results you desire. (p. 3)

Similarly, the Aberdeen Group (2015) found that companies with a formal employee engagement program had 233 percent greater customer loyalty (Minkara & Moon). Based on the research of the Aberdeen Group, Verint suggested three opportunities for companies to foster engagement through collaboration; one way to encourage collaboration is through activity streams. Activity streaming is a live webpage that is available only to employees to collaborate on unpredictable problems that arise as they are assisting customers. Live chat is another solution the Verint suggested, this allows employees to chat online with colleagues one on one. Finally, the third suggestion is to incorporate gamification into the workplace. Finally, gamification is another option to build the desired knowledge and skills for each employee group (Verint, 2015).

Hanrahan et al. (2019) reported that leaders are usually excited about engagement, but making time for it is difficult. Organizations can make it easy for leaders to focus on employee engagement by offering a low barrier of entry: find one area that is not doing well, one area of weakness, and work on it to help the internal and external community understand company values. Hanrahan et al. (2019) also suggested using forums, but also proposed that leaders must find out how teams talk to each other and determine if it is efficient. If the communication is not efficient, leaders should look at the processes and

show employees how their work ties directly to the mission, vision, and values of the organization, which are central to the culture of an organization Hanrahan et al. (2019).

Brusino and Soyars (2009) found that when employees are well informed of the missions and goals of the organization this can lead to highly engaged employees. In their study, they found that 90% of the companies surveyed agreed that communicating their mission and goals to their employees was important, but only 52% alleged that they are successfully doing this. If so, many agree that communicating the mission and what the company is striving to achieve is important, what is holding them back? Many day-to-day tasks will get in the way of important work that does not have immediate, visible positive outcomes on the bottom line.

Engagement and Culture

Culture is how employees work and engagement is how employees feel about their work; culture is what is actually happening and engagement is what people think about what is happening (Hanrahan et al., 2019). Groysberg et al. (2018) found that “a culture that emphasizes caring and order encourages a work environment in which teamwork, trust, and respect are paramount” (p. 49). A caring culture is defined as an organization that is warm, sincere, and rational. A culture that values caring produces employees that have a strong sense of loyalty, the company retains talent, it lacks conflict and notices high levels of employee engagement (Groysberg et al., 2018). Accordingly, building culture into the processes that drive the organization and the daily work of the employee is what matters more than what kind of culture the organization chooses (Hanrahan et al., 2019). According to Magee (2002), two key factors that influence the behavior of employees are organizational culture and Human Resources (HR) practices.

HR practice is to develop and manage peoples' performance management which in turn gives employees clearly articulated goals, valid evaluation information, recognition of contributions, essential on-going feedback, and fair and equitable pay.

A significant factor that plays into the employee engagement level of the organization is whether or not employees agree on the most important cultural attributes of the company. Brusino and Soyars (2009) state that "there are three elements- contributions, connections, and growth and advancement - that drive employee engagement and must be ingrained in an organization's culture for employee engagement to flourish" (p. 63). Additionally, Brusino and Soyars (2009) found the single most important factor in engagement is the employee's immediate supervisor.

Engagement and Leadership

Leadership is the "capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create" (Senge, 1990, p. 9). Leadership may also be more about what the leader does than who the leader is or what the leader says. According to Drucker (2001),

leadership does matter, of course. But, alas, it is something different from what is now touted under this label. It has little to do with "leadership qualities" and even less to do with charisma. It is mundane, unromantic, and boring. Its essence is performance. (p. 268)

In respect to performance, leadership has been reported to be a method of supporting engagement. Leaders should be held accountable for the engagement level of their employees on their performance appraisals (Brusino & Soyars, 2009). According to Gallup, "business/work units with high employee engagement nearly double their odds of above average composite performance in their own organizations and increase their odds

for above average success across business/work units in all organizations by 2.1 times” (Harter et al., 2016, p. 27).

In the 1990s, Gallup's research continued to show the importance of supervision and engagement when retaining talent (Mann & Harter, 2016). According to Kouzes and Posner (2012), leaders influence engagement through establishing and exemplifying clear values, nurturing a culture of collaboration. Employees that are motivated to exceed expectations in their tasks also demonstrate a solid tie between the employee and their leader (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Secure leaders who care for their employees have a profound effect on the employees’ job satisfaction (Ronen & Mikulincer 2012). According to Decker and Van Quaquebeke (2015), respect across leadership positively impacted subordinate’s self-determination and job satisfaction, while also decreasing their willingness to leave their place of employment.

In *Radical Candor*, Scott (2017) examined the impacts of different approaches to leadership. Radical candor requires a supervisor to "care personally" and "challenge directly" (p. 9). "Radical candor builds trust and opens the door for the kind of communication that helps you achieve the results you're aiming for" (p. 9). Scott proposed that caring is where supervisors must use when building relationships with direct reports, as challenging directly will only work once leaders have proven that they care personally. According to Scott, if leaders are not in the "radically candid quadrant," they are in one of three other quadrants: "obnoxious aggression, manipulative insincerity, or ruinous empathy" (p. 22). Critiquing someone without taking time to show they care personally is what Scott called “obnoxious aggression” (p. 25) and cautioned that obnoxious aggression is a “behavior,” not a “personality trait" (p. 27). Behaviors are

adjustable; an employee cannot easily adapt personality traits. Accordingly, when critiquing a behavior, Scott proposed to be careful not to personalize it, and only critique the behavior, not the person. "Not caring enough about someone to challenge them directly" (p. 30) is manipulative insincerity, which is demonstrated when supervisors care more about themselves and how uncomfortable it will make them feel to confront someone. Providing feedback is a key skill for a leader that will engage and motivate their team.

Leaders looking to encourage their employees should include congruence and empathy in their daily practice (Fitch & Van Brunt, 2016). Congruence refers to a manager's genuineness and authenticity with its employees. Considering a situation through the employees' eyes demonstrates empathy. Active listening, or listening with curiosity and respect of the storyteller's perspective, is another way to encourage employees (Fitch & Van Brunt, 2016). According to Charan et al. (2011), today's employees expect transparency from administrations and freedom to contribute to decisions that affect them; they do not want a micromanager, but rather someone they can respect and trust to provide advantageous direction. In order for first-line managers to gain trust, respect, and have transparent communication with their direct reports, their boss, their suppliers, and their customers, they must focus their time on building relationships (Charan et al., 2011). "First-line managers who are perceived as devious and manipulative will never form productive relationships with their people" (Charan et al., 2011, p. 45). Trust is the foundation of the employee supervisor relationship.

Leadership and Communication.

A leader's ability to communicate with their employees is the foundation for employee engagement (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Communication should be a dialogue between the employee and supervisor (Kruse, 2016). A strategy used to boost employee engagement is to host quarterly meetings to allow employees to express what knowledge they are missing in order to perform to peak performance and also to allow others to share knowledge that will empower them to grow and develop in their current roles (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). According to Charan et al. (2011), business managers must be skilled at working with a diverse workforce, employees with different skill sets and different personality traits ensuring their communication is effective and clear so as not to cause confusion.

Charan et al. (2011) also proposed that managers who are unable to properly delegate, communicate with their direct reports, give thorough feedback, and coach and offer clear direction should not supervise. In reference to communication, Scott (2017) encouraged supervisors to criticize direct reports in private and encourage just the opposite from their team. The team should be encouraged to criticize the actions of the boss openly, as trust comes when the boss is open to critique in public settings and is also willing to make changes. According to Scott, when a boss reacts well to criticism, it can go a long way in building the culture of guidance and it can allow some leverage with the team, especially when the team is large. Ultimately, the team will see their supervisor genuinely wants the criticism and will continue to bring critiques to the supervisor, therefore, developing a credible leader. At first, direct reports will be hesitant to provide a boss feedback, but leaders should have a question ready to start the conversation and

embrace the discomfort. Additionally, Scott suggested that most employees will initially tell supervisors that everything is fine, great, or going well, but do not fall for this and allow the conversation to end before getting a genuine response. Scott suggested that after asking for a critique, leaders should count to six before responding to the comment, "forcing them to endure the silence" (p. 132). Scott also offered another way to embrace the discomfort of seeking criticism by calling it out when someone's words are not matching their body language. Say something like, "Come on, tell me what you really think" (p. 133). While seeking criticism, Scott cautioned not to criticize the criticism, listening to understand what employees are sharing, not to respond or debate it. Finally, Scott warned her readers to gauge the guidance they are receiving. If feedback is all praise and no criticism, beware.

Idowu and Abolade (2018) found that effective communication, not just downward communication, but treating employees like they matter increased employee engagement. According to Mikkelson et al. (2015), effective communication from the direct supervisor increases employee job satisfaction. Related to effective communication, another factor in leaders developing their employees was listening (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Listening begins a process coined by Scott (2017) called the "Get Stuff Done" (p. 81) wheel. The steps in the "Get Stuff Done" wheel are as follows: listen, clarify, debate, decide, persuade, execute, and learn. Scott emphasized listening to employees and creating a culture in which they listen to each other.

Leadership and Trust.

Trust, ethical leadership, and social exchange theory may build increased levels of employee engagement (Blau, 1964) and trust is essential to the achievement of a business

unit (Searle et al., 2011). Chughtai et al. (2015) pioneered the idea that engagement could be tied to ethical leadership and proposed trust in a supervisor connects ethical leadership to increased employee work engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption) and decreased emotional exhaustion. Building on the work of Chughtai et al. (2015), which examined the impact ethical leadership had on employees' well-being, Kruse (2016) proposed supervisory behaviors in key areas, including communication, trust, recognition, and growth opportunities, may influence levels of employee engagement. According to Hanrahan et al. (2019), trust in leadership is key to employee engagement. Charan et al. (2011) proposed that communication and trusting relationships between managers and their direct reports are fundamental, and without trust, it is difficult to motivate employees. Similarly, when managers do not trust each other it may affect their direct reports negatively (Hanrahan et al., 2019).

Leadership and Disengagement.

Outcomes, loyalty, an employee's intent to stay, motivation, and discretionary effort are all measures of an employee's engagement. In contrast, disengagement typically links to a fundamental lack of trust, eventual turnover, and lack of radical candor (Huselid, 1995). Companies can also lose engaged employees when disengaged employees go unaddressed (Hanrahan et al., 2019). Osborne & Hammoud (2017) reported that "disengaged employees typically cost US corporations \$350 billion annually" (p. 50) and Crabtree (2013) reported that only 13% of employees worldwide are engaged at work.

Just as leadership plays a large factor in an employee's level of engagement, it can also lead to disengagement. According to Scott (2017), bad decisions that result in

companies listening to only senior leaders or people who insist on having a seat at the table" are among the biggest drivers of organizational mediocrity and employee dissatisfaction" (p. 99). Scott also contended that great bosses do not leave decision-making up to themselves, but rather have a process for empowering employees' closest to the facts of the work to make many of the decisions; the more a boss goes straight to the source for facts and information when making a decision, the more an organization builds strength and employees are empowered (2017). As a result, better decisions are made and morale is heightened. According to Drucker (2001), "the leader sets the goals, sets the priorities, and sets and maintains the standards" (p. 270) yet leaders must also see leadership as a responsibility rather than a rank and privilege; they should strive to see the triumphs of their direct reports as their own triumphs, rather than threats. According to Charan et al. (2011), the day of the "military manager" (p. 38) has passed and employees now have access to endless information via the Internet that allows them to be creative and innovative. This creativity, however, may be stifled if managers continue to bark orders, compete with their direct reports, and jealously guard information. According to Charan et al. (2011), "when managers don't understand or appreciate the contribution of support staff, these staff people don't deliver full performance" (p. 33). According to Scott (2017), "authoritarian bosses tend to be particularly weak persuaders, they don't feel a need to explain the decision or their logic" (p. 99) and care very little, if any, for the feelings of those affected by their decisions. In contrast, Osborne & Hammoud (2017) claimed that leaders could be authoritative while also listening to the needs and concerns of their employees.

Leadership and Performance.

Employee engagement influences employee performance and both can suffer when leaders become what Scott (2017) called “ruinously empathetic” (p. 6). Ruinous empathy transpires when a boss lets poor performance slide.

Retaining people who are doing bad work penalizes the people doing excellent work. Failing to deal with a performance issue is not fair to the rest of the team. Work undone generally winds up getting picked up by the top performers, overburdening them. (p. 70)

Employees need to know what is expected of them and they need to be held accountable by their managers. Mann and Harter (2016) suggested that aligning “critical engagement elements” with employee performance and the overall human resources strategy should be the top priority for leaders of organizations (para. 19). Every interaction employees have can potentially impact the engagement level which then can directly or indirectly impact the organizations’ bottom line.

Additionally, engagement is not a stand-alone component of an organization, but it should be woven into how managers lead employees to exceed expectations through providing development opportunities and resources to accomplish the company’s goals (Ishibashi, 2017; Mann & Harter, 2016). If enhancing engagement is the focus of a leader’s every interaction with direct reports, performance may increase.

