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JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

A MIXED-METHOD APPROACH IDENTIFYING ANTECEDENTS OF EMPLOYEE

ENGAGEMENT IN A NONDENOMINATIONAL CHURCH: PERSPECTIVES

FROM VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement is a crucial factor that affects organizational success, productivity, and overall well-being. Extensive research has been conducted on factors contributing to employee engagement in secular organizations. However, additional study on the volunteer workforce is needed, particularly on the factors influencing engagement within the Christian community. This study explored the antecedents of employee engagement from a comparative perspective, examining volunteers and employees to shed light on the factors that drive engagement across different work commitments. Drawing upon a mixed-methods research approach, data was collected from a diverse sample of Christian church volunteers and employees. The research used an adapted version of the Gallup Q-12 and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire surveys to measure the dynamics shaping engagement among volunteers and employees and find its antecedents. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain qualitative insights into the antecedents of engagement. The results showed various factors, such as work satisfaction, leadership support, and ministry opportunities, significantly influenced employee engagement. Volunteers expressed similar factors that contributed to their level of engagement, including intrinsic motivation, a strong sense of purpose in their work, meaningful ministry involvement, and the fulfillment of their personal spiritual beliefs. Understanding the antecedents of employee engagement is vital for organizations wanting an engaged workforce. Since volunteers and paid employees are essential to the function of church ministries, it is imperative to understand the leadership practices that keep ministry servants engaged.

Keywords: Antecedent of Engagement, Transformational, Leadership, Christian Church Leaders.

Dedication

This is dedicated to my amazing wife, Deborah, for always encouraging me and believing in me. You have been a source of strength, support, and patience.

To my two amazing sons, Ryan, and Joshua, who are the joys of my life, your influence is what drives me to be a better man; without you, I could not succeed.

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List of Abbreviations

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Employee Engagement (EE)

Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement Survey (Q12)

Human Resources Development (HRD)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Liberty University (LU)

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)

National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)

New King James Version (NKJV)

Organizational Change Management (OCM)

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Total Quality Management (TQM)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

Within the heart of every church lies an energetic nucleus where worship and community converge as the focal point of service. Behind the scenes is a cadre of unsung heroes: the tireless volunteers and dedicated staff who invest their time and talents into cultivating and managing various ministries. These individuals form the bedrock of church operations, supplying an invaluable service transcending mere tasks and duties to weave a priceless fabric of ministry support (Anderson & Fox, 2015). Church workers play a pivotal role in fostering a sense of belonging and community within the organization and are a valuable support system for the pastoral staff (Williams & Gangel, 2004). Through their emotional involvement, these volunteers, and employees craft opportunities for members to connect, build relationships, and provide mutual assistance, which furthers efforts toward fulfilling The Great Commission.

This study delves into the motivations driving Christian employees and volunteer workers, and the antecedents that contribute to employee engagement in non-denominational churches. The insights gathered could empower Christian leaders and practitioners to sculpt focused strategies that build a more engaged workforce. Central to this study is examining the leadership style preferences exhibited by non-denominational church leaders and unpacking the factors that strengthen engagement for those are devoted to Christian ministry. While ample literature dissects leadership theories on employee engagement and distinctly compares, contrasts, and defines transactional versus transformational leadership theory in a secular culture, less attention has been paid to the antecedents influencing volunteers and employees in a Christian church setting.

After many hours researching social dynamics and human behavior, at one time the researcher was invited to join a church leadership team to launch a new church-sponsored bible college program. The church-sponsored bible college was a church program designed to teach theological principles. During the initial meeting, the senior pastor unveiled an unexpected challenge: the glaring shortage of volunteers willing to contribute to the latest educational endeavor. Although the church had developed a comprehensive curriculum platform, congregants remained disinterested in volunteering for the bible college. In digging deeper, the root cause of the lack of volunteerism were parallels between the leadership teams' management of the volunteer workforce and their underestimation of the behavior of the volunteers and the underlying cause of the lack of participation. The leadership team was also reluctant to accept that the workplace culture created by the leadership team impacted volunteerism. Ultimately, the bible college failed to thrive due to the pastor's hesitation to appreciate the significance of nurturing the antecedents of employee engagement, which are defined by Wollard and Shuck (2011) as intrinsic or extrinsic motivators that stimulate employees toward positive engagement.

With an ever-changing culture, church leaders, i.e., pastors, can face many of the same leadership challenges that corporate leaders experience, such as motivating and retaining workers. Harter (2021) cites that only 36 percent of employees are engaged in the workplace; yet, as stated by Hanna (2006), "anyone who expects to attain absolute perfection is engaged in more rhetoric. At the same time, nothing releases organizational energy, generates activity, or satisfies human beings as a meaningful goal" (p. 8). Most religious organizations are successful only due to the enormous efforts made by the volunteers who supplement full-time paid staff members. Volunteers play a critical role in the day-to-day operations of a church, and they are often responsible for running programs, organizing events, providing hospitality, and performing

other tasks essential for ministry success (Williams & Gangel, 2004). Motivating volunteers is a crucial aspect of church leadership because the volunteer workforce is often much more significant in numbers than full-time church employees. Without motivated volunteers, a church may struggle to fulfill ministry objectives (Anderson& Fox, 2015). It requires an intentional effort by church leaders to create a culture of appreciation, encouragement, and support that inspires volunteers to give their time, talents, and resources to the church. A healthy workplace culture with engaged employees typically consists of loyal, productive, and satisfied employees (Lockwood, 2007). Ultimately, creating a culture of engagement within a church requires a commitment from leaders to value the contributions of members and volunteers and to provide them with the support and resources they need to feel invested in the church's mission. Therefore, to better understand the correlation between leadership methodologies and the impact those methods have on a healthy workplace church environment, this study aims to enhance the understanding of pastoral leaders' influence on the antecedents of engagement.

A desire to understand the leadership culture that motivates volunteers to serve the church ministry ultimately led to this study. This study further analyzed the preferred leadership style that impacts the antecedents of employee engagement, confirmed known precursors, and uncovered the unique antecedents associated with a non-denominational evangelical church. Chapter One discusses the background of the problem and identifies the research questions. Subsequent chapters contain a literature review, a platform for the research design, and a more in-depth description of the mixed-method research design. The study concludes with Chapter Four, which reflects the research data, and Chapter Five, the analysis, and recommendations for future research.

Background of the Problem

The importance of employee engagement cannot be overstated; companies have found that "happy" or engaged employees work harder, call out sick less, and contribute more to an organization's overall success (Chateau, Flynn & Vonderhorst, 2007; Pugh & Dietz, 2008). Employee engagement is critical to a successful organization (Gallup, 2021). Gallup describes an engaged employee as being enthusiastic and committed to their work and workplace. Positive workplace engagement will lead to greater profitability and rewards for the organization (Llorens, Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2007). Those organizational leaders concerned with employee engagement will typically have their organizations undergo a survey study to examine the level of organizational engagement. An organization such as Gallup provides an engagement survey to help organizations assess their overall level of employee engagement. Many different influencing theories underlie what accounts for an "engaged" employee, and there remains a gap between authoritative expert and qualified definition. Despite the numerous studies and models available reflecting employee engagement, there remain inconsistencies defining the term "engagement" and what this means to an organization. For example, what one organization holds valuable, i.e., profit, another organization will mark success based on the number of societal contributions; this makes assessing engagement difficult to unilaterally define.

Employee engagement is when employees contribute more to the organization than is required based on their own accord. Kruse (2012) said, "Employee engagement is the emotional commitment the employee has to the organization and its goals" (p. 3). Macey, Schneider, Barbera, and Young (2011) state that "engaged employees give more of what they have to offer, and that as a result, an engaged workforce is simply a more productive one" (p. 2). The term employee engagement does not necessarily equate to "happy employees' as even unhappy

employees can be engaged within the organizational structure. Employee engagement and happiness are not always therefore synonymous terms. Macey et al., (2011) suggest that while happy employees may contribute to employee engagement, engagement goes beyond just happiness and involves a more profound commitment and involvement to the organization. Engaged employees are passionate, motivated, and committed to their jobs. Engagement is a key performance indicator of a healthy workplace culture and should be taken seriously.

Antecedents of Engagement

The factors and conditions that influence an employee's engagement with their work and organization are known as the antecedents of engagement. These antecedents must be established before an organization can reap the benefits of an engaged workforce (Saks, 2006). Antecedents include job autonomy, organizational support, leadership, recognition, and rewards (Alam, et al., 2022). The antecedents of employee engagement are crucial because they impact performance, productivity, and employee retention. Engaged employees are more committed to their work, have greater job satisfaction, and are likelier to contribute to the organization's success (McBain, 2007).

Job satisfaction, teamwork, and professional development are examples of antecedents that influence an employee's level of engagement (Gallup, 2021) For instance, providing employees with more autonomy and growth opportunities can increase their control over their work responsibilities, leading to better engagement and motivation (Rich et al., 2010; Khan, 1990). Similarly, recognition and rewards for satisfactory performance can boost an employee's sense of value and commitment to the organization. Engaged employees often express feelings of being heard by leadership and have a voice in the decision-making process (Macey et al., 2011). Psychological safety is influenced by perceived social systems related to support and

relationships, while psychological availability is influenced by perceived self-perceptions of confidence and self-consciousness (Rich, et al., 2010). Leadership and management within an organization play a significant role in employee engagement (Khan, 1990). Ultimately, the importance of the antecedents of employee engagement lies in leadership's ability to create a culture of engagement and commitment within an organization, which leads to improved performance, higher productivity, and better employee retention.

Leadership Theories That Impact Engagement

Leadership theories play a crucial role within religious communities. These include transformational leadership, which emphasizes inspiring, motivating, and encouraging followers, and the servant leadership model, which suggests that pastors and other church leaders place the needs of others before themselves (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Greenleaf, 1998). Authentic leadership resonates in a pastoral setting; pastors lead with transparency and honesty, which builds trust within the Christian church (Strauss, 2019). Ultimately, church leaders benefit from combining these leadership theories, which enables them to create a dynamic and engaged Christian community where employees and volunteers are inspired, supported, and connected with their passion for serving the ministry.

Leadership is a complex and dynamic skill set involving influencing, nurturing, guiding, and inspiring others toward achieving organizational success (Bass & Riggio, 2006). As stated by Irving and Strauss (2019), Christian leaders need high-level technical and supervisory management skills. Although there are several leadership theories, this study examines two popular theories: transformational and transactional leadership. While transformational leadership and transactional leadership complement each other, in most contexts, they are separate approaches to leadership and have diverse characteristics (Avolio & Bass, 2001). Bass

and Riggo (2006) state that "transformational leaders are those who lead to social change" (p.3). They further point out that transformational leaders inspire subordinates to achieve extraordinary outcomes.

Research suggests that many employees are identified as Theory-X personalities, which cites that most people have little ambition and do not take responsibility as determined by Douglas McGregor (2006). Since the early 1960s, there has been an increase in defining and qualifying a healthy workplace environment, i.e., engaged employees. As an individual, each employee may not fit into the Theory-X category, as a workplace collective, it does suggest many employees are unhappy in the workplace. The employee engagement survey is designed to uncover this organizational sentiment which may be detrimental to a flourishing workplace.

Many organizational leaders maintain the self-deception of engagement practitioners despite being more likened to subsidiary consumers. Although they do not intentionally create a lack of understanding of employee engagement, a poorly lead organization originates from a systemic culture of ignoring diminished engagement environment. However, engagement remains of the most underappreciated and often disregarded organizational theories in the praxis of Total Quality Management (TQM).

Employee engagement continues to attract organizations as a driving force of success. Research confirms that organizations with a higher degree of engagement have employees with perpetual levels of job satisfaction (Eldor & Harpaz, 2015). When every element of the human resource process is not properly tended, the organization's body is burdened to a degree where every employee cannot reach their fullest potential, per Dicke, Holwerda, and Kontakos (2007), "Leaders interested in employee engagement will be best served to create a custom approach to the finding in measuring engagement based on extensive research on their company strengths

and weaknesses as well as research on closely related concepts with a long history" (p. 7).

However, employee engagement is a process with various definitions. The essence of an

effective leader is a champion of the engagement program (Wollard & Shuck, 2011).

Engagement must clearly define engagement because it constantly overlaps with established

concepts and methods. Any firm hoping to use employee engagement, as it is now understood, to

achieve manageable results should cautiously utilize the strategies already defined by

engagement theorists to establish a unique plan based on an in-depth study of the company's

strengths and limitations.

<div align="center">**Statement of the Problem**</div>

Although numerous resources are available connecting engagement to management

theories and various methodologies to management, there are few studies with empirical data on

the antecedents of employee engagement in a non-denominational church. Engagement is not a

singular event addressed casually; it is the organizational team members' level of commitment to

the job, colleagues, and mission statement, or, in the case of ecclesiastical organization, the

ministry objectives. To attain a competitive advantage, organizational leaders must find ways to

inspire employees and create an energy continuum that attracts and promotes creativity. In a

religious organization, such as an evangelical church, the antecedents of employee engagement

can be entrenched in an employee's, or volunteer's, personal beliefs and desire to serve the

church: "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same

function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another"

(New King James Bible, 1979/2015, Romans 12:4-5). The stronger the culture, the more

employees will openly communicate and assimilate expectations (Gallup, 2021). Measuring and

defining employee engagement is problematic for most organizational leaders because there are extensive variances in both definitions (Dicke, Holwerda, and Kontakos, 2007).

Additionally, authors Dicke et al., (2007) caution leaders to make a concerted effort to discern benchmark information about their organization cautiously. Comparing to other organizations, the information could be disastrous for their own if not relevant (Dicke et al., 2007). In other words, engagement assessment should be personalized for each organization, examining the uniqueness of the organizational culture, and identifying antecedents and drivers that affect the organizational change process and employee engagement. Positive antecedents of employee engagement keep employees invested in the group and promote creativity.