Smith and Bititci (2017) found that there is a “causal relationship between performance measurement, performance management, employee engagement and

performance” (p. 1207). According to Gallup, there are five best practices to improve engagement and performance:

integrate engagement into the company’s human capital strategy, use a scientifically validated instrument to measure engagement, understand where the company is today, and where it wants to be in the future, look beyond engagement as a single construct, and align engagement with other workplace priorities (Mann & Harter, 2016, para. 19).

Smith and Bititci (2017) also found a clear relationship between employee performance management and employee engagement. Their intervention led to findings that demonstrated increased levels of employee engagement due to a more democratic and participative approach to performance. Prior to the intervention, individual performance scores were posted publicly, but there was a change instituted to make performance more of a team goal as opposed to an individual competition that also proved to increase employee engagement overall.

Summary

Employee engagement is not simply the lack of disengagement, but it is “the emotional commitment an employee has to the organization and its goals” (Kruse, 2016, p. 6). How much effort does the employee put into their work when no one is looking, do they go above and beyond expectations because they believe in the mission and purpose of the organization? Leaders can heighten levels of employee engagement by using simple techniques offered in this chapter. The difficult part about employee engagement is that it is not a stand-alone strategy. Collectively, the literature makes clear that employee engagement should be

woven into the culture (mission, values, strategy) of the organization and the evidence should be able to be measured through employee performance.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This mixed-methods study explored influences on higher education employee engagement with emphasis on the potential impact of supervisor behaviors on their employees' engagement. Among the research sample, four employee types were included, faculty, adjunct instructors, staff, and coaches. A quantitative analysis was conducted to test the following hypotheses and examine relationships between employee's self-reported engagement levels at work and four supervisory variables, including the employee's level of trust *in* their immediate supervisor, the recognition received *from* their immediate supervisor, the quality of communication *with* their immediate supervisor, and opportunities for growth provided *by* their immediate supervisor. This section of narrative outlines the methodology used for this research study. The research provided context for the study's location, population demographics of the research site, sample demographics, the protection of human subjects' anonymity and confidentiality, and data analysis procedures and results of the study.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Null Hypotheses.

H₀₁: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and their immediate supervisor.

H₀₂: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and their level of trust in their immediate supervisor.

H₀₃: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and the quality of communication with their immediate supervisor.

H₀₄: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and recognition received from their immediate supervisor.

H₀₅: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and opportunities for growth provided by their immediate supervisor.

H₀₆: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no difference between engagement at work and employee type.

Research questions.

RQ1: To what extent is the research sample of higher education employees engaged at work?

RQ2: Among the research sample of higher education employees, what influences engagement at work?

Study Location

The university was located west of the Mississippi river on 500 acres. There were more than 125 undergraduate and graduate programs and the student to faculty ratio was 12:1. Students were from 50 states and over 75 countries. Students enrollment at all campuses included 4,822 undergraduate students and 2,560 graduate students; at the main campus there were 3,963 undergraduate students and 1,177 graduate students. The research was conducted in a private Midwest university's training and development

center. The researcher served at the university as the Director for Employee Development.

Employee Type.

As illustrated in Table 2, the total population of employees at the research site was 1,318 employees (adjunct instructors, coaches, faculty, and staff). Adjunct Instructors represented the largest category of employees with the university with 49.70% ($n=655$). Staff represented 27.85% ($n=367$), followed by faculty at 15.71% ($n=207$). Coaches, the smallest category, represented 6.75% ($n=89$) of the total employee population.

Table 2

University Population - Employee Type

Employee Type	Population Size ($n = 1318$)	
	<i>n</i>	%
Adjunct Instructor	655	49.70
Coaches	89	6.75
Faculty	207	15.71
Staff	367	27.85

Gender.

The research site had a total employee count of 1,318 adjunct instructors, coaches, faculty, and staff. Overall, 50.72% ($n = 668$) are males, 49.20% ($n = 648$) are females, and 0.08% ($n = 1$) are not disclosed. Table 3 illustrates genders for the employee types included in this study.

Table 3*University Population - Gender*

	Employee Type							
	Adjunct Instructor		Coaches		Faculty		Staff	
Gender	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Female	326	24.75	23	1.75	111	8.43	188	14.27
Male	327	24.83	66	5.01	96	7.29	179	13.59
Not Disclosed	1	.08	0	0	0	0	0	0

Generation.

Generation statistics at the research site are based on the total employee count of 1,318 adjunct instructors, coaches, faculty, and staff. The Silent Generation (1928-1945) was 1.68% ($n = 22$) of the employees, Baby Boomers (1946-1964) were 27.31% ($n = 358$), Generation X (1965-1980) consisted of 37.53% ($n = 492$), Generation Y/ Millennials (1981-1996) were 32.65% ($n = 428$), and Generation Z (1997-Onwards) totaled 0.84% ($n = 11$). Table 4 illustrates generations for the employee types included in this study.

Table 4*University Population - Generation*

Generation	Employee Type							
	Adjunct Instructor		Coaches		Faculty		Staff	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Silent Generation (1928-1945)	21	1.60	0	0	1	0.08	0	0
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	222	16.93	10	0.76	72	5.49	54	4.12
Generation X (1965-1980)	273	20.82	21	1.60	98	7.48	100	7.63
Generation Y/ Millennials (1981-1996)	132	10.07	57	4.35	36	2.75	203	15.48
Generation Z (1997-Onwards)	0	0	1	0.08	0	0	10	0.76

Ethnicity.

Ethnicity statistics at the research site are based on the total employee count of 1318 adjunct instructors, coaches, faculty, and staff. 0.30% ($n = 4$) employees were American Indian or Alaska Native (Not Hispanic or Latino) (United States of America), 1.90% ($n = 25$) Asian (Not Hispanic or Latino) (United States of America), 8.22% ($n = 108$) Black or African American (Not Hispanic or Latino) (United States of America), 2.59% ($n = 34$) Hispanic or Latino (United States of America), 0.30% ($n = 4$) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Not Hispanic or Latino) (United States of America), 1.60% ($n = 21$) Two or More Races (Not Hispanic or Latino) (United States of America), 83.49% ($n = 1097$) White (Not Hispanic or Latino) (United States of America), and

1.60% ($n = 4$) did not wish to disclose my ethnicity (United States of America). Table 5 illustrates ethnicities for the employee types included in this study.

Table 5*University Population - Ethnicity*

Ethnicity	Employee Type							
	Adjunct Instructor		Coaches		Faculty		Staff	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
American Indian or Alaska Native (Not Hispanic or Latino)	1	0.08	1	0.08	0	0	2	0.15
Asian (Not Hispanic or Latino)	16	1.22	0	0	6	0.46	3	0.23
Black or African American (Not Hispanic or Latino)	62	4.72	10	0.76	6	0.76	30	2.28
Hispanic or Latino	14	1.07	1	0.08	6	0.08	13	0.99
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	0.15	0	0	0	0	2	0.15
Two or More Races (Not Hispanic or Latino)	8	0.61	1	0.08	4	0.08	8	0.61
White (Not Hispanic or Latino)	536	40.79	74	5.63	182	13.85	305	23.21
Did not wish to disclose my ethnicity	12	0.91	2	0.15	3	0.23	4	0.30

Table 6*University Population - Compensation*

Compensation	Employee Type							
	Adjunct Instructor		Coaches		Faculty		Staff	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Less than \$21,000	482	39.64	25	2.06	0	0	4	0.33
\$21,000-30,000	49	4.03	9	0.74	0	0	13	1.07
\$31,000-40,000	21	1.73	19	1.56	0	0	101	8.31
\$41,000-50,000	7	0.58	15	1.23	6	0.49	84	6.91
\$51,000-60,000	0	0	11	0.90	18	1.48	53	4.36
\$61,000-70,000	0	0	7	0.58	42	3.45	36	2.96
\$71,000-80,000	0	0	2	0.16	37	3.04	18	1.48
\$81,000-90,000	0	0	1	0.08	29	2.38	15	1.23
\$91,000-100,000	0	0	0	0	28	3.13	4	0.33
Above \$100,000	0	0	4	0.33	37	3.04	29	2.38
Total	559	45.98	93	7.64	197	17.01	357	29.36

Note. Faculty and staff compensation salary data is from 2020. Adjunct instructors are paid on a monthly basis. In order to have a full year's data, 2019 data was included.

Compensation

Compensation statistics at the research site are based on the total employee count of 1318 adjunct instructors, coaches, faculty, and staff; 42.02% ($n = 511$) earned less than \$21,000, 5.84% ($n = 71$) earned \$21,000-30,000, 11.60% ($n = 141$) earned \$31,000-

40,000, 9.21% ($n = 112$) earned \$41,000-50,000, 6.74% ($n = 82$) earned \$51,000-60,000, 6.99% ($n = 85$) earned \$61,000-70,000, 4.69% ($n = 57$) earned \$71,000-80,000, 3.70% ($n = 45$) earned \$81,000-90,000, 3.45% ($n = 42$) earned \$91,000-100,000, and 5.76% ($n = 70$) earned above \$100,000. Table 6 illustrates compensations for the employee types included in this study.

Sample

Research participants were defined and recruited from employee data in the institution's Human Resources Information System database. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher partnered with a human resource (HR) professional to pull the sample. The HR professional removed all identifying information before providing the data to the researcher. A random sample of 50 employees from each employee group; faculty, staff, adjunct instructor, and coaches were compiled for a total of 200 employees to be recruited for the study.

A stratified random sample was collected to determine the sample. By using a sample from faculty, part-time adjunct instructors, staff, and coaches, the researcher was able to examine several angles of the relationship between direct supervisor behaviors and employee engagement. Fraenkel et al. (2012) described the stratified random sample as a process in which certain subgroups (faculty, staff, adjunct instructors, coaches) are selected for the same sample in the same proportion as they exist in the population. The samples were chosen from all academic schools and divisions within the private Midwest university to provide all angles of the university's engagement levels. New employees were not excluded from the study and there was no limitation on years of service. From the 200 employees recruited for the study, 24% ($n=48$) elected to participate.

Employee Types.

The total sample of employees for the study included 48 employees (adjunct instructors, coaches, faculty, and staff). Staff made up the largest category of employees within the sample with 39.58 % ($n=19$). Faculty made up 21.75% ($n=14$), followed by adjunct instructors at 18.75% ($n=9$), and coaches at 12.50% ($n=6$) of the sample population. Table 7 illustrates the employee types for the sample of this study.

Table 7

Sample Employee Types

Employee Type	Sample Size ($n=48$)	
	<i>n</i>	%
Adjunct Instructor	9	18.75
Coaches	6	12.50
Faculty	14	21.75
Staff	19	39.58

Age

The total sample of employees for the study included 48 employees (adjunct instructors, coaches, faculty, and staff). The sample consisted of 8.33% ($n=4$) 18-24-year-olds, 27.08% ($n=13$) 25-34-year-olds, 31.25% ($n=15$) 35-44-year-olds, 14.58% ($n=7$) 45-54-year-olds, and 18.75% ($n=9$) above 54-year-olds. Table 8 illustrates ages by the employee types included in this study.

Table 8*Sample Ages*

Age	Employee Type							
	Adjunct Instructor		Coaches		Faculty		Staff	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Above 54 years old	3	6.25	0	0	0	0	1	2.08
45-54 years old	4	8.33	0	0	0	0	3	6.25
35-44 years old	1	2.08	2	4.17	8	16.57	4	8.33
25-34 years old	1	2.08	3	6.25	1	2.08	8	16.57
18-24 years old	0	0	1	2.08	0	0	3	6.25

Table 9*Sample Genders*

Gender	Employee Type							
	Adjunct Instructor		Coaches		Faculty		Staff	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Sample Ethnicities</i>								
Female	3	6.25	2	4.17	9	18.75	11	22.92
Male	6	12.50	4	8.33	5	10.42	8	16.67

Gender

The total sample of employees for the study included 48 employees (adjunct instructors, coaches, faculty, and staff). The sample consisted of 52.08% ($n=25$) females and 47.92% ($n=23$) males. Table 9 illustrates genders by the employee types included in this study.

Ethnicity

The total sample of employees for the study included 48 employees (adjunct instructors, coaches, faculty, and staff). 89.58% ($n=43$) of the sample were White, 2.08% ($n=1$) African American, 2.08% ($n=1$) Asian, 2.08% ($n=1$) Native American, and 8.33% ($n=2$) in the other category. Table 10 illustrates ethnicities by the employee types included in this study.

Years of Service

The total sample of employees for the study included 48 employees (adjunct instructors, coaches, faculty, and staff). In reference to years of service at the university, 16.67% ($n=8$) of the sample were employed for less than one year, 31.25% ($n=15$) 1-3 years, 14.58% ($n=7$) 3-5 years, 6.25% ($n=3$) 5-7 years, 4.17% ($n=2$) 7-10 years, 16.67% ($n=8$) 10-15 years, 6.25% ($n=3$) 15-20 years, and 4.17% ($n=2$) 20+ years. Table 11 illustrates years of service by the employee types included in this study.

Table 10*Sample Ethnicities*

Ethnicity	Employee Type							
	Adjunct Instructor		Coaches		Faculty		Staff	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
American Indian or Alaska Native (Not Hispanic or Latino)	0	0	1	2.08	0	0	0	0
Asian (Not Hispanic or Latino)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2.08
Black or African American (Not Hispanic or Latino)	1	2.08	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hispanic or Latino	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Two or More Races (Not Hispanic or Latino)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White (Not Hispanic or Latino)	8	16.67	5	10.42	14	29.17	16	33.33
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4.17

Table 11*Sample Years of Service*

Years of Service	Employee Type							
	Adjunct Instructor		Coaches		Faculty		Staff	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
20+ years	0	0	0	0	1	2.08	1	2.08
15-20 years	1	2.08	0	0	2	4.17	0	0
10-15 years	3	6.25	0	0	3	6.25	2	4.17
7-10 years	0	0	1	2.08	1	2.08	0	0
5-7 years	0	0	1	2.08	1	2.08	1	2.08
3-5 years	1	2.08	0	0	3	6.25	3	6.25
1-3 years	3	6.25	2	4.17	2	4.17	8	16.67
Less than 1 year	1	2.08	2	4.17	1	2.08	4	8.33

Compensation

The total sample of employees for the study included 48 employees (adjunct instructors, coaches, faculty, and staff). 12.50% ($n=6$) made less than \$20,000, 8.33% ($n=4$) made \$21,000-31,000, 10.42% ($n=5$) made \$31,000-40,000, 14.58% ($n=7$) made \$41,000-50,000, 14.58% ($n=7$) made \$51,000-60,000, 18.75% ($n=9$) made \$61,000-70,000, 6.25% ($n=3$) made \$71,000-80,000, 6.25% ($n=3$) made \$81,000-90,000, and 8.33% ($n=4$) made above \$100,000. Table 12 illustrates compensations by the employee types included in this study.

Table 12*Sample Compensation*

Compensation	Employee Type							
	Adjunct Instructor		Coaches		Faculty		Staff	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Less than \$20,000	5	10.42	1	2.08	0	0	0	0
\$21,000-30,000	1	2.08	1	2.08	0	0	2	4.17
\$31,000-40,000	0	0	1	2.08	0	0	4	8.33
\$41,000-50,000	1	2.08	0	0	0	0	6	12.50
\$51,000-60,000	1	2.08	3	6.25	1	2.08	2	4.14
\$61,000-70,000	0	0	0	0	8	16.67	1	2.08
\$71,000-80,000	0	0	0	0	2	4.17	1	2.08
\$81,000-90,000	0	0	0	0	2	4.17	1	2.08
\$91,000- 100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Above \$100,000	1	2.08	0	0	1	2.08	2	4.17

Note. \$91,000-100,000 was not included in the sample survey.

Human Subjects

As per the following language, research participants were informed through the initial email and within the survey that there were no risks or direct benefits from participating in this study (see Appendix A).

We are collecting data that could identify you, such as your email address if you choose to participate in the voluntary focus group. Every effort will be made to keep your information secure and confidential. Only members of the research team will be able to see your data.

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. We do not intend to include information that could identify you in any publication or presentation.

Any information we collect will be stored by the researcher in a secure location.

The only people who will be able to see your data are: members of the research team, qualified staff of [the research site], or representatives of state or federal agencies. (Appendix A)

Participants who elected to complete the focus group portion of the study also received an explanation from the researcher that their privacy was protected and all that was discussed would be kept confidential and only used for the purposes of this study. The researcher asked that the participants leave their email or phone number to be contacted. In an effort to keep the answers to the survey completely confidential, participants also had the option to email the researcher directly.

Orientation

An initial email was used to orient participants to the study. The research information statement (Appendix B) was included in the first block of questions in the survey, as well as at the start of the focus group on August 7, 2019 from 2-3 p.m. The initial email outlined the purpose of the study and explained that the researcher was completing doctoral studies and examining the impacts of supervisor behaviors on employee engagement. The email also stated that the survey would take approximately

10-to-15 minutes. Additionally, for those that agreed to participate in the focus group, the researcher re-introduced herself and reiterated the purpose of the study. The researcher also told the sample that their participation in the study was confidential and everything they shared would be kept private and only used for the purposes of the study. They were reminded that there was no employment risk or benefit from participating in the study.

Data Collection & Analysis

The hypotheses for this study were as follows:

H₀₁: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and their immediate supervisor.

H₀₂: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and their level of trust in their immediate supervisor.

H₀₃: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and the quality of communication with their immediate supervisor.

H₀₄: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and recognition received from their immediate supervisor.

H₀₅: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and opportunities for growth provided by their immediate supervisor.

H₀₆: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no difference between engagement at work and employee type.

Data for test these hypotheses were collected through a 22-item survey. The survey questions were adapted from The Survey Institute's Employee Engagement survey (Sutherland et al., 2020). The Survey Institute was chosen for this study because of the alignment of the mission and values of the company to this particular study; their mission is to "convert research data into meaningful information for driving business strategy" (Sutherland et al. 2020, para. 1). Their goal is to help companies make sense of the data they collect. The Survey Institute has served organizations in nearly 90 different countries and in 30 different languages. They are a trusted company and have validated research for the past 21 years (Sutherland et al., 2020).

After adapting the questions from The Survey Institute, the researcher built the survey in Qualtrics™. Qualtrics™ was the primary survey platform used by the research site; it was used to collect, manage, and record data for this study, as well as many other studies throughout the university. In order to send out a survey using Qualtrics™, the researcher created a new project and in the first block for questions, entered the full disclosure statement. The second block of questions in the Qualtrics™ survey began the demographic section of questions. The researcher used multiple choice questions to collect data on age, gender, ethnicity, salary range, and employee type. The third set of questions provided a sliding scale for participants to rate their level of engagement at work and their perception as to whether their supervisor was a good leader and whether or not they were happy to work for their supervisor. The third block in the survey also included two open ended questions about when the participant felt motivated and demotivated in their work. The fourth block of questions used a matrix table where the participant could answer strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, neither disagree

nor agree, somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree for statements regarding trust, communication, growth opportunities, and recognition received from their supervisor. Finally, the last question was an open-ended text question asking for participation in the focus group. The researcher gave the participants the option to leave their email or phone number to be contacted by the researcher. They also had the option to email the researcher directly in an effort to keep the answers to the survey completely confidential.

The survey link was sent to the sample via university email. The email was sent out twice; 1st week of June 2019, 2nd week of June 2019, and the survey closed on July 19. Beginning on July 20, 2019 the data were collected. The full disclosure statement in the beginning of the survey was important, because prior to this study, the researcher sent many surveys to the university population as a part of her regular job duties. It was imperative that employees did not think participation in the study was a job requirement. Appropriate measures, such as the disclosure statement were taken to ensure there was no coercion when asking for participation.

After the participants completed the survey and focus group, the researcher ensured all identifying information was removed before analyzing the data; this was vital to the success of the study. To analyze the quantitative survey data the researcher used the statistical test called the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The PPMC, named after Karl Pearson, “determines the strength of the linear relationship between two variables” (Bluman, 2010, p. 533). The researcher tested the self-reported level of employee engagement against four variables related to the employees’ direct supervisor’s behavior. Specifically, the direct report’s level of engagement at work and the impact of the employee’s supervisor’s level of communication, trust, recognition, and the

opportunity for growth. Additionally, the employee's self-reported level of engagement was also tested against the employee's report of how happy they were to work for their supervisor and whether they saw their supervisor as a good leader.

The research questions for this study were as follows:

RQ1: To what extent is the research sample of higher education employees engaged at work?

RQ2: Among the research sample of higher education employees, what influences engagement at work?

Data from the survey and a focus group were used to answer these questions. The researcher contacted those who consented to participate in the focus group and used a Doodle™ poll to arrange a time to hold the meeting that was best for a majority of the participants; 10 participants were able to take part in the focus group. The researcher conducted the focus group in a private setting on February 14, 2020, which lasted approximately one hour. The researcher began the meeting by reminding the participants of the confidentiality that would be kept by the researcher and all that was shared in the focus group would only be used for the purpose of the study. The researcher asked open-ended questions about the level of engagement the participants experience at work. Specifically, the questions asked about the participants favorite part of work, the pros and cons of the university's mission, vision, and values, how they felt about work when they got up in the morning, what gives them a sense of accomplishment at work, how comfortable they felt communicating issues to the appropriate channels at work. The researcher opened the conversation for the participants to add anything else they would like to say. The focus group was audio-recorded and transcribed. Once transcribed, the

analysis of the data began. The researcher completed a detailed analysis of the focus group transcript and coded it for themes.

The qualitative data from the focus group were coded for themes presented in the Gallup 2016 Q12 meta-analysis (Harter et al., 2016). The Q12 “measures employee perceptions of the quality of people-related management practices in their business units” and has been administered to over 30 million employees, validated with over 1000 focus groups, and used in 198 countries around the world (Harter et al., 2016, p. 8). The Q12 themes aligned with the study included the supervisor's expectations, having the necessary resources to do their job, being given growth opportunities, recognition (public and private), attention, encouragement, voice, purpose, collaboration, relationships at work, accountability, and personal growth. Using the Q12 themes was a key component of this study because of the alignment with the purpose of the study. Both the Q12 study and the current study sought to find out what drives employee engagement and how supervisors can benefit from knowing this information. Using the Q12 themes, the researcher analyzed the overall results to find commonalities and differences in the qualitative data.

Summary

This mixed methods study explored the influences on higher education employee engagement. The research sample included four employee types, faculty, adjunct instructors, staff, and coaches. The quantitative analysis was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to test the hypotheses and examine relationships between employees' self-reported engagement levels at work and four supervisory variables, including the employees' level of trust *in* their immediate supervisor, the

recognition received *from* their immediate supervisor, the quality of communication *with* their immediate supervisor, and opportunities for growth provided *by* their immediate supervisor. The qualitative portion of the research used themes from Gallup's Q12 meta-analysis to answer the question of engagement levels and motivating factors (Harter et al., 2016). Chapter Three outlined the methodology used for this research study and provided specific statistics to provide contexts for the population and sample demographics.

Chapter Four: Results

This study sought to provide greater insight into key drivers of employee engagement in an academic environment, including possible relationships between employees' supervisors' behaviors and the extent to which the employee is engaged at work. While many studies have been conducted in the corporate environment related to employee engagement, little research has been carried out on engagement in the higher education arena. Through this study, the researcher sought to add to the literature with regard to the employee engagement levels in academia and provide expanded opportunities for Human Resources to attract and retain top talent, which may prove to be an even more difficult challenge in the next ten years (Goldstein, 2006).

RQ1: To what extent is the research sample of higher education employees engaged at work?

In response to the survey prompt, "please rate your overall level of engagement in your work," data to answer *RQ1* was provided by the sample of higher education employees, including nine adjunct instructors, 14 faculty, 19 staff, and six coaches. Participants were able to rate their engagement at work on a sliding scale from 0 to 100. A score of 90 to 100 equated to "Extremely good," 70-89 "Moderately good," 51-69 "Slightly good," 50 "Neither good nor bad," 40-49 "Slightly bad," 20-39 "Moderately bad," and 0-19 "Extremely bad." Overall, the sample reported to be moderately engaged at work, with an average self-reported engagement score of 87.85%. Faculty reported the highest average level of engagement at 92.29%, followed by staff at 87.79%. Coming in third was adjunct instructors at 85.66%. Coaches reported the lowest average level of engagement at 81%. Table 13 outlines the breakdown for each employee type and the

RQ2: Among the research sample of higher education employees, what influences engagement at work?

Data to answer *RQ2* was provided through open-ended questions in the survey and questions asked in the focus group. Among the participants' responses, consistent motivating and demotivating themes emerged; although all four employee types' jobs varied from one another, the motivating factors did not fluctuate. The predominant motivating themes were meaningful opportunities, recognition, and collaboration. The predominant demotivating themes were lack of resources, lack of collaboration, and lack of recognition.

Motivators

As illustrated in the sample of supporting quotes that follow, the theme of "meaningful opportunities" may be best defined as circumstances in which the employed can use their expertise to support the university and its students, whether working with individuals, teams, or entire departments or schools. Also illustrated in the following quotes, responses reflecting "recognition" and "collaboration" align with established definitions. According to Kruse (2016), as well as Osborne and Hammoud (2017), recognition is an act bestowed upon them in which employees feel valued and appreciated. According to Mann and Harter (2016), collaboration is working with associates or fellow employees who are committed to doing quality work.

Meaningful opportunities.

Among faculty participants, responses reflecting the theme of meaningful opportunities included (a) "Every day I am at work, to help students, employees I supervise, faculty, or prospective students;" (b) "I feel motivated when I see those around

me excelling and when I am working on duties that I am really interested in;” (c) “I feel motivated to exceed expectations when working with prospective students and their families. I want them to have a good experience and to see the positive aspects of the University;” (d) “anything that can make the school or our department better is something I like to do;” and (e) “Those times I choose to give tutorials and independent studies for students without pay.”