As an organization, the church faces similar challenges often seen in secular corporate organizations, such as economic fluctuations, maintaining "branding," effectively serving the community they influence, and navigating government and cultural influences threatening its well-being. Pastors and other church leaders can mitigate challenges by motivating members spiritually and corporately to overcome obstacles (Hartwig & Bird, 2015). Assistant officers and other ministry leaders assume managerial roles within the church structure and experience some of the same challenges associated with corporate organizations.

The current gap in literature facilitates a necessity to understand how leadership methodologies impact the antecedent of engagement, which, in turn, influences employee engagement within an organization. For example, Rowold (2008) examined the differences between transactional and transformational leadership and found that they are valid in supporting a positive impact on followers' stratification with their pastor. Rowold's (2008) suggests transformational leadership is best suited to positively impact congregants' satisfaction with their

church. Yet, employee engagement in transactional-transformational theory still needs to be addressed.

This research identified how transformational and transactional leadership methodologies inspire employee engagement in the church. Additionally, there needs to be more defining engagement relevant to a particular culture. What is essential for one culture does not necessarily hold for another (Bowles & Cooper, 2012). Even within the American corporate arena, some other subcultural differences and expectations promote a level of "what is important to me" philosophy. There is a unanimous consensus on identifying and defining transactional and transformational leadership, as defined by Bass (1985). Many researchers lack consistency in defining terms, making it difficult to apply from one organization to another, i.e., churches to businesses.

The evangelical non-denominational Christian Church serves to provide the ministry and to teach from the Bible in fulfillment of The Great Commission (NKJV, Matthew 28: 16-20).Yet, Barna (2017) found that Christians are leaving the church because they are dissatisfied with what is being "produced" by the church. This study exposes characteristics which points to leaders who are inattentive to a changing culture and their results of being inattentive leaders. There are surveys geared toward identifying a spiritual leader's preferred leadership model. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was used, in this study, to determine the church leader's preferred leadership style, relevant to transformational leadership versus transactional leadership theory. An employee engagement survey was also administered to church employees and volunteers to evaluate their level of engagement, qualify the leadership's preferred leadership style, and validate which leadership method is significant to creating a healthy workplace environment.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the antecedents of employee engagement among church volunteers and employees of a non-denominational church and the influence church leaders have on workplace culture, as well as the impact that antecedents have on the church to foster a healthy workplace environment that is recognized by a thriving Christian ministry. The theory most suitable for guiding this study for the quantitative phase of the study is descriptive, while the theory guiding the qualitative phase is phenomenology (Creswell, 2018).

Research Questions

The four research questions and two hypotheses address the research premise and support the purpose statement. Elements of the questions are derived from reviewed literature and other research into employee engagement antecedents. The research questions address leadership preferences, employee antecedents, which Christian theology keeps employees engaged, and how the antecedents for volunteer workers may differ from paid employees. The hypotheses propose negative relationships (e.g. null hypotheses) with respect to the quantitative data collected and analyzed for this study.

RQ1. What is the current level of employee engagement in a non-denominational church?

RQ2. What is the preferred style of leadership amongst pastors in non-denominational churches?

RQ3. What are the antecedents of employee engagement of employees and volunteer workers in a non-denominational church?

RQ4. To what extent do the antecedents to engagement impact the ministry's ability to create a healthy work environment in a non-denominational church?

$H_0 1$: There is no correlation between the antecedents of employee engagement and the level of employee engagement.

H$_0$2: There is no statistical correlation detailing employee engagement antecedents between paid and volunteer workers.

Assumptions and Delimitations

Research Assumptions

The study assumed that a considerable number of Christian volunteers and employees of the non-denominational church were genuinely willing to provide open and candid responses when participating in the two research study surveys. It was assumed that all participants follow the Christian faith. In addition, it was assumed that pastors and other leadership team members from the same non-denominational church were willing to allow their staff to participate in the study by supplying access to the volunteers and other employees. Additionally, it was presumed that the integrity and reliability of the surveys are correct and coincide with standard principles of scientific research validity. Finally, this study inferred that church leaders possess strong emotional competence, encourage spiritual formation and influence church workers and volunteers.

Delimitations of the Research Design

1. The study was delimited to the non-denominational evangelical "mega-church" system, which narrowed the dissertation topic to a single church network.

2. The research was delimited to those churches that employ full-time or part-time staff and volunteer workers of at least twenty personnel in addition to the church leadership. This limitation was because new church plants often begin with a limited number of ministry participants and have had little time to develop leadership preferences.

3. Employees and volunteers from church K–12 education were not part of this research study; only those who work in church ministry programs outside of K–12 were eligible for the study.

4. Participants were over 18, spoke English, and served the church as either employees or volunteers.

Definition of Terms

1. *Antecedents:* The antecedents of employee engagement refer to the leadership culture that precedes and contributes to employee engagement (Wollard & Shuck, 2011)..

2. *Christian Worldview:* one who holds the Bible to be the word of God (Martin, 2006).

3. *Drivers of Engagement:* Engagement drivers refer to the factors that motivate or encourage people to actively participate within an organization; drivers differ from antecedents in that drivers motivate employees to maintain employment, such as compensation, whereas antecedents keep employees engaged (Macey, Schneider, Barbera, & Young, 2011).

4. *Employee engagement* is the extent to which employees feel passionate about the job and their commitment to the organization (Macey, Schneider, Barbera, & Young, 2011).

5. *Senior Pastor:* A church pastor or preacher who oversees providing spiritual leadership to members of their church and who holds the office of chief church administrator (Bonem & Patterson, 2005).

6. *Transformational leadership:* leadership methodology based on reward and penalty; according to Judge & Piccolo (2004) this type of leadership can also be referred to as contingent-reward management.

7. *Transformational leadership:* Leadership methodology based on inspiring employees, personal and professional empowerment (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

8. *Volunteer:* Someone who is a supervised volunteer who regularly serves the church without compensation. According to the IRS (n.d.) "an employee is generally considered anyone who performs services if the business can control what will be done and how it will be done; compensation is not the defining line between volunteer and employee.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the field of knowledge reference to Christian leadership through its focus on pastoral management and how a created culture affects an employee or volunteer workforce. The ecclesiastical church network operates with the primary of mission teaching Christianity through direct instruction originating exclusively from the Bible. Since churches typically have a leadership structure like a corporate setting, it presupposes that these organizations experience many of the same challenges as their corporate counterparts. Therefore, church leaders must address, mitigate, and overcome the same challenges typically affecting for-

profit organizations such as absenteeism, motivation, and progression of church objectives. Church leaders must be able to motivate workers and employ the same leadership principles as other organizational leaders, aspiring to build a harmonious and productive workplace culture.

An element of the study examines leadership preferences, i.e., the dichotomy between transformational and transactional leadership and the significance the antecedents of employee engagement have on a biblical and fruitful ministry. The study aimed to uncover whether Christian church organizations that diligently foster and nurture high employee engagement are inherently more suited to accomplishing ministry goals. This research will apply directly to church leaders who desire to understand the connection between the antecedents of the employees in a church and the emotional competence associated with leadership development.

Summary of the Design

This research aimed to consider if the antecedent of employee engagement for church employees and volunteers is different from the presumed standards reflected in the literature review. The secondary research goal of this research design is to produce a theory reflective of the research data. By selecting mixed-methods research, the researcher presupposed the intricate relationship between the study variables, specifically leadership practice and employee engagement. The researcher predicted insight into the variables' collective influence on the antecedents of engagement for church employees and volunteers. The mixed method blends the strengths and weaknesses of individual methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In compliance with Leedy and Ormrod (2019) the mixed method is designed to integrate two kinds of information. This research encompasses leadership and engagement surveys, interviews, and case studies, which support the data analyzed for this study. The instruments used were two online surveys, reproduced in Appendices A & B.

In-person interviews were used to collect data (see Appendix A). The use of surveys allowed for the collection of quantitative data. In contrast, the interviews served as an instrumental means of examining qualitative data, enabling exploration of the perspectives and opinions of those influenced by church leadership. The surveys were used to define a cultural aspect of the church workforce. It was presumed that there is a connection between a high-performing workforce and employee engagement is cultivated by leaders (Gallup, 2021; Macey et. al., 2011). The surveys (quantitative) were utilized to support the outcome of the data received from the interviews (qualitative). The Gallup Q-12 survey was used to assess the level of employee engagement; the rationale is to show comparison and possibly support the theory that a particular set of antecedents is affected by either a positive or negative employee engagement culture. Gaging the level of engagement was necessary to support the premise that leadership style affects a thriving workplace environment. The in-person interviews were used to investigate if the antecedents for church workers are the same as those of other organizations and to uncover unique antecedents for church employees and volunteers. Chapter One is the foundation of the research question, and Chapter Two is instrumental in building connections within this research study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The literature review here offers the intellectual basis for the research study and, ultimately, the dissertation. The chapter provides a body of knowledge related to the research topic, with a comprehensive examination of the research study's theoretical, theological, and scholarly framework related to leadership and the challenges associated with leading a team. The literature discusses benefits of an engaged work culture. As employee burnout is reduced significantly employees work harder, and the organization is much more likely to enjoy sustained success. Collaborating on specific engagement strategies discussed here can foster a healthy and flourishing workplace culture. Khan (1990) believed an individual must be engaged psychologically to perform a role successfully. Pastors and other church leaders need to mitigate challenges by motivating organizational members spiritually and corporately to overcome this obstacle and discern which cultural aspects should be preserved and transformed (Pazmino, 2008, p. 192). Finally, the review established the context for the study, further identifying gaps in knowledge, and provided a critical synthesis of key concepts.

Theological Framework for the Study

This chapter explores the literature on the development antecedents of employee engagement theory from a theological perspective. The chapter also examines the relationship between pastors and other church leaders and employee engagement, which has a biblical and theological basis. This exploration of theory showed a foundational reflection of a Christian worldview that exists for each approach and the practical application therein. A continuous discussion exists surrounding the relevance of Christian leadership in a secular culture.

Nevertheless, there are a plethora of examples illustrating that secular leadership is built upon similar Christian foundations.

Meaningful goal setting is a leader's responsibility. The relevance of the Holy Spirit in confirming and preserving leadership theory is apparent when the views are dissected and examined. For example, "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (NKJV, Acts 6:3). Stephen, from the Acts of the Apostles, was considered an outstanding leader because he was full of the Spirit, wisdom, faith, and grace (NKJV, Acts 6:3). A wise leader who supports equilibrium and steers clear of eccentricity and extravagance excels in knowledge; the Holy Spirit's fulfilling results in wisdom (Sanders, 2017). These attributes are some of the qualities of a Christian leader, which are the foundations of employee engagement theory.

Both trust and safety appear as antecedents in every employee engagement theory and model. There are notable similarities from one ministry to another, but the actionable practice is the same: develop meaningful human relationships, encourage a trusting and safe organizational culture, and treat people with respect, compared to biblical teaching. The Bible speaks of how leaders should treat employees: "And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him" (NKJV, Ephesians, 6:9). Scripture illustrates how Christian leadership benefits from keeping a focus on God and not on man's desires or objectives:

> And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. However, he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality" (NKJV, 1979/2015, 3:23-24).

Additionally, the Bible speaks of happy employees: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not

in vain in the Lord" (NKJV, 1 Corinthians 15:58). Keeping employees happy and focused is the foundation of a healthy workplace culture. However, in this context of employee engagement, safety is less about physical safety and concentrates instead on how their leaders interact with employees in the workplace (Gallup, 2021).

Practical Theology

In accordance with the most popular theological teachings, a pastor represents a shepherd, as identified in scripture as one who "oversees" the flock (Laniak, 2015). In the Greek language (πάστορας), the word pastor is translated as shepherd. The Bible illustrates pastors as leaders: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His blood" (NKJV, Acts, 20:28). As leaders, pastors have a unique opportunity to influence not only their congregation but also their employees. Leaders significantly increase people's belief in their ability to make a difference; they move from being in control to giving over control to others coming to their coach" (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 220). Most organizational leadership theories teach that leaders drive organizational commitment, which has shown many benefits. Herold, Fedor, Caldwell, and Liu (2008) cited that an employee's organizational commitment increases job performance while reducing absenteeism, further illustrating duty to the organization which increases the employee's desire to continue showing up to work. Laniak (2015) notes that a good shepherd sees what the owner sees and acts with the owner; the shepherd is a follower before a leader. This implies that pastors have the ability to mold the organizational culture of the churches; employee engagement is dependent upon a flourishing workplace culture.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory is a leadership style emphasizing the importance of inspiring and motivating followers to achieve a common goal. Bass and Riggio (2006) state that transformational leaders inspire team members to achieve extraordinary results. It is based on the belief that people are motivated to perform at their best when they have an unobstructed vision and a sense of purpose and are empowered to contribute to the larger picture. In reference to Drury (2003), transformational leadership theory is exceptionally appealing to church leaders because they view themselves as being in the "transforming" business. Effective communication is one of the skills of transformational leaders. Without debate, a pastor needs to have confident communication skills in conformity with the communication possessed by Jesus Christ while preaching to his disciples, individuals, and the masses, as seen in the Sermon on the Mount (NKJV, Matthew 5-7; Luke 8).

Jesus' ministry was transformational in purpose and design. His ministry teaching style was to address large crowds and minister to individuals. In Luke 8, Jesus preached to the large crowd, speaking with them, uniting the inflecting power of a parable. Herold et al. (2008) cite followers of transformational leaders who identify with the leader's objectives, and followers are more invested in a long-term relationship with the organization than short-term rewards. Although Jesus began ministering young, his ministry began when he gathered a group of ordinary and sinful followers. In hand-picking His disciples, Jesus illustrated transformational leadership both secularly and scripturally. Therefore, Jesus's followers became disciples of what He taught and believed in His teaching. According to Drury (2003), studies on lower-level leaders rather than chief executive officers are needed.

Transformational leadership in the church also focuses on developing individuals through teaching and education to become better leaders. This may involve mentoring, coaching, and training opportunities to help individuals grow in their spiritual and leadership abilities. Most Christians believe salvation is through faith alone; therefore, rewards for actions do not typically apply to Christianity. Christianity is rooted in selfless service:

> "Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward" (NKJV, Matthew 6:2).

The Bible has many examples of God intervening when covenants are broken. The Bible has numerous instances where God asserts leadership in response to broken covenants. For example, when Adam consumed the forbidden fruit in the book of Genesis. In this example, Adam and Eve's transgression results in their expulsion from the garden. Had they obeyed God's leadership, their fate would have been different.

Another example is Moses's leadership. Moses can be seen as both a transactional and transformational leader. Moses transformed the Hebrew people by creating a judiciary system that provided order and, at times, punishment for the people, illustrating both types of leadership theory. Overall, transformational leadership in the church is about teaching, educating, and empowering, thereby equipping individuals to grow in their faith and become leaders who can positively impact the world. Additionally, Jesus is the central figure of transformational leadership in Christianity. He broke societal norms and ministered to the masses, teaching love, compassion, and forgiveness. Jesus inspired individuals, emphasizing spiritual transformation and the importance of serving others.

Transactional Leadership Theory

Transactional leadership theory is a leadership approach focusing on the exchange or transaction between leaders and followers. In this theory, leaders use rewards and punishments to motivate and control their followers. An example of transactional leadership in a religious setting is when a Catholic Priest gives communion. The Priest determines who can receive the sacramental elements based on liturgical performance (Stewart, 2008). Rainer (2008) says transactional leaders use social exchange to accomplish their goals. Drury (2003) agrees with the common application of transactional leadership; however, the author also suggests that church members are more interested in intrinsic rather than financial rewards. Bruns's transformational theory is divergent from transactional leadership theory, where leaders provide rewards in exchange for desired behavior (Burns, 2003). The transactional leader is interested in something other than organizational or cultural change. (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Drury, 2003).

Christian Leadership in Education

Effective Christian leadership depends on continued personal and professional growth through procuring skills and knowledge relevant to ministry leaders. Leaders who prove adaptability in the face of dynamic challenges often inspire their followers. Wilhoit (1986) found meaningful education catalyzes learning. Therefore, people learn best when the subject matter is individually significant. Christian leadership and education depend upon continuous learning by the teacher, leader, or pastor. Prioritizing constant learning and development allows professionals to make well-informed decisions, encouraging a culture of innovation and ongoing education among workers. Christian education based on a biblical foundation provides a stimulating and creative experience (Pazmino, 2008). Professional and personal leadership development enables

leaders to perceive challenges and setbacks as avenues for growth rather than rigid limitations that hinder organizational goals.

In the Greek language, hegemon (leader) is defined as one who supplies direction, purpose, and order (NKJV, Romans 12:8; 1Timmothy 3:4). Greek, *didaskalos* is translated as "teacher"; the Bible shows that pastors are teachers: "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (NKJV, Ephesians 4:11-12). Most parishioners on Sunday morning likely agree that the person standing behind the pulpit preaching is also a teacher. Therefore, leaders must incorporate Christian and theological leadership into their education model. As cited by Estep, Anthony, and Allison (2008), a Christian education involves more than just the knowledge or shredded facts within the classroom; a Christian perspective requires more than just obtaining a college degree. Becoming a leader, specifically a Christian leader or pastor, requires commitment.

Another example of Christian education is the Reformation. Martin Luther viewed education as a principal instrument for furthering the Christian gospel (Luther & Plass, 1959). Luther recognized the importance of Christian education in everyday life. Cultures during the early biblical times did not segregate their religious beliefs from everyday life, as it often is in modern culture. Many Jewish customs reflect Mosaic law, which is integrated into everyday life. Jesus directed his disciples on the importance of education, specifically in the Great Commission, directing them to go out and teach the gospel to the world (NKJV, Matthew 28:16–20). The Great Commission greatly influenced Christians, and evangelism reflects the directive Jesus gave the disciples.

In conformity with a Christian worldview, the Holy Spirit imparts the responsibility of pastor/teacher, leader, or prophet (NKJV, 1 Corinthians 12). Many pastors do not necessarily need a college degree before beginning a ministry. However, it is often prudent for ministers and pastors to have a certain level of formal virtual training before ministering to and leading others; as Estep et al. (2008) put it, "insufficient theological integration in Christian education has led to a state of crisis in the field." Antonakis, Cianciolo, and Sternberg (2004) suggest that ongoing education and support are necessary when selecting someone for a leadership position.

Theoretical Framework for Study

As with other secular organizations, pastors have a challenging time managing their church and the fluidity of congregational members as new members attend church service. Bredfeldt (2006) says, "Leadership is tricky because of the cultural, philosophical, theological, and moral malaise in which we live" (p.65). Rainer (2008) shows the mistaken leadership practices pastors typically exercise when leading a congregation, Rainer believes that, at times, pastors are autocratic and power-hungry, which ultimately causes harm to the church and hinders the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Therefore, pastors and other church leaders benefit from being aware of their preferred leadership style to aid them more effectively in their leadership and transformational duties. Leadership can be a challenging trait to reach; Kotter (2012) explains that leaders need to promote a sense of urgency for effective change management.

Pastors could learn from the successful Kaizen method that the Toyota car company uses to develop leaders from the bottom up, enabling leadership to create a strong "parental" relationship based on total commitment to the secular organization, thus creating a "transformational" culture. Herold et al. (2008) cite, "given that the relationship with

transformational leaders is also characterized by strong identification with the leader" (p.7), which means that followers are more willing to accept changes when they have a closer connection to the organizational leader. Herold et al. (2008) further state that "… change-specific leader behaviors that violate change-leader prescriptions may present "glitches" in otherwise strong relationships or mere "bumps" on the road to a shared vision" (p.7).

Pastors often find themselves regularly recruiting volunteers to work in the church and introducing new church members who feel the calling to serve the church. (Williams & Gangel, 2004). Literature suggests that Christian education should promote intrinsic motivational behaviors where church members and employees are motivated to thrive with a Christian worldview. Since most leaders have transformational and transactional leadership traits, it is prudent to examine and qualify which leadership theory is prominent among pastors and how it influences employee engagement. Pastors find themselves wearing several hats of leader, motivator, change facilitator, and educator, and per Avolio and Bass (2001), most leaders do have both transformational and transactional leadership traits.

Transformational Leadership

In reference to Avolio and Bass (2001), transformational leaders motivate others to do more than they believe they can do and to reach their full potential. Additionally, "transformational leaders stimulate and inspire their followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 19). Transformational leadership is popularly believed to be the better leadership style for organizational change (Rainer, 2008; Herold, 2008). The popular position is that transformational and transactional leadership theories are at opposite ends of the continuum. On the other hand, Avolio and Bass (2001) assert leaders show both traits of transformational and transactional leadership to a certain extent. Additionally, as previously

shown by Avolio and Bass (2001), most leaders have the traits of more than one leadership theory, and most leaders benefit from knowing which leadership style they exhibit. This leadership theory says that "directive or participative, as well as democratic or authoritarian leaders, are leveling" (Avolio & Bass, 2001, p. 6; Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Bass and Riggio (2006), show a considerable amount of evidence supporting transformational leaders over transactional leadership theory as effective in influencing change. The leadership theory is extraordinarily appealing to church leaders who view themselves as leading a transformational business (Drury, 2003). Drury further states says that many pastors and church leaders do not intellectually stimulate other church members to think outside the box regarding creativity and innovation. Many pastors do all the creative thinking and fail to encourage their church workers to participate in the innovation process.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leaders differ from transformational leaders in that they "emphasize the transactions or exchange among leaders, colleagues, and followers" (Avolio & Bass, 2001, p. 1). Also, transactional leaders provide rewards and promises for people who meet the standard of performance set jointly or by the leader" (Avolio & Bass, 2001, p. vii). Two main concepts of transactional leadership apply to Christianity. First, the contingent reward is deeply rooted in Christianity, and second, most Christians see God as managing by exception (Drury, 2003). Transactional leaders employ contingent rewards, such as time off for a certain number of days of work performed (Bass, 1985). Transactional leaders appear to have more direct control over their subordinates because of their ability to influence their day-to-day behavior (Bass, 1985). Church leaders seldom employ rewards for performance; although Christians reject exchanged for salvation they will often accept a "reward theology for fidelity" (Drury, 2003, p. 17).

Employee Engagement Theory

Engagement is not a singular event addressed casually; it is recognized by the organizational team member's commitment to the job, colleagues, and mission statement. The stronger the culture, the more employees will openly communicate and adopt expectations (Macey et al., 2011). Measuring and defining employee engagement is problematic for most organizational leaders because there are extensive variances in defining what it means to be "engaged" (Dicke, Holwerda, and Kontakos, 2007). As stated by Dicke et al. (2007), the best strategy for leaders interested in evaluating employee engagement is to develop a unique method based on significant research on the strengths and weaknesses of their organizations and research on intricately connected ideas.

Although many pastors and leaders are expected to operate their organizations like corporations (Barr, 2019), pastors are most likened to Chief Executive Officers (CEO), the executive leaders of their respective churches. However, pastors are typically seen as spiritual healers and educators who teach the gospel and are expected to fulfill their evangelical duties reflective of scripture. Most church organizations have volunteers and employees subordinate to church leaders who help meet ministry goals. As with any organization, a certain level of employee satisfaction is associated with performance and organizational satisfaction, i.e., employee engagement needs to be gauged and evaluated (Macey et. al., 2011).

Trends

Saks and Gruman (2014) argue that increasing interest in employee engagement began around 2004, and its growing popularity continues. They found the first major article to profile employee engagement and a theory by Kahn (1990). The authors conducted a search and found that the article was seldom reviewed; in contrast, within the previous five years of their

publication, Kahn's article had over eighteen hundred citations. The pseudo-scientific search implies an increased interest in employee engagement theory and practice. Additionally, Saks and Gruman (2014) define engagement as individuals displaying their whole selves in any role they perform. Employees who are engaged in the workplace express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during their performance at work (Saks & Gruman, 2014, p. 158; Kahn, 1990). Therefore, leaders should have not just high-quality professional skills but also a positive outlook and the ability to manage relationships with employees to increase the overall caliber of their teams.

Engagement Concept

Although the theory of employee engagement is not new, not all notable management authors subscribe to the idea; for example, in his book *The Practice of Management*, Peter F. Drucker does not mention employee engagement as a part of his management analysis. Hersey (2001) does find that organizations are social systems, and professional development is essential for raising the question, "What motivates people?" (p. 15). Therefore, the conclusion is that employee engagement is a concept that has been introduced previously, but it has been redefined as an academic discipline. The simplistic description of employee engagement is that "happy" employees perform better, and leaders themselves perform better if they understand the antecedents of employee engagement, which ultimately impact their employee's performance. However, as later illustrated being happy has little to do with employee engagement.

Dicke, Holwerda, and Kontakos (2007) caution leaders to make a consorted effort to discern benchmark information about their organization cautiously; the information, compared to other organizations, could be disastrous for their own if not relevant to their purpose. In other words, assessments should be personalized for each organization, examining the uniqueness of

the organizational culture, and finding antecedents and drivers that affect the administrative change process and employee engagement (Macey et al., 2011). Positive antecedents to employee engagement keep employees invested in the organization and promote creativity. Engagement drivers, like antecedents, are survey items that address the themes influencing or driving engagement outcomes.

A Christian worldview often includes working for ministry objectives with selfless motivation, yet the illness of low employee engagement does not escape the church environment. Harter (2021) finds that the most significant contributor to low employee engagement is a generally poorly managed organization. As identified by Gallup and Harter (2021) only 36 percent of employees are noted as "engaged." Also, Friesen (2017) cites that low engagement is not inevitable. Some employees, however, are committed and driven on their own. Although there is a plethora of literature reflecting employee engagement, including statistics, surveys, and strategies for managers to improve engagement, little literature shows the engagement levels of church employees.

Employee Engagement Drivers

An essential element in the management of the engagement process is understanding what motivates or drives employees toward a feeling of engagement. Kitto (2020, July 8) lists drivers of engagement as meaningful work, career growth, empowerment, belonging, recognition, leadership, and fulfilling work relationships. Organizational leaders need to recognize that the list of drivers can vary with each corporate culture. Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) cite an absence of universal and unanimous definitions and measurements of employee engagement; this makes it difficult for leaders to comprehend the delicate drivers of engagement fully.

Nelson (2018) found that only 12 percent of employees noted meaningful recognition, and 34 percent said that the recognition that they had received was meaningless. Additionally, Nelson finds that employee recognition a high driver of engagement, noting further that there is a disconnect when human resources members develop recognition programs, which include prizes such as money, gift cards, and plaques, which often fail to stimulate employees (Nelson, 2018). In other words, recognition is more valuable to employees than the system incorporating token rewards. This behavior illustrates the necessity for human resources and other engagement leaders to develop culturally appropriate recognition programs before developing an engagement or driver program.

Drivers of engagement can vary from one profession to another. For example, an employee in a Fortune 500 company may have different drivers than an employee of a religious organization. An employee of corporate America might be driven by career advancement and recognition, while an employee of a religious organization might be motivated by intrinsic faith-based motivations. An auto worker, as another example, may prioritize workplace safety as the most critical driver of engagement (Kitto, 2020, July 8, p. 3). Public servants such as police, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel must feel supported by their organizations. Placing themselves in dangerous situations unnecessarily may change their level of engagement.

In a defund-the-police climate, officers feel their efforts are not making a difference, and the public does not appreciate them. Apathy towards law enforcement personnel contributes to the rise in crime; as per Alfonseca (2022, March 19), "New York City saw a 38.5% increase in overall crime when comparing January 2020 to January 2021, and Philadelphia's homicide rate in 2022 is beginning to outpace the dangerous, record-high numbers in 2021". Officers reacted to the negativity due to a lack of public and legislative support. Officers reacting to negativity is a

prime example of negative drivers diminishing engagement. A sustainable workload, proper recognition and reward, and a supportive work environment, such as fairness and justice, are all related to employee engagement (Saks, 2006). A lack of job satisfaction and recognition leads to lower employee engagement. Engagement is the degree to which a person is focused on and absorbed in their tasks (Saks, 2006).