Among adjunct instructor participants, responses reflecting the theme of meaningful opportunities included (a) “I felt motivated to exceed expectations when creating new course content for undergraduate and graduate students. Creating courses for graduate students felt like especially high stakes, as it is contributing to the education of the future of my field;” (b) “The students motivate me, when they challenge me with questions, I want to go find information to help them learn;” (c) “when students have real world challenges that parallel what we are learning about. I am always willing to help them;” and (d) My immediate supervisors keep me motivated, they are positive and upbeat, excited about what we are doing to help our students learn and grow. I am most motivated when I know I helped a student.”

Among staff participants, responses reflecting the theme of meaningful opportunities included (a) “When I was able to design my programs the way I wanted;” (b) “When it comes to creating new tools to help students succeed, I am always excited. I love helping students and seeing them succeed, so creating a new process or tool is very exciting and makes me want to go the extra mile;” (c) “I am motivated to exceed when I know it is an opportunity that will help me develop professionally” (d) “When I am designing new processes that makes work more efficient for me and my employees,

which in turn impacts the service offered to the students. More importantly, improving, enhancing, and growing my department's functions;" (e) "When assisting in training fellow officers;" (f) " I love helping students and seeing them succeed, so creating a new process or tool is very exciting and makes me want to go the extra mile;" (g) "Whenever a student does not receive the service they expected, I feel motivated to exceed their expectations to prove the university is dedicated to them and their goals;" and (h) "When I am designing new processes that makes work more efficient for me and my employees, which in turn impacts the service offered to the students. More importantly, improving, enhancing, and growing my department's functions."

Among athletic coaches, responses reflecting the theme of meaningful opportunities included (a) "I always feel motivated when I am able to provide my athletes with meaningful, fun, and memorable opportunities for learning and growth;" and (b)

When I am directly interacting with my players is when I feel the desire to exceed expectations. An example would be some of our team bonding events we set up as surprises throughout preseason; when we took them to 9-round to push outside their comfort zones and also completed games we have created/learned, such as Maze or Machines, back on campus to promote communication, teamwork, and discipline;

and (c) "always looking for something to do to better the team;" (d) "I feel motivated when my athletes are on campus and I am actively recruiting;" and (e) "During practice times."

Recognition.

The theme of recognition was apparent among all employee types with particular emphasis from staff members. Among faculty participants, responses reflecting the theme of recognition included (a) “When tasked with a special project that highlights a personal skill set that I possess that sets me apart from my colleagues;” and (b) “I am a student advocate and believe one can do anything long as you apply yourself and exceed self expectations;” and (c) “Those times I choose to give tutorials and independent studies for students without pay.” According to an adjunct participant, the response that reflected the need for recognition included, “When some of my students were very responsive to my teaching and they had done good work during the week leading up to the lesson time.” Among staff participants, responses reflecting the theme of recognition included (a) “my hard work was noticed by my team members;” (b)

Beginning in the position, it was clear many employees did not understand the role of the Title IX office. I was very compelled to change this understanding. I visited with many different departments and provided outreach and training for people to have a better understanding of Title IX, their role as responsible employee and to understand our procedures. I believe the reporting of incidents has increased due to this education;

(c) “I always feel extra motivated when I know my colleagues notice and appreciate the work I do. I also feel a sense of motivation when there is a clear vision and set of goals to achieve;” (d) “I am generally motivated to exceed expectations when there is a hard deadline/timeline and knowing I can get the task completed early;” and “I also am more motivated when I know that I will receive the recognition/credit deserved;” (e)

“propos[ing] an idea for an exciting, creative project that required overseas travel. I worked nearly double time for three weeks to prepare for the project that took place over a weekend. I am extremely pleased with how the work turned out in the end;” and (f)

whenever I've, you know, brought an idea to my boss or my boss's boss or something, I've kind of always felt heard. Even if the idea isn't followed, I feel like our administrators at least do a nice job in making you feel like your perspective is valued and listened to.

Among coach participants, responses reflecting the theme of recognition included (a) “As a former national champion and national record holder, I am a deeply and intrinsically motivated individual;” and (b)

I believe one of the most motivating factors is feeling heard and feeling valued, but then also seeing action. I believe far too often in department meetings or breakout sessions we are asked to give feedback or opinions and nothing seems to come out of them. Another scenario is when we have been told certain things are put into action, or new hires will fill certain roles to aid us, such as fundraising, but then those things do not happen and it is still fallen on us with very little guidance or a streamlined system to help.

Collaboration.

A theme of professional collaboration was apparent among all employee types. Among faculty participants, responses reflecting the theme of recognition included (a) “I feel motivated when I see those around me excelling and when I am working on duties that I am really interested in;” and (b) “I was motivated when given clear instruction and direction and feedback.”

Among adjunct instructor participants, responses reflecting the theme of recognition included (a)

I was asked to help re-write the course rubrics to comply with CAEP. I was unfamiliar with what that entailed, so I did some research and found examples. I then compiled them into a final product that I feel meets and exceeds the expectations. As an adjunct, this was not really part of my job, but I felt included in the team by doing the work;

and (b) "It was to assist a functional group struggling with change. I offered to walk the group through a change management exercise."

Among staff participants, responses reflecting the theme of recognition included

(a)

But, also another one, for me, is when I can collaborate and actually get something done, ah, without having a roadblock in the way, um, that's definitely a big one. So those are probably-- I mean, those are the two big ones. Like, once orientation is over, I'm sure programs, especially, will be like, "We did it, now we can take a breath;

(b)

I, I think it's really just working with other people, um, and helping, helping the students and trying to make things easier. Um, like, I'm always open to, if my department can make something easier for you or I'm doing something that makes it harder for you, let me know. Because there should never be anything I do that should you. Especially because I'm the-- I'm the one who's supposed to fix the

problem.” Coaches also demonstrated this same desire for collaboration by stating they were motivated during practice time with their teams.

Demotivators

Three predominant themes emerged in this study as demotivators of engagement for employees in higher education, including lack of resources, lack of collaboration, and lack of recognition. As illustrated in the following quotes, lacking resources were primarily financial (lack of funds; low salaries) and human (lack of/not enough employees). Also illustrated in the following quotes, inappropriate or absent collaboration and recognition from colleagues and supervisors were cited as sources of frustration among full-time employees (faculty, staff, and coaches); a lack of collaboration and recognition was not an issue among part-time employees (adjunct instructors).

Lack of Resources.

Among faculty participants, responses that reflect demotivation due to lack of resources included (a) “After finding out the salaries of some of my co-workers and realizing that I was being underpaid based on my job description, time at the University, and highest earned degree, I was very unmotivated;” (b) “After hearing the tuition benefit is only available for one dependent per faculty was VERY discouraging;” (c) “When the closure of the undergraduate programs at [satellite campus] was announced;” (d)

a big part of my job is [proving] as much as teaching with the band. And, uh, when you don't know what you've got, whether it's staff or financial resources to recruit . . . scholarship money to recruit with, until February or March;

(e)

What I've noticed-- so I'm thankful that my department has grown in the last few years exponentially. I'm very thankful for that. Um, but every time we add a new position, it's not-- you know, so use the example, I had 100 things to do, so this person comes in, I should have 50 things to do, but now we have 200. So, we end up with the same workload;

and (f)

So, the distribution or the lightening of the load or, "Let's be more effective," never happens, because with every new employee that we add, we also add a brand-new set of duties. Meaning that my duties never change. So, I asked for help. I'm still not getting help, even though we're growing again. It's a very [popular?] thing, right? And so, we've grown and I, I will still continue to do the work we grow but we do that [to where?], it's like, "Oh, you've got one more person; this 100 hundred things." And, it's like, "No, the goal was to just continue to be able to operate consistently and, and, uh-- operationally sound and not." But I see that a lot in our campus because if you add human resources, the workload.

Among adjunct instructor participants, responses that reflect demotivation due to lack of resources included (a) "I lacked support from supervisors and did not feel appropriately compensated for my work" and (b) "when they lost their contact for scheduling classes and they would have to wait to see if they were going to get to teach a course that term."

Among staff participants, responses that reflect demotivation due to lack of resources included, (a) "When we get our raises;" (b) "On rare occasions I and mostly it

may be related to my wishes for higher compensation in order to enjoy more life outside of work with family;" (c)

lack of resources, according to the sample, however, is not limited to the following, lack of authority was also mentioned, "I haven't been working at the university full-time for long, but as a part-time employee it can be easy to get overwhelmed when students come to you in distress or something out of your control occurs;

(d)

But I think this also comes down to kind of a key-- it kind of is con-- is there is definitely-- I feel like there could be a lot better communication between departments. Um, that way we don't get, like, the last minute, "Hey, you really want to do this, but you can't put that on the T-shirt anymore. You have to do it this way." And it can delay some things. Because we were ordering 1,200 T-shirts for orientation. We were told one day, Hey, we're going to put this on all, ah, orientation items. It's going to be, like, the slogan for the year." And it was find your roar and then the very next day they were like, 'Hold on. Don't touch anything. Disney's new Lion King movie has find your roar in it.'" [inaudible] copyright issues. And then, like, a week later, they were like, "All right, well, we're going to do discover your roar." So not only we were kind of told late that there was this going to be this whole thing going on-- this theme. Then there was a hold on it, which pretty much pushed back our order date for these 1,200 T-shirts, which we're hoping to get in next week. Um, so, like, I think there-- a lack

of communication sometimes prevents things from being done in a timely manner or being done as effectively as they can;

(e)

Yeah, there are a lot-- there are a lot of rules that have been recently implemented, especially when it comes to budget, that, that seem arbitrary. Um, I'm sure there's a reason behind it, but no matter how many times I look at it, I can't find that reason and no one will give me a reason, even if I ask. Um, so I just continue to think this is kind of just an arbitrary rule that, unfortunately, makes harder for us, but-- and then, of course, I'll do one thing-- like, I'm trained to do it one way and then I go to do it six months later the way I'm told and then it's like, "Oh, no, you have to do it this way." It's like, "Why didn't you tell me [laughter] that you changed the process;

and (f)

IT was working off of a budget for about four years before all the other departments got it. I know that much. But also, like, the first year that we had budgets, like, I found out, of course, well after the budgets were made, that, "Hey, we're missing \$40,000 from our budget." So, obviously, that was corrected for this year, but at the same time, it's like, "Well, the-- how are we supposed to figure this out when I've, you know, very limited people I can talk to to figure this out." Because I'm like, "I didn't know." Because I had actually just gotten into this role where I would have been taking on the budget literally, like, a month after the fiscal year started. So, they had already planned out all the budget beforehand and then I get tasked with it as, like, a brand-new person in this role, and then I found

out we're missing, like, this huge lot of money. And they're like, "Okay, well, you're going to have to figure it out because we're not giving you anymore." It's like, "Okay, well, we'll see what we can do." Additionally, two staff members cited a desire for increased compensation to enhance their engagement.

Among athletic coaches, one participant was particularly frustrated due to a lack of staff/human resources:

There have been a lot of changes in the workplace in the five years I have been here. During the school-year, I almost always work 60-90 hours each week. This amount of time is not enough, and it is hard to stay motivated sometimes because I work so much and don't have time to take care of myself. Ultimately, not having a large enough staff (because it has been cut so much) has caused motivational issues for me at times. It was especially bad when my most recent assistant coach left. He lost motivation because of the long hours and eventually just couldn't take it anymore. It was sad because I put a lot into his development as a coach, and he was a very good employee. Overall, the lack of sleep, overall tiredness, lack of ability to hold personal friendships, lack of ability to spend time with family, etc. that are involved with not having enough staff to perform the amount of work necessary is what causes a loss in motivation.

Lack of Collaboration.

Among faculty participants, responses that reflect demotivation due to lack of collaboration included (a) "When I have been publicly undercut by a colleague" and (b) "When we were rebranded twice without input."

Among staff participants, responses that reflect demotivation due to lack of collaboration included (a) “I rarely lose motivation at work but when it seems to happen when dealing with people who do not want to offer any solutions to the issue with which we are trying to resolve;” (b) “at times when others that I work with seem to be critical, negative and petty. It seems to get me down;” (c) “I lost a great deal of motivation when I was told I could not teach a class at Lindenwood because I am a non-exempt staff member;” and (d) “There have been a few occasions that a coach or coworker have done something that resulted in a NCAA violation when they know better but acted indifferently.”

Lack of Recognition.