Safety and trust are significant drivers, which can also be viewed as antecedents. Employees not only have to feel that they can trust their employer, but leaders also need to feel that they can trust their employees (Aexlrod, 2001). As Kanh's theory, for example, mentioned, employees experience psychological safety when working with others who relate to the same performance level and are provided with personal resources to perform their jobs (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014). Furthermore, the authors find that when employees feel psychologically safe, their work becomes meaningful, and employees commit to their whole selves, focusing on enhancing their job performance. Safety in the workplace is not only physical safety but also emotional safety. Employees want to feel safe in open dialogue with their managers and senior leadership members (Gallup, 2021). This dialogue fosters the desire to feel secure about being creative, being themselves, and being safe enough to push back on a decision they might disagree with. Trust is a significant driver of engagement and an antecedent of employee engagement. The employer-employee relationship follows many characteristics as other interpersonal relationships; trust is often at the top of many engagement models. Like other relationships, trust is a two-way street.

Positive Leadership Modeling

Chen and Peng (2021) found that empirical studies showed a transformational leadership style motivates and inspires employees, raising their professional awareness, the importance of

their tasks, and their willingness to put organizational needs before their own. Servant leadership has also been identified as contributing to a positive engagement culture. Research shows that leadership is the fundamental driving force behind employee engagement; servant leadership and transformational leadership have similarities that drive a flourishing workplace environment. Qualified organizational leadership tends to bolster collaboration, endorse communication, and contribute to employee satisfaction. Leaders must be task-focused and people-oriented (Irving & Strauss, 2019). According to Searle and Barbuto (2010), positive psychology theory supports the presupposition that leadership influences and advances constructive employee engagement behavior. Gortner (2014) states that leaders must be tireless and inventive enablers of team leadership management. Most leadership development programs promote but do not always define the developmental pathway; a healthy workplace (engaged employees) promotes training, develops managers, develops managers into leaders, and identifies those who want to lead others. This culture then evolves to develop managers, transforming them into leaders who uphold values and ethics and navigate the intricate landscape of employees' emotions.

Northouse (2021) found that transformational leaders are concerned with the values, ethics, and emotions that satisfy employees' needs, contributing to positive engagement. The similarities between servant and transformational leaders are apparent; both address basic and individual needs, growth, and safety. The Gallup Q-12 engagement questionnaire is divided into four categories: basic needs, personal needs, teamwork, and growth. It should be noted that the Gallup Q-12 is widely accepted as an engagement survey tool. Over 36 ago, Gallup named these four categories of what engaged employees valued (Gallup 2021). For example, question one in the Q-12 (*basic needs*) addresses if the employee knows what is expected of them, and question four (individual needs) asks the employee if they have recently received recognition or a phrase.

Question seven (t*eamwork*) asks if their opinion matters, and question 12 (*growth*) asks about the

employee's opportunity to learn and develop (Gallup, 2021, October 25). As illustrated, the

leadership characteristics associated with these two theories echo many of the traits found in

Maslow's hierarchy of employee engagement. Leadership styles that address an employee's basic

needs are the most successful at fostering an engagement culture. Safety and trust are recurring

themes in the employee engagement paradigm, with basic need satisfaction being a central pillar

of the antecedent structure. Antecedents of engagement are the foundation of employee

engagement, which supports the pillars that drive engagement (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Pillars of employee engagement illustration
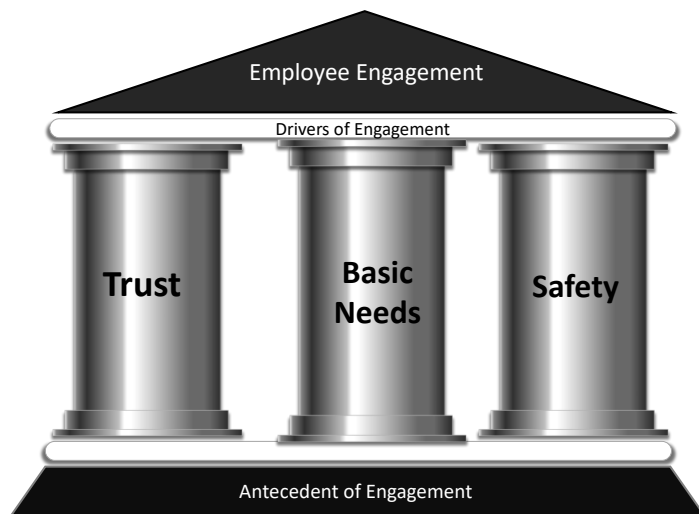
Note: This graphic illustrates the pillars of employee engagement, reflecting trust and safety as the two potent elements that flank basic needs. Researcher's own work

Workplace Programs

Saks (2006) states that role fit, and job enrichment were positive predictors of employee engagement. Additionally, supportive leadership supplies positive support, while "adherence to co-worker norms and self-consciousness were negative predictors" (Saks, 2006, p. 602). Saks (2006) also says that burnout involves the erosion of engagement; this could be detrimental to an organization dependent on a volunteer workforce, such as a church. Maslach et al., (2001), state that employee burnout has several predictors: perceived fairness, values, community and social support, rewards, and recognition; "burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by three dimensions, exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy" (Maslach et al., 2001, p.1). Employee burnout is a symptomatic response to conditions that organizational leadership can mitigate if the symptoms are found early.

There must be intrinsic motivators that stimulate employees to perform at peak ability; employees go to work to do more than just pull a paycheck. Macey et al., (2011) argue that employees need intrinsically exciting jobs that are meaningful and where employees have some autonomy for decision-making. That being said employees often bring with them personal dispositions that affect workplace culture. Baldacci et al. (2011) found that if managers could identify their employees' adverse reactions, it would better foster positive work experiences. Macey et al. (2011) also found that "engagement happens when employees have work that interests them and aligns with their values and are treated in a way that reinforces the natural tendency to reciprocate in kind" (p. 12).

Patrick Lencioni (2016), in his book *The Ideal Team Player*, suggests a strategy for hiring the right person for the right job. His method is to hire someone who is hungry, humble, and smart. He describes "hungry" as someone who not only desires a position but also wants to be

part of the team. He describes "humble" as someone who puts team dynamics first, and Lencioni (2016) defines "smart" as emotional intelligent people. Good employees are often independent thinkers who want the freedom to engage. Employees need to feel that they will not be punished for taking initiative (Macey et al., (2011). Hiring the right person who fits into the organizational culture is a significant antecedent to employee engagement. Human resource managers and other hiring professionals would benefit from considering qualified applicants who hold to the culture and are likely to foster an engagement culture.

Theories That Contribute to Engagement

Social Exchange Theory

In accordance with the social exchange theory (School of Social Work - Tulane University, 2021) a relationship between two people is developed through cost-benefit analysis. Groups, locations, and environments that constitute socially entrenched impacts on meaning are connected through communication and culture in social processes (Johnston, 2018). The social exchange theory (SET) exists within the foundation of employee engagement antecedents. Johnston (2018) describes engagement as a dynamic, multidimensional relationship that encompasses psychological and behavioral attributes designed to achieve or elicit an outcome with individuals (p. 19). SET implies that the agreement between two parties, through reciprocity, is mutually dependent on one another. One of the foundational ideas of SET is that, over time, the relationship develops into commitments based on trust and loyalty; however, one size does not fit all (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Through their level of engagement, employees reciprocate their allegiance back to their organizations; yet, employees will decide to what degree they engage, depending on the exchange they receive.

Saks (2006) proposed when performance is often assessed and used as the foundation for choices on salary and other administrative matters, it is more challenging for individuals to alter their levels of job performance. Therefore, employees' emotional ability to fulfill their responsibilities depends on their social-emotional and financial capital. Nevertheless, as suggested by Cook et al., (2013), the more a person receives rewards, the less valued the reward becomes. This theory is critical to employee engagement because the days of feeling "lucky" to have a job have diminished; employees need more emotional drivers to feel fulfilled. which Baby Boomers are quickly leaving the workforce; what remains is Generation X , Y and the proceeding Generation Z, who typically engage within an organization for a brief time and then move on to other opportunities; reciprocity is, therefore, an individual orientation (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The next generation will have different social-emotional needs that will drive engagement. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) further cite that when an individual is in a close relationship, which Generations Y and Z desire, they may still feel the need to negotiate; this shows a level of comfort that depends on their feelings of safety.

The AON-Hewitt Model

The AON-Hewitt engagement model considers factors needed for best performance and productivity. These include rational thought, emotions, intentions, and behaviors. As per Hewitt (2012), "Conventional wisdom suggests that engagement has a lot to do with one's manager and that pay is a hygiene factor not important to one's engagement" (p. 13). Not many companies can implement salary increases based on positive engagement scores. On the other hand, Hewitt (2012) suggests that employees react favorably to the concept of equity of pay and narrow compensation trends compared to traditional competitors. At the center of Hewitt's engagement wheel is "The Work Experience," surrounded by leadership, performance, the work, the basics,

company practices, and brand. Hewitt (2012) places external political, social, and technological environments as top drivers of engagement, reflecting that "top engagement opportunities appear to directly reflect the criticality of meeting these basic employee needs" (p. 13).

Based on Hewitt (2012), many of the best engagement possibilities might not be affected by or under the immediate manager's control. Managers also do not appear at the top of the global regents, which might show that managers are not as crucial to the engagement equation as they once were. This is an exciting position because traditionally, managers were seen as the "front line" employee engagement specialists are believed to have the most impact on employees' overall job satisfaction. However, weak leadership or, bad managers are a top cause of employee turnover (Gallup, 2021). Employees are looking more toward senior leadership to designate the organization's direction. A second-ranked driver is the employee value proposition, which assesses how well a firm can support trust with employees by keeping promises; the aim is to create a bonded sense of belonging and worthiness within the organization (Hewitt, 2012). Hewitt (2012) found that while corporate social responsibility may be crucial to an organization, it is less critical than the company's capacity to supply a shared motivation for workers.

The Kahn Model

Employee involvement in the workplace is the main emphasis of the Kahn Model, created by psychologist William Kahn. It does not explicitly deal with leadership development or education, but it has implications for how leaders may encourage team involvement, which is essential for good leadership and education. Kahn (1990) suggests that engagement is centered around physical, cognitive, and emotional principles. Kahn further cites three psychological prerequisites that allow engagement. First, employees need to feel that their efforts are meaningful and purposeful and that what they contribute is heard and valued. Setting clear

expectations is essential to an open communication culture; in this way, employees know what is expected of them and are more likely to meet organizational expectations. Also, a top-down communication approach is necessary because it sets organizational goals and reduces lost time in analyzing and interpreting new curricula. Next, employees must believe they are intellectually a part of their business. Also, employees are more emotionally dedicated when they are trusted and feel they can trust the organization's leaders. Lastly, if workers feel their efforts are significant, they are more likely to contribute to the organization by going above and beyond what is required of them (Kahn, 1990).

Kumar and Sia (2012) state that employees who are deeply engaged work hard, have solid loyalty to their employers, and encourage innovation, which helps the organization thrive, while non-engaged employees are typically unhappy at work and remain indifferent regarding the work context. Khan (1990) cites that physical engagement is when employees exhibit physical and mental engagement as they contribute to the organization, have increased confidence in their positions, and look forward to challenges. Cognitive engagement is where employees know the organization's vision. Kahn's (1990) position is that the more knowledgeable an employee is about the organization's vision, ethics, and beliefs, the more likely the employee will become confident in making decisions and, therefore, feel like an essential element of the process.

Kahn (1990) cited that everyone has a basic need for social interaction and emotional engagement. The author further argues that employees remain with an organization if there are opportunities for growth and advancement; employees will work hard when there is a possibility to create a better life for themselves and their families. Alternatively, a mediocre or routine reward system may be counterintuitive as employees become indifferent towards periodic

rewards (Kahn, 1990). Therefore, human resource partners and organizational leaders should reward performance based on notable accomplishments rather than achieving everyday employment standards. A positive relationship depends on the employer's ability to connect with the corporate culture. Emotional engagement encourages employees to trust the organization and buy into the values that the organization holds in high regard (Nelson, 2018).

Maslow's Model

An employee's need to feel safe in the workplace is at the root of Maslow's model of the employee hierarchy of needs; an employee will only flourish in the workplace if they feel physically and psychologically safe. Abraham Maslow is best known for creating the hierarchy of needs theory and a five-step needs model. His theory illustrates that those basic needs, such as food and shelter, must first be met before a person can attain self-actualization. Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001) found that "The physiological needs are shown at the top of the hierarchy because they tend to have the highest strengths until they are somewhat satisfied" (p. 36). As these needs are satisfied, other needs become significant; when these needs are met, diverse needs appear, and so on. Cadiat and Probert (2015) state that the lower needs should be satisfied in Maslow's model before moving to the next level. The more an employee fulfills their needs, the more likely they will become engaged; conversely, when these needs are not met, they will be less likely to be fully involved.

At the bottom of the employee engagement hierarchy pyramid is survival, likened to the basic-need foundation in the Maslow self-actualization model. At the foundational level, employees are disengaged, typically having a job with the singular object of earning a paycheck. The next step upward is the security level; here, employees still need to be more engaged. At the security level, employees only contribute partially to the organization. Ascending to the next

level of belonging, the employee is almost engaged and begins to feel like the position is

somewhat worthy but needs to be transitioned to the engagement phase. The next level, one

below the top, is essential, where the employee feels like a vital team member. Lastly, self-

actualization is at the top; employees feel inspired by their work and look forward to contributing

to the organization (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Applied to Employee Engagement
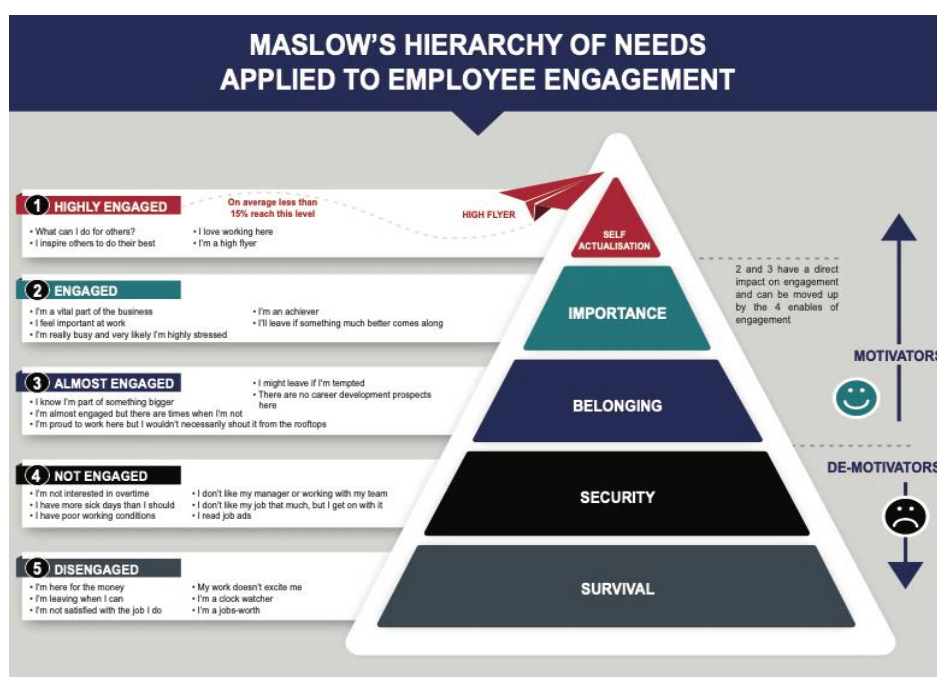
Note: Maslow's Hierarchy of Self-Actualization and employment hierarchy comparison By Gunn, N. (2022, June 8). *Employee Engagement and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*. Incentive Solutions. Reprinted with permission: https://www.incentivesolutions.*com*/blog/employee-engagement-hierarchy-needs

Organizational Change Management Theory

Organizational change management (OCM) theory speaks to immense structural changes,

including culture and dealing with an external environment (Drury, 2003). According to Kotter

(2012), "When the goal is behavior change, unless the boss is extremely powerful, authoritarian

decree often works poorly even in simple situations" (p. 70). Literature suggest that leaders benefit from being well-versed in these competencies which lead to successful organizational reforms. Kotter (2012) further suggests that people refrain from frequently building the coalition required to lead change because they secretly believe a transformation is optional.

The principles of OCM theory can be incorporated into leadership education in several ways. First, OCM theory helps leaders-in-training understand the nature of change and its impact on individuals and organizations. Future leaders can develop empathy and awareness of the challenges associated with leading change by learning about the various types of change, resistance to change, and the emotional responses that often accompany it. Next, leadership education can incorporate OCM theory by teaching leaders the ability to change. This encompasses effective communication, stakeholder involvement, handling resistance, forming coalitions, and developing a change-friendly culture (Hersey et al., 2001; Drury, 2003). When leaders do not manage the emotional side of change, people will resist the change, revert to the old ways of doing things, and unfavorably impact organizational goals and aims (Kotter, 2012). Effective OCM builds trust that supports teams during times of change.

From a Christian perspective, Jesus is the ultimate director of change management. Scripture states, "And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." They at once left their nets and followed Him" (NKJV, Matthew 4:18-20). Here, Jesus directs the disciples to follow him, issuing a new era of change in the church. Jesus shows confidence and authority by leading the disciples to follow him. Managers can no longer be satisfied to allow change to happen spontaneously; if they want efficiency, they must be capable of creating plans that will guide and

manage change (Hersey et al., 2001, p. 367). Anderson and Cabellon (2010) found that pastors

firmly believe in culture, upbringing, understanding of Scripture, and educating political views.

Therefore, pastors and other church leaders who want to stand firm on organizational changes

within their ministry need to stand strong on their beliefs while at the same time being open to

organizational changes as they are directed within the confines of Scripture. An essential element

within the change leadership theory is to set an example and live by shared values (Kouzes &

Posner, 2017). Kouzes and Posner (2017) cite that leaders are their organization's ambassadors of

shared value. There would be little argument against pastors and church leaders being identified

as ambassadors of shared values.

Related Literature

This section offers an analytical evaluation of the varying subtopics relevant to the

research study. It explores other leadership trends that affect employee engagement and the

preceding antecedents of engagement. Additionally, this section surveys the pathway to effective

organizational change, including educational theory, learning theory, and prominent church

leadership models. While this section does not supply an exhaustive compilation of theory, it

does provide foundational information on the complexities of leadership and employee

engagement in a religious setting. The premise is to have progressive leadership that promotes

ministry growth. Church employees will develop into ministry leaders, ideally being promoted

by senior church leadership.

Depth-of-Knowledge / Blooms Taxonomy

Two major educational frameworks for categorizing and evaluating the degree of

cognitive complexity in learning objectives and assessment activities are Bloom's Taxonomy and

Depth of Knowledge (DOK). Bloom's Taxonomy was developed by educational psychologist

Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues in the 1950s (Bloom, 1956; Forehand 2011). It classifies

learning goals into a model with six levels, organized from lower-order to higher-order thinking

skills. Both frameworks strive to encourage learners to use their higher-order thinking skills

while having different historical roots and organizational systems. Norman Webb (2002)

developed a process that standards for methodically examining how well criteria and

standardized tests correspond. The model assumes that curricular elements may all be

categorized based upon the cognitive demands needed to produce an acceptable response" (Hess,

2013). Essentially, Norman Webb has broken down and ordered the problem-solving thought

process into four depth of knowledge (DOK) levels:

1. Recall and reproduction.

2. Skills and Concepts

3. Short-term strategic thinking

4. Extended thinking

 Webb's model for level 1 involves requiring the student to recall facts, terms, concepts,

and generalizations. At level 2, the student must have basic reasoning skills, such as comparing

and converting information from one form to another. Level 3 encompasses complex reasoning;

students explain "how and why" to justify and problem-solve. Moreover, level 4 is defined as

extended reasoning; the students' performance will require them to analyze information from

multiple sources and explain alternative perspectives (Hess, 2013). Incorporating Bloom's

Taxonomy into training and development initiatives allows organizations to create a structured

learning environment (Bloom, 1956; Forehand 2011). Employees can develop essential skills

and competencies relevant to their roles by advancing through the various levels of the taxonomy

while striving to achieve their goals. In keeping with Webb's breakdown, there appears to be a

correlation between the development of pastors, starting with inexperienced ministry figures, and the growth of congregants in their ministry. This correlation shows that as pastors become more seasoned in the ministry role, they become more receptive to organizational change, which contributes to the development of the church staff. The question that needs further exploration is how church leaders can transition from solely focusing on preaching to becoming ministry leaders knowledgeable about leadership theory and organizational change issues.

Also noteworthy in education is Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy of Higher Learning. Concerning the study of leadership preference and employee engagement, Bloom's taxonomy paves a path toward helping ministry education, and practically all situations within the structure aim to guide a group of students through learning by using a structured framework (Forehand, 2011). The taxonomy was created as a component of a research study on education called "Taxonomy of Educational Objectives," which looked to categorize and arrange the aims of educational teaching. Although Bloom's Taxonomy proceeds Webb's depths of knowledge, it presents a foundational understanding of the learning process. In reference to Forehand (2011), the taxonomy is hierarchical in classifying levels of learning. For example, Bloom's Taxonomy model has three lower levels of learning: knowledge, comprehension, and application, while the highest level of education has analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom, 1956; Forehand 2011). The various levels of Bloom's Taxonomy are defined as follows:

1. **Remembering**: retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from long term memory.

2. **Understanding:** constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, referring, comparing, and explaining.

3. **Applying**: Breaking material into constituent parts, determine how the aspects relate to one another in an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organizing, and attributing.

4. **Evaluating:** making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing.

5. **Creating:** putting elements together to form a cohort or functional hall; re-organizing aspects into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning, or producing.

When it comes to learning something new, either pedagogical or andragogical in origin, based on Bloom's and Webb's hierarchy, there is a significant educational benefit to having prior life experience with the subject matter at hand. Houde (2006) showed adult learners (andragogy) differently from children. Furthermore, understanding that andragogy is recognized as a relationship between a learner and an educator, therefore, underscores the relevance of social psychological theories (Houde, 2006). This awareness sheds light on the challenges Church members face, who recognize a disconnect between Sunday morning sermons and what they hear and experience daily (Grayston, 2008).

According to Bruhler (2018), even Christian students studying the Bible achieve greater biblical literacy when connecting course material with earlier experiences. Grayston (2008) further cited that preaching in the past has often been academically dry, devoid of any real-world application or human appeal, or it has devolved into a collection of antidotes that do not interact with the biblical text; the reader's world and the word of the Bible are not connected in any way. A healthy work environment that supports good leaders who are teachers fosters a culture of continual learning and progress inside the organization.

The determinants of employee engagement and the depth of knowledge (DOK) of employees are significantly influenced by leadership. While inadequate leadership may impede growth and engagement, successful leadership can have a beneficial impact in these areas. By

granting access to training, development programs, and resources that stretch and advance their knowledge and abilities, they inspire employees to pursue higher levels of DOK. Employee engagement is increased by a learning-focused atmosphere because staff members feel encouraged to advance personally and professionally. This concept has actual world applications when trying to inform pastors and other ministry leaders about new leadership theories and ideas that might be unfamiliar; Pazmino (2008) argue that people often use established traditions (heteronomy) to know and understand. In other words, pastors and ministers would benefit from first setting up a real-life commonality between theory and application, which the spiritual leader can appreciate. By granting access to training, development programs, and resources that stretch and advance their knowledge and abilities, they inspire employees to pursue higher levels of DOK. Employee engagement is increased by a learning-focused atmosphere because staff members feel encouraged to advance personally and professionally.

Church Leadership Traditional Methodologies

Years ago, the premise was that a person went to work, did their best job, went home, and ultimately received compensation for their efforts. This past generation coached Little League, went home, tended to their domestic duties, cooked dinner, and then started the cycle again the next day. That generation displayed their work ethic as a badge of honor; yet the modern employee's identity has changed. Although employees typically work as hard as they ever have, employers have recognized that since employees spend nearly one-third of their lives at work, dedicated employees are managed differently, and leadership should be examined and addressed from an altered perspective; from the Christian worldview where management is influenced by theology.

Many ancient philosophers, such as Aristotle, have studied leadership, and the concepts and theories of organizational leadership and employee engagement can be found deep in the Bible. Based on Lopus et al., (2022), many Christian leaders manage their churches but fail to be Christian leaders who reflect biblical teaching. Leadership curriculum and development practitioners commonly identify personality traits such as behavior, ethics, and group dynamics as influencers of employee engagement. Many leaders subscribe to anecdotal achievements as a benchmark of success and try to emulate this process. Pastors and other Christian leaders need to not only understand leadership theory and practice from a secular point of view but also need to understand the far-reaching truth reflective of Scripture: "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant" (NKJV, Matthew 20:26).

Smith (2009), in his book *Desiring the Kingdom*, describes how people revisit behaviors to satisfy their needs. Smith further coined the term "worship what you love" to express revisiting desires; in this context, religious identification needs to be removed from the word "worship." Smith (2009) says that "Worship is the ordering and recording of our mental being to the end for which it was meant" (p. 143). He illustrates his position by describing a person wandering about the shopping center and looking at the merchandise for sale. Although an individual may not be able to afford items, they still visit those merchants to admire and dream about possessing the image associated with that merchandise, i.e., trending clothing or fitness. In this illustration, the shopper" loves" the image of being beautiful and therefore "worships" at the shopping center, creating a liturgical practice by returning to the shopping center. Smith (2009) claims that people are liturgical animals with love and desires shaped and directed by rituals. Employees will often respond to these actions, which reflect their professional desires. Leaders could benefit from employee engagement programs when they identify the "liturgical"

motivators employees will revisit. The theory of engagement introduces a crucial ingredient to the practice: employees will respond to what they care about most. Yet, even advancing Christian organizations can fail to flourish; many churches and Christian businesses are squandering opportunities for development and personal spiritual growth, thereby giving Christianity a bad name through their toxicity (Lopus et al., 2022). Loups et al., (2022) also found that some Christian organizations are simply not living up to the Imago Dei, i.e., reflection of God. Building Christian teams is somewhat different for secular organizations: "Spiritual leadership is the development of a relationship with the people of a Christian institution or body in such a way that individuals and the group are enabled to formulate and achieve biblically compatible goals that meet real needs" (Gangel, 1997, p. 44).

The model for employee engagement emphasizes the importance of recognizing and rewarding individuals for their unique talents and fostering solid interpersonal relationships through effective communication. As stated in 1 Corinthians 15:58 (NKJV,1979/2015), "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." The Apostle Paul encouraged the people of Corinth to remain faithful to Jesus's teachings and avoid false doctrines. The Apostle Paul told the people at Corinth to hold fast to what they had learned from Jesus's teaching and not fall victim to false teaching. Hanna (2006) proposes that the Holy Spirit promotes leadership principles such as synergy, conviction-confession, conversion-repentance, consecration-obedience, and confirmation-perseverance. These principles can be applied to leadership and employee engagement theories. For example, conversion-repentance aligns with Khan's physical involvement theory and Maslow's belonging level of engagement. Conviction-confession relates to the importance of open communication, which fosters trust and productive engagement

between leaders and employees or church members. As demonstrated, many secular engagement theories share similarities with biblical and theological approaches.