Among faculty participants, responses that reflect demotivation due to lack of recognition included (a) “When my work was not acknowledged and a colleague was given praise for my work” and (b) “a colleague in a meeting that was trying to make themselves look good by diminishing my work.” Among staff participants, responses that reflect demotivation due to lack of recognition included (a) “When I completed research or a project and then someone else used it as their own without acknowledging where it came from;” (b) “When I did tons of research/data collection and then the information was no longer needed and was useless;” (c) “When my work is overlooked and discarded;” (d) “When I felt I was overlooked for all that I was doing; (e)

I also feel like there's not a lot of input from the lower people in the totem pole of what can we improve. We have a lot of really great people here who are doing their masters, doing their doctorate, doing a lot of research, and I don't think that those perspectives are always taken into consideration when making certain

changes. So, I mean, somebody who's studied higher-education and kind of knows the research and the data and everything behind it, they don't understand why these changes are happening and why are they happening;

and (f)

I think what the immediate supervisor. Um, my immediate supervisor knows all of the things that I'd really like to do and I'd love to help out, but she's a-- she's also aware of all the things that, I guess, constantly are a struggle for me to work with. Um, particular policies and personnel. Um, she's aware of it and the thing is that-- the one thing that bugs me the most is that I know that she's aware of it. I know she wants to help out, but then at the same time, certain behaviors are able to persist because, even at her level, she can't make the change. Which makes me think that it's not going to change. Because if she -- you know, it's that whole-- it gets up to a certain rung on the ladder and then it just kind of dies off. So, there are certain things that could, you know, make a big difference. Like, we could-- because we know other universities can do it, we could let you know our scholarship money, but there's something we can't see it because we're really only with our immediate supervisor. It's just what-- where does it go after that?"

Among coaches' participants, a response that reflects demotivation due to lack of recognition included "I believe one of the most motivating factors is feeling heard and feeling valued, but then also seeing action. I believe far too often in department meetings or breakout sessions we are asked to give feedback or opinions and nothing seems to come out of them. Another scenario is when we have been told certain things are put into action, or new hires will fill certain roles

to aid us, such as fundraising, but then those things do not happen and it is still fallen on us with very little guidance or a streamlined system to help.

Hypotheses

Data to answer the hypotheses were provided through a random sample answering questions with a Likert scale. The researcher applied the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to analyze the survey data and answer H01 through H05. The PPMC, named after Karl Pearson, “determines the strength of the linear relationship between two variables” (Bluman, 2010, p. 533). In this study, the researcher tested the self-reported level of employee engagement against variables related to the employees’ direct supervisor’s behavior. The researcher examined the direct report’s level of engagement at work and the impact of the employee’s supervisor’s level of communication, trust, recognition, and the opportunity for growth. To test and analyze H06, an Analysis of Variance was used, commonly abbreviated as ANOVA. An ANOVA is a statistical test used to “test a hypothesis concerning the means of three or more populations” (Bluman, 2010, p. 602). The researcher examined the self-reported engagement levels of each employee type for comparison and to determine if there was a significant difference between the types. Additionally, the employee’s self-reported level of engagement, the report of how happy they were to work for their supervisor, and whether they saw their supervisor as a good leader were also used in support of the analysis of the hypotheses.

H₀₁: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and their immediate supervisor.

The analysis revealed the correlation coefficient relating the employee's happiness level in relation to working for the immediate supervisor and the employee's level of engagement at work ($r = .100$) to be not significant; $t(46) = 0.68, p = .499$. The researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that the variables were not related.

H₀₂: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and their level of trust in their immediate supervisor.

The analysis revealed the correlation coefficient relating the employee's trust level in relation to working for the immediate supervisor and the employee's level of engagement at work ($r = .084$) to be not significant; $t(46) = .572, p = .570$. The researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that the variables were not related.

H₀₃: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and the quality of communication with their immediate supervisor.

The analysis revealed the correlation coefficient relating the employee's communication level in relation to working for the immediate supervisor and the employee's level of engagement at work ($r = .071$) to be not significant; $t(46) = .483, p = .632$. The researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that the variables were not related.

H₀₄: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and recognition received from their immediate supervisor.

The analysis revealed the correlation coefficient relating the employee's recognition level in relation to working for the immediate supervisor and the employee's level of engagement at work ($r = .029$) to be not significant; $t(46) = .197$, $p = .845$. The researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that the variables were not related.

H₀₅: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and opportunities for growth provided by their immediate supervisor.

The analysis revealed the correlation coefficient relating the employee's opportunity for growth in relation to working for the immediate supervisor and the employee's level of engagement at work ($r = -.007$) to be not significant; $t(46) = -.047$, $p = .962$. The researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that the variables were not related.

H₀₆: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no difference between engagement at work and employee type.

The researcher conducted an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine whether or not there was a difference between the engagement of the four employee types in higher education. The analysis revealed no difference between the means of the four groups. The researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that engagement was consistent among all four employee types. Table 14 describes the results from the

ANOVA test that was calculated on the participants' engagement level compared with the employee type, $F(3, 44) = 1.31, p = 0.281$.

Table 14

ANOVA Table Comparing Engagement Between Employee Types

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p-Value	F crit
Between Groups	599.96	3	199.99	1.318	0.281	2.816
Within Groups	6676.02	44	151.73			
Total	7275.98	47				

Summary

Of the 48 employees to participate in the study, nine were adjunct instructors, 14 were faculty, 19 were staff, and six were coaches. All four employee types reported, on average, to be highly engaged at work; faculty reported the highest level of employee engagement at 92.29%, followed by staff at 87.79%, coming in third was adjunct instructors at 85.66%, and coaches reported the lowest level of engagement at 81%.

Meaningful opportunities, recognition, and collaboration were the top motivating themes among the participants and employee types in this study. Adjunct instructors most often cited meaningful opportunities and collaboration with others. Faculty most often cited meaningful opportunities, recognition, and collaboration with others. Staff and coaches most often cited meaningful opportunities and recognition. Lack of resources, lack of collaboration, and lack of recognition were found to be the primary demotivators among the participants in this study. The current study also found no significant relationship

between the immediate supervisor and the employee's level of engagement at work. Furthermore, no significant relationship was found between the employees' level of trust, level of communication, level of recognition, or opportunity for growth from their immediate supervisor and their self-reported level of engagement at work.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Reflection

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore influences on higher education employee engagement with particular emphasis on the potential impact of supervisory behaviors. The literature explored employee engagement in the non-academic arena, but the researcher found little evidence or study in the area of engagement in higher education. For example, among the 230 different types of organizations in which Gallup researched in their seminal 2016 meta-analysis, only seven were in the education sector (Mann & Harter, 2016). This study contributes to the literature by providing insights into motivators and demotivators of employee engagement in the context of higher education. Among the research sample in this study, employee types included faculty, adjunct instructors, staff, and coaches. Relationships were examined between employees' self-reported engagement levels at work and four supervisory variables, including the employees' level of trust *in* their immediate supervisor, the recognition received *from* their immediate supervisor, the quality of communication *with* their immediate supervisor, and opportunities for growth provided *by* their immediate supervisor. No significant relationships between these supervisory variables and employee engagement were found. Additionally, no significant findings were determined between engagement level and employee type.

Motivators and demotivators of engagement at work, however, were consistent among the sample. The predominant themes that emerged in this study as motivators for employees in higher education were meaningful opportunities, recognition, and collaboration. All employee types cited meaningful opportunities as a factor that motivated them at work. Additionally, all employee types, except for the adjunct

instructors, cited recognition in their top three areas of motivating factors at work. Collaboration was also cited as a top three motivating factor for all employee types, except for athletic coaches. Although all four employee types' job descriptions vary from one another, the motivating themes did not seem to fluctuate much according to the outcome of this study. All employee types, with the exception of coaches, cited the lack of resources, lack collaboration, and lack of recognition as demotivating factors influencing engagement at work. Coaches cited lack of resources and lack of recognition, but did not find lack of collaboration to be a top three theme when determining factors that cause loss of motivation at work. The following sections outline specific data to these themes.

Discussion

RQ1: To what extent is the research sample of higher education employees engaged at work?

Based on a survey in which 48 employees responded to the question, "please rate your overall level of engagement in your work," the average engagement level of the research sample was self-reported at 87.85%, moderately good. The sample rated their engagement at work on a sliding scale from 0 to 100. A score of 90 to 100 equated to "Extremely good," 70-89 "Moderately good," 51-69 "Slightly good," 50 "Neither good nor bad," 40-49 "Slightly bad," 20-39 "Moderately bad," and 0-19 "Extremely bad." Overall, the sample reported to be moderately engaged at work with an average self-reported engagement score of 87.85%. Individually, by employee type, faculty reported the highest average level of engagement at 92.29%, followed by staff at 87.79%. Coming

in third was adjunct instructors at 85.66%. Coaches reported the lowest average level of engagement at 81%.

Engagement level was determined by the average score of the self-reported score on a scale of 1 to 100. Scores from 75.1 to 100 were assigned as 'highly engaged' employees. The researcher found that 43 (90%) of the 48 employees surveyed reported to be extremely or moderately engaged. Among highly engaged employees the average score on a scale of 1 to 100 was 91.28%. Among these highly engaged employees, the average score on a scale of 1 to 100 that their immediate supervisor was someone they were happy to work for was 79.19%. Among highly engaged employees, the average score on a scale of 1 to 100 that their immediate supervisor is a good leader was 72.

These self-reported engagement levels contradict findings from Gallup's longitudinal study of employee engagement. For 20 years, Gallup measured employee engagement, and while there were some slight changes from year to year, Gallup reported less than one-third of employees in the United States were engaged at work on a consistent basis (Mann & Harter, 2016). It would seem the research site is doing something or even many things to positively impact the level of employee engagement. Findings associated with *RQ2* may provide insights into why this sample reported higher than average engagement in their work.

RQ2: Among the research sample of higher education employees, what influences engagement at work?

Data to answer *RQ2* was provided through open-ended questions in the survey and responses to the questions asked in the focus group. Three employee engagement themes consistent with the literature became apparent in this study among all employee

types; meaningful opportunities, recognition, and collaboration were found to be motivators when looking at all four employee types collectively. Additionally, while this study found no statistically significant influences from supervisors on employee engagement, the study produced some interesting findings related to employee engagement in higher education that are consistent with two of the hypotheses in this study, recognition and opportunities for growth.

Exercising Expertise.

Consistent with the literature, the definition of “meaningful opportunities” is expressed when employees have the opportunity to exercise their expertise. As an employee of higher education, particularly for faculty, exercising expertise is an act that demands substantial training and education in order to perform at high levels. In Gallup’s seminal Q12 meta-analysis, opportunity is defined as the opportunity to do what you do best every day (Mann & Harter, 2016). According to Osborne and Hammoud (2017), as well as Brusino and Soyars (2009), motivation is found in meaningful opportunities that also relate back to the mission of the organization and expertise of the employed, their findings provided a compelling connection to the discoveries in this methods study.

The theme of opportunity emerged from participants’ responses and interestingly, aligned with a component of faculty expertise. For example, the faculty job description stated, “participates in and develops efforts to recruit and retain students.” When asked to describe a time when you felt motivated to exceed expectations at work, a faculty response included the following: “I feel motivated to exceed expectations when working with prospective students and their families. I want them to have a good experience and to see the positive aspects of the University.” Another example of the opportunity to

exercise expertise is seen in the following expectation for faculty members and participant response. The expectation stated,

Focuses on the talents, interests and future of the student through instruction that includes, but is not limited to clearly communicating learning intentions and how those intentions will be assessed; structuring courses in an organized way; providing time for reflection, discussion and application of ideas or information; making learning engaging and interesting; ensuring appropriate rigor; using examples or illustrations to explain difficult points; encouraging students to question ideas or information; adjusting instruction if students experience difficulties in learning; helping students to understand the language and processes of the subject; helping students to think through and solve problems, either by themselves or together as a group; providing useful feedback on tests or completed assignments; using assessment results to provide extra help or extended learning opportunities.

A statement that corresponds to this expectation included, “Every day I am at work to help students, employees I supervise, faculty, or prospective students.”

Adjunct instructors are distinctly motivated by meaningful opportunities, but potentially in an exceedingly different manner. Faculty are under contract for the entire academic year and, with even mediocre performance, are likely to have a contract the following year. Conversely, adjunct instructors are employees that receive a contract on a semester-by-semester basis. The number of students enrolled, budget constraints, and performance play a greater role into the consistent teaching load for adjunct instructors

than it does for full time faculty. With this in mind, meaningful opportunities cited by adjunct instructors could contrast faculty outcomes considerably, but the findings of this study found that the types of opportunities that influence engagement of full-time faculty also motivate part time adjunct instructors. For example, at the research site, an adjunct instructor's job description stated, "Ensure that students receive reasonable and timely assistance with course assignments/assessments as requested." Within this theme, adjunct instructors described meaningful opportunities, assisting students. For instance, "When students have real world challenges that parallel what we are learning about. I am always willing to help them."

The adjunct instructor is also expected to,

Develop adaptive thinking and problem-solving skills by using examples or illustrations to explain difficult points, encourage students to question ideas or information in the subject, adjust instruction if students experience difficulties in learning, help students to understand the language and processes of the subject, and help students to think through and solve problems, either by themselves or together as a group.

Bearing this in mind, adjunct instructors said they were driven to exceed expectations in the following statements: (a) "When I was developing a Negotiating exercise for my class;" and (b) "my immediate supervisors . . . keep me motivated, they are positive and upbeat, excited about what we are doing to help our students learn and grow. I am most motivated when I know I helped a student." According to Gallup, engagement is not a stand-alone component of an organization, but it should be woven into how managers lead employees to exceed expectations through providing development opportunities and

resources to accomplish the company's goals (Mann & Harter, 2016). If enhancing engagement is the focus of a leader's every interaction with direct reports, performance may increase, as seen in the previous response.

Staff play a contrasting role in the university, while faculty and adjunct instructors are vital to students' success in the classroom, staff support students in the financial, operational, residential, etc. areas of the university. For instance, at the research site, a custodian staff job description stated job responsibilities as, "Utilizes various housekeeping tools in areas such as classrooms, hallways, restrooms, locker rooms and other facilities." When asked to describe a time when you felt motivated to exceed expectations at work, a staff response included the following: (a) "When we clean all dorms and houses to get ready for new students." The staff and faculty responses are disparate in many ways, but complement each other in the way that both participant groups describe the opportunity to exercise their expertise as an influencer to their heightened levels of engagement.

Another staff expectation stated, "Provides educational programs." While keeping this statement from the job description in mind, participants said the following about desire to exceed expectations: (a) "When I was able to design my programs the way I wanted to and my hard work was noticed by my team members;" and (b)

Beginning in the position, it was clear many employees did not understand the role of the Title IX office. I was very compelled to change this understanding. I visited with many different departments and provided outreach and training for people to have a better understanding of Title IX, their role as a responsible

employee and to understand our procedures. I believe the reporting of incidents has increased due to this education.

Another staff job description outlines the following job duty: “Strong understanding of database design, structure functions and processes, and experience with databases tools.”

In relation, a staff member cited the opportunity to enhance tools and processes to exceed student expectations: “When it comes to creating new tools to help students succeed, I am always excited.” An additional job responsibility of staff is “Completes routine reports for recruitment, projections, scheduling and development.” One following staff member cited the opportunity to develop others as a motivating factor: “I look to the long-term gain of knowledge and experience, and being included on projects outside of my ‘wheelhouse’ motivates me to do well in all things.” This finding is consistent with the findings of Brusino and Soyars (2009), “quality of training and learning opportunities” (para. 8) positively influenced employee engagement to a high or very high extent.

Charan et al. (2011) agreed, “The best developmental approach provides carefully selected job assignments, job assignments that stretch people over time and allow them to learn and practice necessary skills” (p. 27). In accordance with Q12 meta-analysis, staff are in line with the literature, doing what they do best every day to enhance motivation and engagement (Mann & Harter, 2016).

There is a battle continuously raging within higher education that we do not often like to admit, academics vs. athletics. Coaches were clearly motivated by meaningful opportunities, but the opportunities athletic coaches are motivated by are distinctly different from faculty and staff. For example, at the research site, a coach job description stated responsibilities as, “Produces a high performing team capable of meeting and

maintaining competitive expectations as determined by University Athletic Administration.” When asked to describe a time when you felt motivated to exceed expectations at work some coaches responded as follows: (a)

Coaching is a very engaging job because your effort/success ratio is very high.

We have a ton of ways to win. Wins and losses, on-field KPI’s, fundraising, recruiting, player evaluations, academic and personal development all lead to highly engaging work. Comparatively, very little of our feedback comes from the university;

and (b) “Mostly during the season. Always looking for something to do to better the team.” This finding is consistent with the findings of Charan et al., whether you are coaching in the workplace or on the field, “coaching is the hands-on art of caring; it bonds people to each other and the organization. When you care, people know it, and this is a very important aspect of leadership” (2011, pp. 69-70). Athletic coaches spend many hours a week with their players, they spend hours practicing and playing games of course, but they also travel together which brings additional dynamics into the relationship that coaches have with their players. Based on the findings of this study, much of athletic coaches’ engagement revolves around the opportunity to provide success and fulfillment for their players.

Affirmation.

The theme recognition derived from the study and correlated with the existing literature. Recognition from the supervisor was not found to be statically significant in this study, yet participants are clearly driven to exceed expectations by affirmation and peer approval. Faculty are motivated by recognition for example in the following

responses cited student recognition; (a) “Personal desire to uphold academic standards and serve as a role model to my students.” A divergent response, but still one seeking recognition and affirmation is seen here; (b) “Those times I choose to give tutorials and independent studies for students without pay.” These statements do not directly state that they received recognition from a supervisor or colleague, but by the nature of the question and their response, the participants reflect the need for affirmation from others to be motivated to exceed expectations.

According to Osborne and Hammoud (2017), organizations may enhance the emotional, physical, and cognitive engagement of its employees through varied forms of recognition by celebrating employee successes, scheduling annual on and off-site company events, awarding time off, hosting dinners, and giving bonuses. Employees in higher education are motivated by the recognition of being chosen to complete a project. Arming employees with dedicated and meaningful work may also heighten employee engagement levels. When leaders nominate individuals on their teams to participate in enhanced development opportunities, those individuals experienced greater motivation to perform at a higher level and exceed expectations (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017).

Supervisors should recognize their employees and let them know their ideas count (Kruse, 2016; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Staff members desire to have a seat at the table and to be heard. In order to have a successful company full of marketable employees, top executives must learn to value skills like employee development and recognition programs. “If the company’s leadership doesn’t value skills like coaching, planning, and rewarding employees, people will either quit or (even worse) stay and

perform poorly” (Charan et al., 2011, p. 28). Recognition and affirmation are making employees feel valued and appreciated.

Gallup’s Q12 meta-analysis defined recognition as receiving recognition or praise in the last seven days (Mann & Harter, 2016). In this study, participants were not asked when they last received the recognition, but it was clear that recognition and affirmation motivates staff participants too. For example, when asked to describe a time when you felt motivated to exceed expectations at work, staff responses included the following; (a) “When I was able to design my programs the way I wanted to and my hard work was noticed by my team members.” The participant not only demonstrates the need for opportunity, as previously stated, but they are also motivated by recognition and approval of the work performed. Another staff member stated this when asked to describe what motivates them at work: (b) “I always feel extra motivated when I know my colleagues notice and appreciate the work I do...;” and (c)

I proposed an idea for an exciting, creative project, that required overseas travel. I worked nearly double time for three weeks to prepare for the project that took place over a weekend. I am extremely pleased with how the work turned out in the end.

Although this staff member did not outwardly state that they need recognition to be motivated, similarly to some of the faculty responses, the statement in itself shows that the participant is propelled by the recognition of accomplishments.

The affirmation needed to motivate this staff member is seen in the desire to help outside of their department, the underlying motive here is recognition from others around campus:

I often feel motivated to go beyond completing expected tasks. I work hard to improve what I can directly, and I have offered assistance in helping improve areas outside my area. I have an extensive customer service background and use this to best serve students, faculty, and staff on campus to the best of my abilities. Others are much more forthright and self-aware of the motivating factor to exceed expectations as seen in the following response: “I also am more motivated when I know that I will receive the recognition/credit deserved.”

Like faculty and staff, athletic coaches are also motivated by receiving recognition and affirmation, for example: (a) “I always feel motivated when I am able to provide my athletes with meaningful, fun, and memorable opportunities for learning and growth; and (b)

Even though I do not feel that my sport is understood by administrators, my direct report supervisor is very supportive and gives me the autonomy I need to stay motivated and have pride in our team’s accomplishments. My job is to motivate and inspire kids to give their all in academics and athletics, so I make it a point to ensure that I am motivated to give my all to them.

Each statement lists either student athletes, a conference, or supervisor acknowledgement when asked what motivates them to exceed expectations. This connection is consistent with the findings of Charan et al. (2011) and Oehler and Adair (2018), among the highest drivers of employee engagement are rewards and recognition.

The findings of this study and what others have said in the literature are exceedingly consistent. Fundamental organizational actions increase engagement, similarly, when employees do not receive these acts the opposite occurs, disengagement

and lack of motivation. Recognition of employees—making them feel valued and appreciated. When asked to describe a time when you lost motivation at work, faculty responses included the following lack of recognition statements: (a)

Deans who micro-manage; a human resources department that does not value employees, but seeks to control and degrade; a university president who sought his own interests above the institution and her experienced employees . . . these have all decreased morale and motivation;

and (b) “After finding out the salaries of some of my co-workers and realizing that I was being underpaid based on my job description, time at the University, and highest earned degree, I was very unmotivated.” This participant left the institution soon after the discovery and went to another place of employment. Furthermore, this finding is consistent with the findings of Huselid (1995), disengagement typically links to a fundamental lack of trust and eventual turnover.

According to Osborne and Hammoud (2017), organizations may enhance the emotional, physical, and cognitive engagement of its employees by celebrating employee successes, and giving bonuses. Just as leadership plays a large factor in an employee’s level of engagement, it can also lead to disengagement. Faculty cited further systemic demotivating factors related to affirmation, but as seen here, adjunct instructors link their lack of recognition to students in the classroom. This is very plausible, adjunct instructors typically do not have as broad of a scope into the inner workings of the university, apart from their individual classes. For example, adjunct participants said the following about the lack of affirmation: (a) “When I had a student not actively participate in the process of taking music lessons;” and (b) “Having to deal with an unmotivated student week after

week was very frustrating.” In the essence of these statements, the adjunct instructor is becoming unmotivated due to the students’ lack of recognition of the time, energy, and effort that goes into planning a course. Supervisors would do well to empathize with faculty and adjunct instructors on the level at which students are not engaged or participating in the classroom.

According to Scott (2017), bad decisions that result in organizations listening to only senior leaders or people who insist on having a seat at the table “are among the biggest drivers of organizational mediocrity and employee dissatisfaction” (p. 99). Leaders looking to encourage their employees should include congruence and empathy in their daily practice (Fitch & Van Brunt, 2016). Congruence refers to a manager’s genuineness and authenticity with its employees, as seen here, the university could engage adjunct instructors at a greater scale by giving them a seat at the table. Considering a situation through the employees’ eyes demonstrates empathy and recognition. Active listening or listening with curiosity and respect of the storyteller’s perspective, is another way to encourage employees with recognition that their thoughts and ideas provide meaning and context for organizational decision making (Fitch & Van Brunt, 2016). This loss of motivation can stem from the loss of a relationship or even a lack of recognition when communicating with a direct report. A leader’s ability to communicate with their employees is a fundamental piece of employee engagement (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017).

Staff are also interested in receiving affirmation for their work. When asked to describe a time when you lost motivation, staff responses included the following statements related to the lack of recognition for work performed: (a) “When I did tons of

research/data collection and then the information was no longer needed and was useless;” and (b) “When my work is overlooked and discarded.” Scott (2017) contended that great bosses do not leave decision-making up to themselves, but rather have a process for empowering employees’ closest to the facts of the work to make many of the decisions; the more a boss goes straight to the source for facts and information when making a decision, the more an organization builds strength and employees are empowered. As a result, better decisions are made and morale is heightened. According to Drucker (2001), “the leader sets the goals, sets the priorities, and sets and maintains the standards” (p. 270), yet leaders must also see leadership as a responsibility rather than a rank and privilege; they should strive to see the triumphs of their direct reports as their own triumphs, rather than threats.

Coaches also want to feel that their work is valued and noticed by those around them. When asked to describe a time when you lost motivation at work, coach responses included the following:

I believe one of the most motivating factors is feeling heard and feeling valued, but then also seeing action. I believe far too often in department meetings or breakout sessions we are asked to give feedback or opinions and nothing seems to come out of them. Another scenario is when we have been told certain things are put into action, or new hires will fill certain roles to aid us, such as fundraising, but then those things do not happen and it is still fallen on us with very little guidance or a streamlined system to help.

This statement demonstrates the need for ideas to be recognized and also put into action to feel valued and motivated to exceed expectations. This finding aligns with the findings

of Kruse (2016) and Osborne and Hammoud (2017), recognition is making employees feel valued and appreciated. Supervisors need to let their employees know their ideas count if they want to keep lack of engagement at bay.

Teamwork.

Collaboration is defined as having associates or fellow employees committed to doing quality work (Mann & Harter, 2016). The theme collaboration emerged from faculty responses and interestingly, aligned with a component of the stated expectations in their job description. When asked to describe a time when you felt motivated to exceed expectations at work, faculty responses included the following: “I feel motivated when I see those around me excelling and when I am working on duties that I am really interested in.” This statement not only aligns with the theme “opportunity” to exercise their expertise, but also collaboration. The faculty member cites others’ excelling and portraying team player virtues as a motivating factor for them to exceed expectations. The expectation for faculty is stated here in the job description, “Exhibits interpersonal effectiveness with and respect for students, colleagues and administrators by acting as a team player and collaborator.”

The research site valued teamwork, furthermore, the adjunct instructor’s job description stated the following expectation, “Exhibit interpersonal effectiveness with and respect for students, colleagues, and administrators by acting as a team player and coordinating work behavior with colleagues.” When asked to describe a time when you felt motivated to exceed expectations at work, adjunct instructor responses included connections to collaboration and being a team player by the following statement: “It was to assist a functional group struggling with change. I offered to walk the group through a

change management exercise.” This response explicitly speaks to the collaboration and team like behaviors expected of adjunct instructors.