Gangel (2007) expressed "In reality, Christian leadership ought to be characterized by all the legitimate earmarks of effective secular leadership, plus factors that make it distinctly Christian" (p. 84). The organism that makes up the Christian team ministry, Gangel (2007) further states that comprises several elements, which incorporate trust, psychology of engagement, care for followers, and teaching (p. 84-86). Gangel (2007) states that the leader must accept responsibility and be responsible: "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy (NKJV, Proverbs 38:13). Additionally, Gangel (2007) finds humility to be another trail of team leadership. When leaders are humble, they are open to constructive criticism and, therefore, more approachable to employees and subordinates.

The servant leadership model codified by Greenleaf speaks of many principles of servant leadership. However, the theory did not originate from Greenleaf. Jesus's ministry speaks on the principles of servant leadership: "And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (NKJV, Mark 10:44). Jesus's ministry is a personification of confident leadership; he came to serve others selflessly and lovingly. His ministry is a model of the ideal team leader; he came with authority, acted purposefully, and led by example. Christian leaders are called into position to serve God in the fulfillment of The Great Commission, and anything less would be a misuse of gifts, but he who did not know yet committed things deserving of stripes shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him will be required; and to whom much has been committed, they will ask the more" (NKJV, Luke 12:48).

Servant Leadership

Greenleaf (1998) is credited with qualifying the term servant leadership; additionally, Greenleaf states that servant leadership is deeply rooted in the Judeo-Christian heritage. In the servant leadership model, leaders typically set aside their self-interest and subscribe to a philosophy of leading by serving others. Winston & Fields (2015) found that easing a follower's development may take place directly through instruction or mentoring, or it may take place inadvertently through repeated actions that motivate followers to engage in self-improvement activities. Essentially, this means that congregational control is not fully surrendered to pastors. Still, employees and volunteers are encouraged to develop through the "modeling" of servant leadership behavior. That being said, Shirin (2014) suggests that although an Augustine theology of leadership would undoubtedly have a vital service component, its underlying assumptions differ substantially from those supporting contemporary therapeutic models, customer service models, or even the unconditional care for coworkers' models. Shirin (2014) also said about servant leadership, "Whereas a religious person is born to be saved, a psychological person is born to be pleased" and "A few Bible verses thrown into this process of self-discovery would not make the process more Christian" (p. 5-7). While the concept of servant leadership is not solely "Christian" in its application, the illustration of servant leadership is exceptionally prevalent in the Scriptures of the Bible. Shirin might have been more exact in saying that servant leadership is not "limited" to Christianity.

Greenleaf (1998) wrote, "Servant leadership begins with a natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first" (p. 6). Greenleaf (1998) finds leaders' attributes conducive to servant leadership. An organizational leader must have an inherent desire and empathy to lead others. Greenleaf (1998) names ten characteristics of servant leadership, which can be broken down into

three categories: communication, a safe environment, and planning communication. Employees

need to feel secure that they can speak their minds, and they need to think that their leaders are

trying to understand and empathize with their needs. The next category is a safe environment,

which includes awareness, persuasion, and conceptualization. Employees feel secure knowing

their managers are aware of their strengths and committed to addressing conflict. Another

characteristic in the safe environment category is persuasion; "the servant leader seeks to

convince others, rather than coerce compliance" (Greenleaf, 1998, p. 6). Lastly, the planning

category includes foresight, stewardship, and commitment to people's growth. Employees and

other organizational members must feel that their future employment is purposeful and secure.

Transformational leadership holds many of the characteristics of servant leadership. Northouse

(2021) further states that leadership qualities and dispositions influence servant leadership.

Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire leadership is the avoidance or absence of leadership, and the model could be

more effective (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This leadership style is sometimes practiced in huge

"mega-churches" where pastors are too busy managing and administering "executive" duties.

Lutz Allen et al., (2013) cite that organizations view laissez-faire leaders as untrustworthy and

lacking credibility. Therefore, these followers are less likely to accept or participate in

organizational changes. Pastors considered deceptive are potentially ineffective at fulfilling their

biblical and scriptural responsibilities; pastors who are not trusted cannot continue in ministry

(NKJV, 2 Peter 2:1).

Organizational Culture and Leadership

According to Schein (2010), although culture is a concept, the forces it generates in social

and organizational circumstances are powerful. From a theological perspective, Geiger and Peck

(2016) argue that the church requires leaders who foster a culture of leadership rooted in theological convictions and who can recognize that an unhealthy church culture fundamentally stems from theological issues. Schein (2010) further states that people in authority, such as managers, frustrate their followers sometimes incomprehensively, saying, "We recognize cultural differences at the ethnic or national level, find them puzzling at the group, organizational, or occupational level" (p.10).

Artifacts

When encountering an unfamiliar culture, a person experiences a new group with a foreign culture, artifacts are all that they see, hear, and feel at the surface level (Schein, 2010, p. 25). Schein (2010) further states, "Artifacts also include, for cultural analysis, the organizational process such as formal descriptions of how the organization works, and organizational culture" (p. 26). In other words, Schein is describing "culture shock". When a person enters a new cultural environment, there are cultural peculiarities, customs, traditions, and other methods of operation that are unique to that culture. In his work, Schein (2010) defined the notion of artifacts in the context of a cultural analysis. Schein (2010) elaborates that artifacts include tangible objects, and the deification also extends to organizational processes that govern the organization. In the parameters of his dissertation, artifacts include surveys, interviews, and other evidence open to analysis by a researcher. The quantitative data is presented within the tables and charts; the qualitative research is used to analyze volunteer and employee insights and the themes and patterns that identify the antecedents of engagement.

Expound Beliefs

Schein defines expound beliefs as "all group learning ultimately reflects someone's original beliefs and values, their sense of what art to be, distinct from what is" (Schein, 2010, p.

26). Another example of this organizational culture at the leadership level is when the organization rolls out a new program that creates a new policy. The corporate members, having not previously been exposed to this new regulation, find it hard to deviate from their former practice based on their own expounded beliefs and values.

Basic Underlying Assumptions

As per Schein (2010), when a solution to a problem succeeds repeatedly, it becomes routine; a theory supported initially by a hunch or value is eventually accepted as fact (p. 30). Another American corporate term for the same level the author points out is "desensitization." Schein (2010) supplies the following illustration: In a capitalist country, it is unthinkable that a person might design a company which operates consistently at an economic loss or that it does not matter if a product works (p.31). The assumption is that businesses will thrive financially because it is inconceivable to consider that organizations would put forth an effort to create a business without prior foresight into its success; therefore, most people need to consider the inherent risks of starting a new business. Drury (2003) cites that pastors often try to influence artifacts without addressing the expounding values and underlining assumptions. Also, Drury (2003) argued, despite denominational and theological differences, Christians share many fundamental beliefs and ideas, but the details may vary significantly.

Change Management and Employee Commitment

Schein (2010) defines expound beliefs as "all group learning ultimately reflects Change management is the process of preparing and supporting individuals, teams, and organizations to navigate and adapt to significant changes successfully. These changes could be related to processes, technologies, organizational structure, culture, or any other aspect affecting how people work and interact within the organization. On the other hand, employee commitment

refers to employees' dedication and loyalty towards their organization and its goals. Weiner (2020) argued that organizational readiness is a shared mental state in which members are committed to executing organizational change and have faith in their group's ability to carry out change. Furthermore, Weiner (2020) believes that when "organizational readiness is high, the collective is more willing to exert greater effort, exhibit greater persistence, and display more cooperative behavior, resulting in more effective implementation" of the organizational change process.

Sarayreh, et al., (2013) suggest that "The main objective of the change management process is to ensure changes record, evaluation, authorization, privatization, planning, testing, implementation, and reviewing in a controlled manner" (p. 626). In line with Drummond (2020), "New behaviors cannot take shape until all behaviors are unlearned. Innovation in new ideas is possible when one practices new behaviors" (p. 56). Drummond (2020) also says organizational change leaders follow Lewin's organizational development stages (p.56). Lewin's organization development has three stages: unfreezing, moving, and refreezing. Unfreezing involves stabilizing all behavior before a new behavior can be successfully adopted; moving is, as it suggests, moving in the desired direction; and refreezing involves stabilizing the group in a quasi-stationary equilibrium (Sarayreh et al., 2013, p. 627). In contrast to Lewin's organization development stages, Kotter (2012) identifies them as an eight-stage process of creating change:

1. Establish a sense of urgency

2. Creating a guiding coalition

3. Developing a vision and strategy

4. Communicating the change vision

5. Empowering broad base action

6. Generating short term wins

7. Consolidating gains and producing more change

8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture

Engaged Leadership Improves Employee Performance

Aristotle is credited with saying, "We are what we repeatedly do. Therefore, excellence is not an act but a habit" (Aristotle, ca. 335 B.C.E./2006). Consequently, effective leadership should be a lifelong endeavor towards excellence. Additionally, honest, competent, and forward-looking leaders are much more respected within organizations (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). In the early 1900s, Frederick Taylor orchestrated a scientific management experiment on employee productivity. Taylor theorized that Western Electric employees would be more productive if the internal lighting were enhanced. However, workers' production stayed the same after the lighting was increased. Therefore, the experiment was reversed, and the lighting was reduced yet Taylor found that employee production remained the same. Taylor later concluded that the enhanced illumination was inconsequential to employee production, instead he found that because the researcher was watching that the employee's performance improved (Burke, 2017). Aristotle's saying, tied together with Taylor's experiment, underscores the idea that an organization's habits shape the culture. Similarly, a leader's behaviors and cultural norms can influence the overall success and performance within organizations. Leaders can cultivate a culture where excellence is not just an aspiration but is deeply rooted in habits that are shared by the collective.

Taylor's experiment suggests that employees are capable of high-level production, first and foremost; yet the study also suggests that employees keep corporate standards when there is an impression of supervision, whether from a distance or direct observation. Aristotle, linked with the Taylor experiment, highlights how organizational habits, in conjunction with a leader's

oversight, shape culture. The Hawthorne Effect, a phenomenon where individuals modify their behavior because they are being observed or studied, emphasizes how observations influence behavior, stressing the importance of cultivating organizational habits and leadership practices Kompier (2006). Additionally, Kompier (2006) cited many reasons that the Hawthorne effect study was not systematic; one reason cited was that employees were not influenced by direct supervision but rather because their compensation system remained unchanged (p. 407). Kompier(2006) cited that there was no necessity to redesign the work conditions; instead, the social conditions were the prevalent communicators affecting employee performance (p.410). Burke and Kompier show that social status and sensitivity in an organization are essential motivational instruments to affect change. Their research and studies show that organizational leaders are more effective when engaging in organizational social patterns.

Employee Engagement

Gallup's employee engagement survey defines employee engagement as "the involvement and enthusiasm of employees in their work and workplace" (Gallup Inc., 2021). Additionally, Gallup Inc. (2021) cites that engaged employees make better everyday decisions that affect the worst place in the organization: "But only fifteen percent of employees worldwide and thirty-five percent in the U.S. fall in the "engaged" category" (Gallup Inc., 2021). Macey & Schneider (2008) say that "employee engagement is the opposite of disengagement, and the common definition is that if employee engagement has a desirable organizational purpose, then it is commonly attached to terms such as commitment, passion, and enthusiasm. Additionally, the term engagement is seen as a psychological state or mood" (Macey & Schneider, 2008, p.5). Macy and Schneider (2008) also say that employee engagement has been used to refer to a "psychological state involving commitment and attachment" (p. 5).

Park (2019) found that in organizational psychology, engagement is distinct from other concepts like organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job involvement. Park (2019) also says that employee engagement differs from job commitment because being committed to a task is associated with performance, while engagement is associated with a psychological state. Macy and Schneider (2008) find that engagement is about passion and commitment, arguing that employee engagement is about fundamental loyalty to the employer, characteristics companies have measured for years. Park used Kahn's (1990) research and cited that "whether employees are engaged or not depends on the degree to which three psychological conditions are perceived," which are "meaningfulness, safety, and availability" (p. 25).

In organizational management, the theory is widely held that happy employees are more productive than unhappy employees. Additionally, there has been a great deal of focus on developing leaders who are compassionate, fair-minded, equitable, and motivators; "The way your company treats employees and how employees treat one another can positively affect their actions can place your organization at risk" (Gallup Inc., 2021). Markos and Sridevi (2010) affirm, "Employers now realize that by focusing on employee engagement, they can create a more efficient and productive workforce" (p.89). Employee engagement is an interwoven part of a successful organization (Markos & Sridevi, 2010).

Markos and Sridevi (2010) cited that an "engaged" employee promotes positive behaviors that help organizations strive. First, engaged employees are more likely to advocate for the organization by referring other employees for employment. Second, engaged employees typically have a concentrated desire for organizational success. Baumruk (2006) found that employees who feel "out of the loop" are often less involved, which implies an opportunity for more excellent communication and leadership involvement in the organizational culture. Also, a

more engaged employee is more likely to hold their managers and team accountable for their success (Baumruk, 2006). Connors and Smith (2011), suggest that effective cultures have a high level of personal and professional accountability.

A study by Ongel (2014) not only supports the premise that happy employees are productive employees, but the study also states that if disengaged employee behavior is not corrected, employees "withdraw themselves psychologically and emotionally" from the organization (Ongel, 2014, p. 4). Also, Ongel (2014) provides added insight into employee engagement, saying that gaining employees' loyalty and commitment will boost performance and job happiness. Baumruk (2006) found that offering praise and recognition to employees positively impacts employee engagement. In contrast, when employees are not provided a sense of commitment, it is not uncommon for employees to suddenly resign from employment (Ongel, 2014). Therefore, as illustrated in the preceding literature, employee engagement is a vital part of maintaining a healthy work environment not only for the employees but for the longevity and sustainability of the organization.