Teamwork and collaboration are evident in the study for all employee types and correlates with the existing literature. Senge (1990), for example, advocated for teamwork, defining a team as a group of people “who function together in an extraordinary way, who trust one another, who complement each other’s strengths and compensate for others’ limitations, who have common goals that are larger than individual goals, and who produced extraordinary results” (p. 4). Lencioni (2016) agrees with Senge, organizations that collaborate and focus on teamwork are more likely to succeed.

In accordance with Gallup’s Q12 meta-analysis, collaboration is defined as having associates or fellow employees committed to doing quality work (Mann & Harter, 2016). Conversely, when participants were asked what caused them to lose motivation, lack of collaboration with colleagues emerged from the data. For example, faculty responses included the following: “When I have been publicly undercut by a colleague in a meeting that was trying to make themselves look good by diminishing my work.” Within this particular scenario, teamwork is not found or described. In congruence with this study’s findings, Lencioni (2016) says thriving organizations need employees who are willing to be team players. You need people who can easily build trust, make real commitments, and collaborate to have a successful business, family, relationship of any kind. When asked to describe a time when you lost motivation at work, adjunct instructor responses included the following:

I have lost motivation when my online class engagement is low. It is hard to encourage, motivate, and reach out to students through online methods only, because, unlike a class setting, I don't know if students are actually opening my emails, fully watching videos, etc., which give them directions and encourage them.

While the adjunct instructor does not cite lack of collaboration with a colleague, the lack of collaboration with students can be just as demotivating. Fitch and Van Brunt (2016) stated three ways managers can improve the employee experience, "perhaps even all employees could benefit from collaboration, communication, and care" (p. 22). According to Kouzes and Posner (2012), leaders influence engagement through establishing and exemplifying clear values, nurturing a culture of collaboration. The literature agrees, a commitment to collaboration produces higher engagement among employees.

As established thus far, collaboration is needed when creating the ideal team (Lencioni, 2016). Many of the following statements recognize the need for teamwork and collaboration at all levels of the university. When asked to describe a time when you lost motivation at work staff responses included the following: (a)

Every time a policy changes even though we've been doing it that way and haven't been questioned before; changes in administration without transparency; handling changes to the institution without staff feedback;

(b)

When decisions are made at a high level without feedback from those who have to carry out the decisions made. More importantly, when that high level decision is

made with accurate data or research of the higher education space at time when others that I work with seem to be critical, negative and petty. It seems to get me down;

and (c)

I lost a great deal of motivation when I was told I could not teach a class . . . because I am a non-exempt staff member. I originally completed my MFA to teach at the university level and found myself working on campus in different roles. Being told I could not teach simply because of my current employment status at the university (after being told I could teach but for no additional compensation) was a real blow, especially since I was hoping to become more involved on campus as an instructor. This experience honestly changed my views of what this university has to offer me in regards to career development. Outside of this one experience, I have lost motivation when working with specific departments/employees on campus. Campus Operations is a specific department.

The statements here reflect the lack of collaboration with key stakeholders when decisions are made affecting cross departmental work across the university which led to lack of motivation and engagement.

Capital.

Lack of resources and capital emerged from this methods study and strongly correlated with the literature. Supervisors can use and apply these strategies to improve morale and commitment to work. Providing resources needed to do quality work is one of those fundamental strategies. Gallup's Q12 meta-analysis defines resources as having the materials and equipment I need to do my work right (Mann & Harter, 2016). When

organizations do not provide the resources employees need, motivation decreases as evidenced by the following statements from faculty; (a) “When I am too overwhelmed without an upcoming reprieve, I lose motivation;” (b) “Sometimes after sitting in full faculty meetings and hearing about negative things going on at the University. After hearing the tuition benefit is only available for one dependent per faculty was VERY discouraging;” and (c) “Lack of administrative support.” These findings are consistent with the findings of Brusino and Soyars (2009), ensuring organizations retain competent employees is critical and strategies include providing the necessary resources and training opportunities to individuals and teams.

Similarly, an adjunct instructor lost motivation and is evident in the following statement: “When you lose your contact for scheduling classes and you are always at a wait and see.” Adjunct instructors are hired on semester long contracts, inevitably when one loses their hiring contact it can be very deflating to not know if you will be hired for the next semester. The adjunct instructor that has lost their original point contract for gaining access to teaching courses may need to increase their communication with the current resources that are available. In accordance with the findings of this study, Charan et al. (2011) reported it is imperative for business managers to be skilled at working with a diverse workforce, employees with different skill sets and different personality traits ensuring their communication is effective and clear so as not to cause confusion.

According to Kruse (2016), many top executives will say their most important asset is the people that work for them (human resources), but when they sit in cabinet-level meetings, they will rarely hear the morale of the employees as a topic of discussion; the executives are more concerned with profit margins, increased sales, and recruitment

rather than the commitment their current employees have for the organization. According to Charan et al. (2011), CEOs want marketable employees who stay in their jobs because they want to, not because they could not get a job anywhere else. Today's employees expect to have the resources needed to do their job, transparency from administrations, and freedom to contribute to decisions that affect them; they do not want a micromanager, but rather someone they can respect and trust to provide advantageous direction (Charan et al., 2011).

When asked to describe a time when you lost motivation at work, staff responses included the following statements connecting back to lack of capital related to compensation or mental health: (a) "On rare occasions I and mostly it may be related to my wishes for higher compensation in order to enjoy more life outside of work with family;" and (b) "I haven't been working at the university full-time for long, but as a part-time employee it can be easy to get overwhelmed when students come to you in distress or something out of your control occurs."

The major sub-theme within the lack of resources and capital that impact staff engagement was information that is and is not communicated. A leader's ability to communicate with their employees is a prerequisite for employee engagement (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Communication should flow two-ways between the employee and supervisor (Kruse, 2016). A reason for withholding information could be tied to the fear of losing power. According to Charan et al. (2011), it is necessary for executives to have high achieving direct reports and be secure enough to pick the right people for the position, despite knowing that some of them may want their job. Empowering employees

by providing transparent communication and necessary resources can increase motivation of employee engagement as demonstrated by these participants' responses.

Athletic coaches also had a lot to say about the lack of capital provided to them. Responses included the following: (a) "When the school announced its transition to the main campus;" and (b)

There have been a lot of changes in the workplace in the five years I have been here. During the school-year, I almost always work 60-90 hours each week. This amount of time is not enough, and it is hard to stay motivated sometimes because I work so much and don't have time to take care of myself. Ultimately, not having a large enough staff (because it has been cut so much) has caused motivational issues for me at times. It was especially bad when my most recent assistant coach left. He lost motivation because of the long hours and eventually just couldn't take it anymore. It was sad because I put a lot into his development as a coach, and he was a very good employee. Overall, the lack of sleep, overall tiredness, lack of ability to hold personal friendships, lack of ability to spend time with family, etc. that are involved with not having enough staff to perform the amount of work necessary is what causes a loss in motivation.

Each statement is very different in nature, but the underlying reason for loss of motivation was the lack of resources, whether it is a resource as large as a campus closure or not having enough administrative staff, they are both lacking resources to accomplish their job responsibilities. This finding is consistent with the findings of Mann and Harter (2016), "critical engagement elements" along with employee performance and the overall

human resources strategy should be the top priority for leaders of organizations (para. 19).

Summary

There is a clear connection from the themes that emerged in this study to the literature. Although supervisors were not found to be a significant factor in influencing the participants' engagement, engagement levels are higher than average at the research site as demonstrated in *RQI*. The implications of this seem to be, if the supervisor is not seen as the one providing the meaningful opportunities, recognition, capital, resources, and a collaborative environment, who is? Who is providing these fundamental aspects to heighten employee engagement at the research site? How are engagement levels more than double the average engagement levels according to Gallup's Q12 meta-analysis (Mann & Harter, 2016)? Are individuals that are attracted to work in the non-profit sector of higher education driven by their belief in education rather than supervisor influence? Is there more professional trust among supervisors and employees in higher education? Faculty in particular and a large number of coaches, set their own schedules, they are not punching a clock, and many coaches work well over the typical 40 hours a week as demonstrated in participant responses. As demonstrated, this study provides opportunity for continued research into the influences of engagement in higher education.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and their immediate supervisor.

H₀₂: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and their level of trust in their immediate supervisor.

H₀₃: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and the quality of communication with their immediate supervisor.

H₀₄: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and recognition received from their immediate supervisor.

H₀₅: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no relationship between engagement at work and opportunities for growth provided by their immediate supervisor.

H₀₆: Among the research sample of higher education employees, there is no difference between engagement at work and employee type.

As reported in the previous chapter, this study found no statistically significant influences from supervisors on employee engagement and the study failed to reject null for all null hypotheses; the sample was found to be moderately happy to work for their supervisors, and they also reported that they thought their supervisor was a moderately good leader. Table 15 outlines the descriptive statistics in response to the survey question, “my immediate supervisor is someone I am happy to work for.” Data to support the hypotheses were provided by the sample of higher education employees, including nine adjunct instructors, 14 faculty, 19 staff, and six coaches. Participants were able to rate their engagement at work on a sliding scale from 0 to 100. A score of 90 to 100

equated to “Extremely happy,” 70-89 “Moderately happy,” 51-69 “Slightly happy,” 50 “Neither happy nor mad,” 40- 49 “Slightly mad,” 20-39 “Moderately mad,” and 0-19 “Extremely mad.” Overall, the sample reported that they were moderately happy to work for their immediate supervisor at 76.81%. Adjunct instructors reported the highest average level of happiness working with their immediate supervisor at 91%, followed by staff at 75.21%, faculty at 72%, and finally coaches at 71.83%.

Table 15

Summary Data for “Happiness to Work for Supervisor”

Happiness Levels	Employee Type									
	Adjunct Instructor		Coaches		Faculty		Staff		Grand Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely Happy	6	12.50	3	6.25	8	16.67	9	18.75	26	54.17
Moderately Happy	3	6.25	1	2.08	2	4.17	5	10.42	11	22.92
Slightly Happy	0	0	1	2.08	0	0	1	2.08	2	4.17
Neither Happy Nor Mad	0	0	0	0	1	2.08	2	4.17	3	6.25
Slightly Mad	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moderately Mad	0	0	0	0	2	4.17	1	2.08	3	6.25
Extremely Mad	0	0	1	2.08	1	2.08	1	2.08	3	6.25

In response to “my immediate supervisor is a very good leader,” data to additionally support the hypotheses was provided by the sample of higher education employees. Table 16 outlines participants’ responses when rating their supervisor’s leadership skill at work on a sliding scale from 0 to 100.

Table 16*Supervisor a Good Leader*

Leadership Level	Employee Type									
	Adjunct Instructor		Coaches		Faculty		Staff		Grand Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely Good	6	12.50	3	6.25	6	12.50	5	10.42	20	41.67
Moderately Good	3	6.25	0	0	3	6.25	5	10.42	11	22.92
Slightly Good	0	0	2	4.17	0	0	3	6.25	5	10.42
Neither Good Nor Bad	0	0	0	0	1	2.08	1	2.08	2	4.17
Slightly Bad	0	0	0	0	1	2.08	1	2.08	2	4.17
Moderately Bad	0	0	0	0	1	2.08	3	6.25	4	8.33
Extremely Bad	0	0	1	2.08	2	4.17	1	2.08	4	8.33

A score of 90 to 100 equated to “Extremely good,” 70-89 “Moderately good,” 51-69 “Slightly good,” 50 “Neither good nor bad,” 40- 49 “Slightly bad,” 20-39 “Moderately bad,” and 0-19 “Extremely bad.” Overall, the sample reported that they thought their immediate supervisor was a moderately good leader at 70.42%. Adjunct instructors reported the highest average percentage when asked if they thought their immediate

supervisor was a very good leader at 88.11%, followed by coaches at 68.17%, faculty at 66.79%, and finally staff at 65.42%.

Summary

Consistent with the literature, the findings from the current study suggest that engaged employees in higher education are motivated by meaningful opportunities to exercise their expertise, recognition and affirmation of meeting or exceeding job expectations, and collaboration with others in the organization (Kruse, 2016; Lencioni, 2016; Scott, 2017). Fitch and Van Brunt (2016) agreed and suggested for employees to be fully engaged in their work they must receive genuineness and authenticity from their leaders in a way that recognizes employees' contributions. Additionally, Lencioni (2016) stated that an organization is most successful when it is composed of employees that desire to collaborate and work as a team. Mann and Harter (2016) suggested that increasing employees' opportunity to participate in professional development activities and providing the necessary resources will lead to increased employee engagement. Consistent with the findings of this study, there are five best practices that Gallup (Mann & Harter, 2016) identified to improve engagement and performance:

integrate engagement into the company's human capital strategy, use a scientifically validated instrument to measure engagement, understand where the company is today, and where it wants to be in the future, look beyond engagement as a single construct, and align engagement with other workplace priorities. (para. 19)

Providing culture awareness seminars, team development opportunities, and communication training, for example, also may grow more competent employees that

stretch for additional challenging assignments and therefore have heightened levels of engagement at work (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Conversely, not providing meaningful opportunities, resources needed to work, or a collaborative environment will prove to decrease levels of motivation and engagement in higher education employees as evidenced by this study.

Implications

Although supervisors were not found to be a significant influence on engagement, the results of this study suggest that supervisors could be providing additional opportunities, recognition both publicly and privately, supplying a working atmosphere that promotes collaboration and teamwork, and demonstrating a connection from employees' work to the mission of the institution, in order to support employee motivation and engagement. By contrast, supervisors could also pay closer attention to influences that demotivate employees; a lack of resources, lack of collaboration, and lack of recognition. In alignment with this study, the literature suggests best practice for supporting employee engagement is providing an environment where the leader is trusted and communicates with their employees to promote opportunity, recognition, collaboration, and purpose (Fitch & Van Brunt, 2016; Kruse, 2016; Lencioni, 2016; Mann & Harter, 2016; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017; Scott, 2017).

Supervisors in higher education could focus attention on how they communicate both vertically and horizontally. A leader's ability to communicate with their employees is a fundamental piece of employee engagement (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Although communication is the foundation, engagement is not a stand-alone component of an organization, it should be woven into how supervisors lead employees to exceed

expectations, through providing development opportunities and resources to accomplish the company's goals (Mann & Harter, 2016). Brusino and Soyars (2009) found that when employees are well abreast of the missions and goals of the organization this can lead to highly engaged employees.

If enhancing engagement is the focus of a leader's every interaction with direct reports, performance can increase along with engagement. Arming employees with dedicated and meaningful work could also increase engagement as was found in this study and the literature. Supervisors in higher education could nominate individuals on their teams to participate in enhanced development opportunities, those individuals experienced greater motivation to perform at a higher level and exceed expectations (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017).

Supervisors can improve morale and engagement with promotions, but there are additional ways to enhance morale, supervisors can honor and reward, or even ensure employees are continuously learning and given new opportunities that challenge them (Scott, 2017). Supervisors must also have genuine relationships with their teams, no matter how sincere, managers will not be able to motivate their teams by dictating a vision (Senge, 1990). In *Radical Candor*, Scott (2017) scrutinized the outcomes of different approaches to leadership. Radical candor requires a manager to "care personally" and "challenge directly" (p. 9). Scott proposed that caring occurs when supervisors begin building relationships with direct reports, as challenging directly will only make an impact once leaders have proven that they care personally. Providing specific and sincere feedback as a leader promotes a caring engaged workforce.

Culture is how employees work and engagement is how employees feel about their work; culture is what is actually happening and engagement is what people think about what is happening (Hanrahan et al., 2019). According to Magee (2002), two key factors that influence the behavior of employees are organizational culture and Human Resources (HR) practices. HR practice is to develop and manage peoples' performance management which in turn gives employees clearly articulated goals, valid evaluation information, recognition of contributions, essential on-going feedback, and fair and equitable pay, much of which corresponds to the findings of this study.

Future Research

The organizational hierarchy is considerably different in higher education than the corporate world. The supervisor was not seen as a significant influence on employee engagement in this study, yet the participants self-reported their overall engagement level at 87.85%, moderately good. Perhaps this inconsistency is due to the nature of employment faculty, adjunct instructors, and athletic coaches experience in higher education. From the researcher's time spent in human resources in academia, faculty, adjunct instructors, and athletic coaches have expressed the inability to see themselves as employees of the university, therefore possibly not viewing their supervisor as having any influence over their morale or motivation at work. A faculty member at the research site shared with the researcher that they were offended by the term "direct report" and stated that they do not report to anyone. As a human resource professional, the researcher knows that the hierarchy of the institution supports supervisor relationships and faculty do in fact report to an academic administrator/supervisor and dean. Several adjunct instructors have tried and failed to make the case that they should be paid as an

independent contractor since, in their opinion, they are not employed by the university; this obviously failed to be approved by the department of labor and the university chief financial officer. Additionally, while the researcher was presenting the performance management system to the athletic coaches, one argued that they should not have to participate in performance evaluations because in their opinion, they too were not employees of the university, again, this is not true. Future research could look at who motivates the employees at higher education institutions if it is not their direct supervisor. Additionally, future research could study who employees would like to see the recognition, opportunities, collaboration, and purpose derived from, since they do not view their supervisor as the one providing these motivating influences.

If employees' demotivating factors do not stem from the immediate supervisor, future research could address the level of trust higher in the organization, among the executive level. Communication that is starting at the cabinet-level could possibly not be trickling down which can lead employees to believe that necessary communication is not occurring at all. Or, if employees think the necessary conversations are occurring, they might feel that they are not valued enough to be privy to pertinent systemic information, therefore decreasing levels of engagement and motivation. A future study on the perceived degree of communication received from the top level of higher education administration could be used to build on the current study. It would be interesting to conduct a study on individual divisions, departments, and schools to see if there is a relationship to size of unit and employee engagement level. Presumably, the smaller the unit's size, the easier it would be for the executive level to communicate pertinent information directly to all levels of employees within a department. Additionally, a future

study could look at the types of recognition, resources, and opportunities that motivate employees in higher education. Is recognition desired publicly or privately, are there specific resources employees feel are lacking most, what kinds of opportunities do employees feel benefit them the most. These are all questions that could be studied in the future.

Gallup found that there was a variance in the standard deviation across companies; “One hypothesis for why this variation occurs is that companies vary in how they encourage employee satisfaction and engagement initiatives and in how they have or have not developed a common set of values and a common culture” (Harter et al. 2016, p. 23). This logic used for the different companies studied by Gallup, could also be used in this study, but applied to the different employee types and then again within the different schools, divisions, and departments that make up these employee types. Future research could look at the specific themes and differences within how supervisors in higher education motivate and engage their unit.

Tuition driven institutions and enrollment have declined over the past few years. The private mid-west university where the research was conducted cut positions in 2018, 2019, and in 2020, due to the decrease in enrollment and revenue. In addition to cutting positions, department budgets have been reduced. These budget cuts played into the fear across the university that their own jobs could be eliminated next. In addition to the budget crisis, one of the campuses owned by the private Midwest university was consolidated and moved from a full-service day and evening school to solely operating as an evening school, as previously stated in several of the participants' comments. Consolidating this campus resulted in an additional loss of positions. The announcement

for this campus consolidation occurred right before the researcher sent out the survey for this study, a future study could be conducted with the same methodology and produce different results based on the circumstances that surrounded this current study. Similarly, the university has had several different presidents in the past five years, all having different visions and goals for the university. Once the university settles with one leadership team, mission, vision, values, and strategic plan, the outcome of this same study could dramatically change.

Summary

The current study set out to add to the literature through insights into factors influencing employee engagement in the field of higher education. The extent to which the research sample is engaged at work was self-reported by 48 participants at 87.85%, moderately good. From the data, three major themes emerged; the findings of this study demonstrate that the influences of engagement for the research sample are opportunity, recognition, collaboration. By contrast, the sample cited, in this order, the lack of resources, lack of collaboration, and lack of recognition as demotivating factors for their engagement at work. Supervisors were not found to be a significant influence on engagement, but the study provides a wealth of qualitative data to supervisors, providing them the opportunity to experiment with new strategies when they strive to motivate and engage others.

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Appendix A

Hello “Participant Name”,

As a part of my doctoral studies, I am conducting a mixed methods study on the impact of supervisory roles on employee engagement. As an employee of Lindenwood University, I would greatly appreciate your participation.

Participation will require a 10-15-minute survey along with the option to participate in a focus group. If you are willing to participate [CLICK HERE](#) to begin the survey. In order to participate in the follow-up focus group, please respond to the final survey question with your contact information.

Thank you for your consideration,
Brittany

Brittany Brown / Director, Employee Development, Human Resources
Lindenwood University / 209 South Kingshighway • St. Charles, MO 63301
636.627.2956 (o) / LinkedIn / Facebook / Twitter / lindenwood.edu

Appendix B

Research Information Sheet

You are being asked to participate in a research study. We are doing this study to look into the impact of supervisor behaviors on employee engagement in a higher education environment. During this study you will complete a 10-to-15-minute anonymous survey, along with a voluntary focus group. It will take about an hour to complete this study. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time.

There are no risks from participating in this project. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

We are collecting data that could identify you, such as your email address if you choose to participate in the voluntary focus group. Every effort will be made to keep your information secure and confidential. Only members of the research team will be able to see your data.

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. We do not intend to include information that could identify you in any publication or presentation. Any information we collect will be stored by the researcher in a secure location. The only people who will be able to see your data are: members of the research team, qualified staff of Lindenwood University, representatives of state or federal agencies.

Who can I contact with questions?

If you have concerns or complaints about this project, please use the following contact information:

Brittany Brown BBrown@lindenwood.edu

Dr. Mary Ruetters MRuetters@lindenwood.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or concerns about the project and wish to talk to someone outside the research team, you can contact Michael Leary (Director - Institutional Review Board) at 636-949-4730 or MLEary@lindenwood.edu.

Appendix C

The Survey Institute Sample Validated Employee Survey Questions

1. Please select your role at the university: adjunct instructor, faculty, staff, coach (make required).

2. In which campus are you located? (St. Charles, Belleville, extended site)

Please respond to the following statements regarding your overall experience with your supervisor.

3. Please rate your overall engagement in your work (1-10).

4. Using the space below, describe a time when you felt motivated to exceed expectations at work.

5. Describe a time when you have lost motivation at work.

6. My immediate supervisor is someone I am happy to work for.

7. My immediate supervisor is a very good leader.

Please respond to the following statements regarding your direct relationship with your supervisor.

8. My immediate supervisor takes responsibility for his or her mistakes. (TRUST)

9. I am comfortable expressing concerns to my immediate supervisor without fear of retaliation. (TRUST)

10. I believe the person I report to cares about me as a person. (TRUST)

11. I feel appreciated by my immediate supervisor. (TRUST)

12. I am comfortable discussing my job performance with my supervisor. (TRUST)

Please respond to the following statements regarding opportunity for career growth.

13. My immediate supervisor empowers me to take initiative and remove things that get in the way of progress. (GROWTH)

14. I have the opportunity to be involved in decisions that affect my work. (GROWTH)

15. My immediate supervisor takes my professional development seriously and is actively supporting my growth. (GROWTH)

16. My immediate supervisor provides timely feedback on my performance. (GROWTH)

17. My immediate supervisor provides opportunity for me to attain my goals. (GROWTH)

18. Training is available to prepare me for new responsibilities and opportunities. (GROWTH)

Please respond to the following statements regarding workplace communication.

19. I am satisfied with the quality of communication from my immediate supervisor. (COMMUNICATION)

20. I receive timely and meaningful information from my immediate supervisor. (COMMUNICATION)

21. There is open communication between my immediate supervisor and me. (COMMUNICATION)

Please respond to the following statements regarding workplace recognition.

22. I am treated like an important asset by immediate supervisor. (RECOGNITION)

23. I regularly receive recognition or praise for my contribution(s) from my immediate supervisor. (RECOGNITION)

24. My immediate supervisor genuinely listens to me and demonstrates that my opinions are heard. (RECOGNITION)

25. My immediate supervisor genuinely listens to me and demonstrates that my opinions are valued. (RECOGNITION)

26. I know if I do a good job, I will be recognized and appreciated. (RECOGNITION)

Please respond to the following statements regarding Lindenwood University.

27. My immediate supervisor works to retain good employees. (RETENTION)

28. Because of my immediate supervisor, I believe I have a future at Lindenwood University. (RETENTION)

29. I rarely think about quitting my job and leaving the university because of my immediate supervisor. (RETENTION)

30. Would you be willing to participate in a focus group? If so, please provide your name and best way to contact you (phone number or email).

Focus Group Questions

1. What is your favorite part about working for Lindenwood University?
2. What are the pros and cons of the university's vision for the future?
3. When you get up in the morning, how do you feel about coming to work at Lindenwood?
4. What gives you a feeling of accomplishment while working at Lindenwood?
5. How do you feel about the mission and values of Lindenwood?
6. How comfortable are you communicating issues through various channels that are available to you, including your immediate supervisor, staff/faculty chair representative, and cabinet representative?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding this topic?

Appendix D

From: Donald R Bruns <DBRUNS@SURVEYINSTITUTE.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 30, 2019 12:57 PM
To: Brown, Brittany D. <BBrown@lindenwood.edu>
Subject: Re: PDFs of the reports you will be able to run

Hello Brittany,

Please feel free to utilize the questions from The Survey Institute's database of questions. If you need anything else, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Don Bruns
President
The Survey Institute

Appendix E

The Q12 statements are:

Q00. Overall Satisfaction) On a 5-point scale, where “5” is extremely satisfied and “1” is extremely dissatisfied, how satisfied are you with (your company) as a place to work?

Q01. I know what is expected of me at work.

Q02. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.

Q03. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.

Q04. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.

Q05. My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.

Q06. There is someone at work who encourages my development.

Q07. At work, my opinions seem to count.

Q08. The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.

Q09. My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.

Q10. I have a best friend at work.

Q11. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.

Q12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.