<div align="center">**Rationale for Study and Gap in Literature**</div>

No empirical literature was found related to the study of the correlation between leadership style, a positive employee engagement culture, and the antecedents of engagement for both paid and volunteer workers within an evangelical church network. Park's (2019) article examined the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement solely from the human resources department perspective rather than from a Christian perspective. Reviewed literature found a correlation between being an effective leader and affecting change within an organization (Hersey et al., 2001; Drury, 2003). There is a gap in the literature that shows a connection between church leaders being effective leaders and practicing a particular

leadership theory, which in turn affects the antecedents of engagement for church volunteers and employee (Lopus et al., 2022). Researchers have not examined the role antecedents of engagement have on the employees and volunteer workers in an evangelical church and the leadership mechanism that links employee engagement to church service.

Gortner (2014) found that many denominations have pastors identified as "placeholder" clergy with foundational pastoral skills such as preaching, pastoral care, and sacramental ministry. Gotner (2014) states that any pastor's skill sets lack momentum and do not bring forth organizational change because they do not empower lay leaders for educational ministry. Additionally, Gortner (2014) finds that ministry development is the most neglected by ministers because pastors and priests do not typically have transformational change qualities. Webb's DOK suggests that at level four, some cultural bias might be the center for a source of challenge (Hess, 2013). Hess (2013) maintained, "such items characteristics may cause some students not to answer an assessment item or answer in assessment item correctly or at a lower level even though they have an understanding and skills being assessed" (p.3). Gortner's (2014) study implies that pastors, not unlike other students, go through phases of learning.

Gortner (2014) found that surveyed pastors said that as much as 80 percent of their education was focused on preaching and proclamation. In contrast, only 30 to 35 percent of their education was dedicated to organizational leadership and group development (Gortner, 2014). Early or newer pastors are likelier to commit more of their efforts to sermons. More seasoned pastors are more likely to address the issues of organizational change and developing laypeople in the evangelism arena. Therefore, this concept and related literature suggest additional research into developing pastors, ministers, and other religious leaders into organizational change leaders while in the fledgling stage of their ministry development.

An examination of the literature that addresses ministry leadership preferences for transformational and transactional leadership and its impact on employee engagement is limited or non-existent as associated with the churches selected for the study. Literature also shows that there is an effective means to educate and train pastors and church employees (Wilhoit, 1986; Pazmino, 2008; Webb, 2002; Hewitt, 2012). A missing piece of the puzzle is when and how a new pastor who is preaching from the pulpit, becomes a leader involved with leadership, organizational change, and growing other church members, including employees, into leadership positions. There are literary works that address and define transformational and transactional leadership theories, as well as extensive studies on employee engagement. Literature material that directly explores the research topic has yet to be discovered in this study.

Profile of the Current Study

A comprehensive literature review was carried out to establish a solid foundation of evidence that highlights the connections between leadership approaches, organizational culture, and the antecedents that lead to employee engagement from the perspective of church volunteers and employees. One of the most difficult challenges for Christian ministry leaders is to recruit and maintain a group of volunteer workers who serve the church (Williams & Gangel, 2004). As such, many church leaders face challenges like their secular counterparts (Barr, 2019). Measuring and defining employee engagement can be challenging for many organizational leaders due to the wide range of interpretations of engagement (Dicke et al., 2007). As a result, there is a need to explore the relationship between workplace culture and effective leadership in a Christian church. The presupposition that there was an existing relationship, if any, between church leadership philosophies and the antecedent of engagement are critical to the research study.

Chen and Peng (2021) found empirical studies indicated that a transformational leadership style progresses engagement by motivating and inspiring employees, raising their professional awareness, and encouraging their willingness to put the organizational needs before their own (p. 1036). Research shows that intrinsic motivators stimulate employees to perform at peak capacity, indicating that employees desire to do more than just pull a paycheck. A healthy workplace culture with engaged employees typically comprises loyal, productive, and satisfied employees (Lockwood, 2007). Employee engagement measures how invested and committed employees are to their work and organization. Engagement also refers to employee enthusiasm and involvement with their job, colleagues, and the company. When employees are engaged, they are motivated, productive, and less likely to leave the organization (Gallup, 2021).

In response to the need to understand the perceived relationship between church leadership methodology and the antecedents of engagement in a Christian church, this study is necessary to offer a more comprehensive understanding of Christian leadership training and the cultural factors that affect volunteerism. Bredfelt (2006) suggests that the intricacies of leadership extend beyond the realms of philosophy, theology, and even morality within society. The preliminary literature review suggests that there is a need for more pastoral leaders who focuses on workplace culture. This study explored the feelings of a sample group of volunteers and employees of a non-denominational "mega-church." The objective was to investigate which antecedents of engagement exist for church workers and volunteers. The researcher used a phenomenological data analyst to answer the qualitative research question(s) by gathering insights and experiences directly from the research subjects using in-person interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The methodology most appropriate for this study is described in greater detail in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This mixed-methods research case study sought to understand the antecedents of employee engagement for volunteer workers and employees in a non-denominational Christian church. By taking advantage of both quantitative and qualitative data, the research method is better suited to capture the distinct dimensions of the research questions. The quantitative descriptive research and qualitative phenomenological design best complement this study. The study began with a quantitative survey that measured employee engagement within the Christian church and a second survey that defined the pastor's preferred leadership style. Next, the research study incorporated an in-person, open-ended interview that examined the antecedents of employee engagement.

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

Lopus et al., (2022) argue that many Christian leaders manage their churches but fail to be Christian leaders who reflect biblical teaching; this can be problematic for the success of any Christian ministry. It is vital for organizational leadership, especially those in ministry programs, to understand what motivates their employees (Hartwig & Bird, 2015). Integrating employee engagement antecedents, leadership, and a flourishing workplace should be seamless; however, many organizations need to help attain seamless integration. Church objectives can only be accomplished with an army of volunteers who serve relentlessly under the direction of a few leaders (Gangel, 1997). To date, no research addresses the antecedents of employee engagement for church workers and volunteers. Consequently, this study explored the foundation of pastoral leadership that significantly influence the antecedents that impact the church's volunteers and employees.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-method study is to investigate the antecedents of employee engagement among church volunteers and employees of a non-denominational church and the influence church leaders have on workplace culture by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The first phase of the study collected data from two surveys. The second phase of the study collected qualitative data from in-person interviews. The data was then analyzed to understand the antecedents of engagement with the ultimate objective of equipping pastors and other church leaders with insight that builds a flourishing workplace culture, thereby inspiring employees, and volunteers to continue serving the church. The theory guiding the quantitative phase of the study is descriptive, while the theory guiding the qualitative phase is phenomenology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

<div align="center">

Research Questions

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The four research questions address the research premise and support the purpose statement. Elements of the questions are derived from reviewed literature and other research on the antecedents of employee engagement. The research questions address leadership preferences, employee antecedents, Christian theology, which keeps employees engaged, and how the antecedents for volunteer workers may differ from employees.

RQ1. What is the current level of employee engagement in a non-denominational church?

RQ2. What is the preferred style of leadership amongst pastors in a non-denominational churches?

RQ3. What are the antecedents of employee engagement of employees and volunteer workers in a non-denominational church?

RQ4. To what extent do the antecedents to engagement impact the ministry's ability to create a healthy work environment in a non-denominational church?

Research Hypotheses

H_0**1:** There is no correlation between the antecedents of employee engagement and the level of employee engagement.

H_0**2:** There is no statistical correlation detailing employee engagement antecedents between paid and volunteer workers.

Research Design and Methodology

The research method for this study justified a mixed-method study. Incorporating quantitative and qualitative data, the study supplied a clear and concise explanation of the research questions when blending the source material, which was necessary to answer the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The mixed-method design unites a phenomenological qualitative method with a descriptive quantitative method. The first phase involved collecting quantitative data using two surveys; the next phase involved collecting qualitative data from in-person interviews. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Rater Form (MLQ) was employed to determine the church leader's preferred leadership style, which is relevant to transformational leadership versus transactional leadership theory. In addition to the MLQ, The Gallup Q-12 employee engagement survey was administered to the church employees and volunteers to evaluate their level of engagement.

Quantitative Research Design and Methodology

For the quantitative element of the study, the researcher used two established surveys. The two instruments were the Gallup Q-12 employee engagement survey and the self-rater version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). The engagement survey aimed to qualify the level of engagement of church employees and volunteers and the MLQ assessed leadership's preferred leadership style and confirmed which leadership method is significant to creating a healthy workplace environment.

Population(s)

The population for the research study came from a non-denominational evangelical Christian church system. Because of the more sizable number of congregants for each church location, typically more than 2,000 regular members, these churches are categorized as "mega-churches." In general, a mega-church is a fast-growing organization that offers more opportunities for members to serve in the ministry and has compensated and volunteer workers. The "mega-church" platform was selected because there was a greater likelihood that the church (body) participates in various ministry programs, and a robust leadership structure was available to contribute to the study. The participants were selected from the population of employees and volunteer workers. The volunteer workers chosen for this study differ from casual volunteers in that those volunteers have a recurring responsibility or "schedule," whereas typical volunteers serve only occasionally. The volunteer subjects selected for the study work for the church in a capacity where their absence of service would likely result in diminished effectiveness of ministry objectives.

Sampling Procedures

The researcher conducted purposive sampling to obtain participants for the study. A confidence level of four equals 114 test subjects, or 22.8 per location out of two churches. It was estimated that each location should have at least 60 eligible test subjects; the sample size was limited to 20 subjects per location for the interview; however, not all the test subjects participated in the Gallup A-12 engagement survey or MLQ Rater Survey. Eight randomly chosen participants from the two churches completed both surveys for the in-person interviews during the qualitative portion of the study. The responses to the semi-structured questions were captured using the voice recognition software included in the MacBook Air which automatically

created transcriptions of the interviewee's responses. This amount represented a mean of 5 and a standard deviation of 4, with a confidence level of 96%; the confidence interval was 5 +/- 1.67, and the mean was 3.33 to 6.67. Maxwell (2013) suggests that internal generalizability delves into the extent to which conclusions hold within an observed group and setting and in unobserved scenarios. Since the study focused on two sub-groups, the researcher extrapolated that the collected data could have relevance and applicability to other similar Christian churches.

Limitations of Generalizations

This study was limited to evangelical Christian churches with a workforce population of at least ten workers and ten volunteer workers. The churches selected for this study were chosen because they have more employees than those of a smaller church. The presupposition was that these churches initially had both employees and volunteer workers. The limitations of the generalizations presume that all the study subjects were evangelical Christians serving in the ministry to further The Great Commission and, therefore, have a recognized and qualified Christian worldview.

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Ethical Considerations

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The church leadership permitted the researcher to contact their employees and volunteers who were considered for the study. Next, the individual test subjects were given a written notification; each church location was asked to forward the survey link via email to their employees to complete the engagement survey. The researcher notified both the church leaders and employees, in writing of the study's intent and assure them that their identification would remain anonymous. Additionally, the church leadership was reassured that the study's intent was not to "grade" their leadership's ability but rather to study the opinions their volunteers and employees have about leadership theory and engagement. The study was not designed to demean

the organization or label the leadership negatively or unflatteringly. The survey and interview information were not used to embarrass the organization but to study the antecedents of employee engagement (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

Instrumentation

Data was collected after the committee and IRB approval. Data collection consisted of two established questionnaires and a semi-structured interview. The Gallup Q-12 employee engagement and MLQ survey were administered to the participants to gather information for analysis. The rationale for using established surveys, such as Gallup's Q-12 and the MLQ, is that these are established instruments with proven validity and reliability. Both the Q-12 and MLQ surveys are proprietary, and the results were analyzed and scored automatically by the companies that provide the surveys. Raw data was also available for added analysis and documentation. The Q-12 questions included subjective answers where the participant has the option to respond with, strongly agree to strongly disagree; raw data was available for examination and coding (see Appendix B). The proposed number of test subjects was approximately twenty participants from each church location.

Permission to use the Gallup survey was granted when the subscriber paid the subscription fee. The test subjects were supplied with an email link to the survey engines. Once the participants completed the online survey, the Gallup organization scored the survey and provided a written analysis report on the results. The survey did not rate or examine the employees' feelings but rather the organization's level of engagement from a team-based perspective. This instrument consisted of 12 questions scored from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) (Gallup, 2022).

Validity/Reliability

Gallup (2021) proclaims that they have administered their survey to over 25 million

people (about the population of Texas), and the validity and reliability of the survey are based on

psychology and biostatistics gathered from years of research. Gallup reported the survey results

through a statistical measurement or mean. They divided the number of people by the total score

of a question. The churches selected for the research study had a limited number of employees.

The potentially small number of participants is inconsequential because that number represents

the church's total number of employees, and the results represented the organization's workforce

regardless of the total number of staff members. A smaller number of participants dramatically

affected the outcome and accuracy of the survey. Therefore, a smaller sample group has a more

significant impact on the survey's overall meaning. The survey's accuracy should not be

questioned because it does not measure personal happiness. Instead, it is designed to measure the

organization's overall workplace satisfaction.

Research Procedures

Initially, the church leadership had to be willing to allow the researcher to contact their

employees. At the onset of the research study, several face-to-face meetings with church

leadership and board members occurred. The church leaders were made to feel comfortable with

the research study topic, and the researcher was given the names and emails of those employees

selected for the Q-12 employee engagement survey. Within the email was information about the

subject's anonymity, and a confidential number representing the subject ensures confidentiality

during the engagement survey as per Gallup protocols. The premise was that the subjects feel

that their identity is being concealed, and they will likely answer all the questions truthfully

without feeling the pressure of repercussions for answering honestly. The subjects answered the

questions through an internet link. The next step was for the participants to complete the Self-Rater version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), which allowed the employees to rate their leader's preferred leadership style. The MLQ survey was completed through an online link provided by the researcher through Mind Garden Inc., which holds proprietary rights to the MLQ survey. Once the first two phases of the study were completed, subjects for the interview phase needed to be selected. First, a comprehensive list of the names was compiled, and the names of the participants who completed two surveys were labeled numerically. Next, a random number generator (online) was used to select four eligible subjects for the interview phase of the study for each church location, totaling eight participants. The interviewees were then contacted and invited to participate in the study's interview phase.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in accordance with the licensing organization's permission. Gallup conducted the data analysis for the quantitative portion of the research study as part of the service agreement. The MLQ revealed the organization's preferred leadership style, either transformational or transactional, as defined by Bass and Riggio (2006). These surveys are proprietary, and there was a fee to use these instruments. The instruments were administered in an online format. The forty-five questions of the MLQ measured the organization's leadership on seven factors related to transformational leadership theory: 0 - Not at all, 1 - Once in a while, 2 - sometimes, 3 Fairly often, 4 - Frequently, if not always. The MLQ was scored off-site, and the results was not given to the church leadership staff. In conformity with Leedey and Ormrod (2019), data triangulation in phenomenological research studies is ideal when there are numerous sources.

The qualitative research data was analyzed through the coding of the transcripts. The main aim was to set up a coding strategy consistent with the research question(s) (Ado, 2019). The researchers used the five-step process of thematic analysis outlined by Braun (2022). The first step involved familiarization with the data by becoming immersed in the transcripts to gain a holistic understanding of the participants' sentiments. Subsequently, the process included generating codes with meaningful and relevant segments within the dataset; the deductive codes were preselected to replicate established antecedents of engagement that reflect the Gallup model. The codes were words or short phrases that capture the essence of the data, and they were created to build categories that allow for emergent themes. The next step involved looking for relationships between codes and finding underlying patterns or connections. Once several themes were recognized, the researcher started organizing them into broader categories; this step involved looking for relationships between codes and showing underlying patterns or connections. In the final coding stage, the researcher further refined and combined the various categories or themes that appeared through data analysis. The process showed the core or central themes of utmost significance to ensure that all pertinent information was appropriately captured within these categories.

Statistical Procedures

The survey part of the quantitative research study required a casual-comparative design. The researcher investigated how an independent variable affected a dependent variable (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). This study focused on the leadership style (independent variable) effect on the employee's antecedents of employee engagement (dependent variable). The mixed-methods research study utilized the Gallup survey and the MLQ as supportive data which to define and

label the dependent variable(s) that affected the organization employees' antecedents of engagement.

Dependability

Initially, pilot testing of the qualitative interview was conducted using two additional test subjects who attend a church in the same church network; that being said, this church was not included in the research data. The purpose of the pilot test was to refine the data collection process and discover any variations in the participants' ability and willingness to express an opinion about their church leadership team. It was presumed that church members would not be willing to provide information about their church leadership that might be unfavorable or unpleasant; the researcher did not observe this. The pilot testing and research participants revealed themselves to be sincere and forthright in their comments about the church where they worship.

Confirmability

The researcher undertook a comprehensive analysis which affected the different perspectives on the data interpretation. A methodological triangulation process was employed to evaluate the confirmability of the research data and justification for themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The process included interviews with eight participants from the sample group. Data source triangulation was used to ensure comprehensiveness by selecting two distinct groups from the working church staff, specifically four bona fide employees and an equal number of volunteers. The sample group contributed to the holistic understanding that the antecedents of engagement had an impact on the impact of a healthy workplace environment in the church. There were two critical components to selecting the participants for the sample group. First, all participants must serve in the ecclesiastical organization as either an employee or a committed

volunteer who works regularly for the church. Next, it was critical to reassure those selected for the interview that their comments would remain anonymous. By keeping anonymity, the respondents were more likely to answer the questions openly, regardless of any negative connotations that might have surfaced.

Trustworthiness

The matter of trustworthiness, as it pertained to a research study, comes into question when there was an occurrence of inadequate data collection methods and the existence of predispositions on the part of the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this research study's context, it is essential to note that although the researcher is part of the same ecclesiastical institution, the researcher refrained from investigating the church of personal worship. Additionally, it is crucial to note that this research study does not have independent variables that the researcher could have influenced or subjected to researcher biases. Using qualitative methodologies in research is commonly associated with a smaller sample size. Moreover, the phenomenological research method emphasizes the bracketing of researcher preconceptions and prejudices while allowing an approach to the data with an open perspective towards the research data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Lastly, the sample size, in this study was adequate to achieve saturation as per Creswell and Creswell (2018).

Qualitative Research Design and Method

The qualitative phenomenological research design was identified as the most appropriate for the second phase of the study, because it allowed for the suitability of developing theory from data. The qualitative approach offered a more holistic viewpoint to the research information on employees' beliefs about their organization. Qualitative research, for example, is collected where people spend significant time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study focused on exploring the

experiences and perceptions of church workers and was best studied through a phenomenological research theory. This research study on the antecedents of employee engagement was concentrated on the human behavior of both leaders and employees. First, organizational leadership had a preferred leadership style, which typically evolves out of organizational needs. For example, transactional leadership emphasizes the exchange process, where leaders help employees meet specific goals. In a religious setting, transactional leadership might look like subtle intrinsic and intangible rewards or ceremonial rewards for liturgical performance. On the other hand, transformational leadership is "concerned with emotion, value, ethics, standards, and long-term goals" (Northouse, 2021). Thus, transformational leadership strives to direct organizational team members toward transcending their goals and personal development. For this study, it is critically important to understand how leadership style impacts the antecedents, either positively or negatively, and how it influences volunteers and employees in the church culture.

The research was conducted in two phases: first, the MLQ Leadership Rater Form survey was administered to the church team members. The rationale for the survey was to define the primary leadership preference, i.e., transactional or transformational leadership styles, to show which leadership method supported employee engagement in the church. Next, the employees were given the established employee engagement survey, Q-12, from Gallup. The engagement survey provided a baseline for showing the level of engagement with the organization, explicitly measuring the level of engagement. This survey aided in developing a theory that infers that transformational or transactional leadership is the more desired leadership trait that impacts the antecedents of engagement. In the second phase the interviews examined the specific antecedents for employees and volunteer workers in the church. This phase was completed through an in-person interview process and the coding of the interview transcripts, which developed a

theoretical platform for naming the antecedents of engagement. The transcripts were generated

using voice recognition software included with a MacBook computer. The researcher was

mindful to give equal value to all participants' statements. Throughout the data collection

process, the researcher noted themes and codes that emerged during the interview and started

forming initial ideas about categories that could be linked to the collected data (Maxwell, 2012).

The primary instruments for data collection in the second phase were in-person interviews and

the coding of the transcripts; Delve software was used to assist in the coding process. Delve

coding software is like hand-scoring but allows for better organization of the coded data. In the

first phase, the survey instrument captures the leadership's preference for leadership style;

demographics were not a part of this data collection. The other survey explored the

organization's level of employee engagement; this is an established instrument with verifiable

reliability and validity. Additionally, this research included a researcher-created questionnaire

that addressed the antecedents of the employees and volunteers.

Employees and volunteers from the non-denominational church were the primary

subjects of this research study. The two churches were selected based on their relative size and

propensity to have enough employees available to question and survey. The churches have a

leadership staff, including a senior and assistant pastor(s) and an adequate number of volunteers

and employees. The test-subject churches all have a congregation of thousands and several large

active ministry programs in which the volunteers serve. Due to the autocratic design of the

educational leadership model, the K–12 staff was not included in this study.

Setting

The reason for choosing a non-denominational setting is that this type of network usually

has a more centralized leadership structure, which includes a pastor, assistant pastor, and other

ministry leaders. This leadership structure is more likely to influence the leadership culture directly and the antecedents of employee engagement. The chosen church organizations were part of an evangelical Christian church network, establishing numerous church plants worldwide. These church locations do not have a board or committees that can influence leadership culture but rather a linear leadership structure. The church network was founded several decades ago and has over 1700 associated churches. The Church's doctrine is teaching directly from the Bible. While the church is considered Pentecostal, the congregation members adhere to conservative and reserved standards of behavior. The pastors make sure to avoid promoting any disruptions during sermons. The pastors are typically solely responsible for shaping the organizational culture and driving ministry programs and outreach initiatives, guided by their understanding of how the Holy Spirit leads them. The churches named for the study have two thousand or more members; a greater number of church attendees ensures a good number of test subjects for the study. The demographics reflect the community it serves and welcomes anyone who wants to attend.

Participants

The demographics of each church varied across gender, age, and ethnicity depending on the location of the churches; however, each participant was required to be over the age of eighteen. The group of participants are paid employees and volunteer workers from each church; forty participants were invited to take part in the study. Initial information about the participants, such as length of employment and work assignment, volunteer assignment(s), etc., was collected before inviting the test population to participate in the study. However, this information is not represented in the study because it is irrelevant to the data analysis. The information was gathered to screen the participants before they participated in the study. The participant

requirement was that each employee had to be employed by the church as a compensated worker. The volunteers for the study had been in a position where if they were absent, the ministry might not correctly function, and they had to significantly give of their time to the church that they otherwise might be viewed as an "employee" of the church. The participants were staff members from the selected churches who strive to further ministry objectives by working for the church as an employee or volunteering to serve church ministries.

Thirty-eight participants, out of 40, from the two ecclesiastical institutions completed the Gallup Q-12 survey; two participants decided not to complete the surveys. The population of employees and volunteer workers for the mega-churches far exceeds the number of participants needed for saturation for this study; Creswell and Creswell's (2018) position are that three to ten test subjects are necessary for study saturation. Email invitations and reminders were sent as needed to ensure enough respondents were invited to participate in the study. For phase one of the study, participants were asked to respond to two online surveys, i.e., the Gallup Q-12 and the MLQ Rater form. A second survey (MLQ) was distributed to the participants, and thirty-seven out of the forty responded. The respondents' emails were provided to both Gallup and Mind Garden, and an electronic invitation was sent to the participants to participate in the survey. Data from the two surveys was reported to the researcher as raw data, which did not indicate individual participants' responses but represented the group's totality. Therefore, the identity of the subject's responses to the surveys remained anonymous. The eight participants for the interview were randomly selected from the participants who completed both surveys. They were assigned a number their names and an online number was generated was used to select which participant would be invited to be interviewed.

Role of the Researcher

In this research study, the researcher belongs to the same Christian church network where the study occurred. However, it is essential to note that the churches chosen for the study are not ones that the researcher personally attends, and the researcher does not have any personal or intimate relationship with any individual who has taken part in the study. The study was not designed to cause any changes or disruptions to the everyday activities of the church. The researcher was extremely cautious to ensure there was no disruption to the church and provided adequate time for the subjects to answer the survey questions. The engagement survey (Q-12) results were not provided to each leadership team or the individual participants. Ideally, this information should not be shared with the leadership of the churches that participated in the study until the researcher's dissertation is published; this prevented any possibility of outside influence from the study participants or their leadership.

This study purposefully examined the feelings and perceptions of the research study concerning the antecedents of engagement. The researcher's objective was to collect data concerning the interview phase of the study. According to Maxwell (2013), a researcher is the primary instrument in a qualitative research study. While taking notes during the in-person interview, the researcher was mindful not to allow personal experiences to influence the interpretation of results, as illustrated by Creswell (2012). Additionally, the role of the researcher was to communicate openly with the participants and ensure them that their responses would remain confidential and that any personal information they shared would be safeguarded.

Ethical Considerations

Researchers are vital instruments in a research study and should not disclose information that could potentially affect the research participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The identity

of the non-denominational network was not revealed in this study, and subjects' identities are preserved to support the confidentiality and integrity of the church and its members. The study subjects were asked, by email and other written communications, whether they would be willing to participate in the research study. The subjects selected for the follow-up interview were fully informed of the research study's purpose. Also, participation was entirely voluntary, and participant anonymity is held to protect the study's validity. During the research interview phase, study subjects could openly redact and correct any statements they made. The collected data was not used for any other research, and the supporting documents will be destroyed in compliance with Liberty University guidelines.

Data Collections Methods and Instruments

After gathering the information and data, the study analyzed and extracted relevant information. The in-person interviews had questions about the work-related culture, such as workplace climate, work attitudes, and the opinions of the paid and volunteer workers in the church. Questions for this study centered on job fit, affective commitment, workers' feeling of safety, and employee/management trust. An observational protocol is unnecessary for the study; however, transcribing audio recordings and coding were implemented. The data obtained from the interview and later transcripts were coded to get diagnostic data. An equal number of paid and volunteer subjects participated in the study's in-person interview phase.

Initially, access to the test subjects was granted with the expressed permission of the church leadership (see Appendix C). The test subjects were contacted in person or via email, requesting their consent to sit for the interview process. The interview was conducted in a semi-private location; participants were fully aware that the conversation was being recorded and that their statements and identity would remain confidential, ensuring their anonymity. Zoom was

used for one test subject who could not attend the in-person interview again; the same protocol and notifications were made before the Zoom interview.

Collection Methods

The qualitative part of the research study used an interview as the instrument to obtain data. However, group discussions and observation were considered, and more practical methods exist for this research study. The researcher asked questions such as how long the subject has been with the organization and organizational responsibilities and allowed the test subject to ask questions about the interview process. Open-ended questions elicit information on the motives, emotions, and motivation behind the subject's perspective of the organization and their duties and responsibilities. The questions are also designed to evaluate the subject's perceived intellectual development and organizational commitment toward continued support of the church (see Appendix A). To illuminate the possibility of gaining too much information, the researcher limited these questions to approximately ten, as to not exhaust the test subjects by overwhelming them with too much questioning.

Instruments and Protocols

This research study included two types of instruments: interviews and surveys; the surveys are better addressed in the quantitative section. However, the interviews are more closely aligned with qualitative research. Although the church locations identified for this resource study are of the same church organization, each church has its own unique identity, demographics, and culture. In preparing for a good foundation for the research questions, the researcher first investigates the background of the church locations, including audience, demographics, and church ministry programs. Although each church location have different demographics, their Christian theology and doctrine each has the same foundational teachings and share a similar

Christian worldview. Qualitative research involves a tremendous amount of decision-making on the part of a researcher; therefore, data could be unconsciously manipulated and vulnerable to the researcher's predispositions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). However, this was not observed in this study.

During the question conceptualization phase, the researcher reviewed the questions with a small panel of church members from the same church network but from a different church plant. Reviewing the questions with members of the same church organization was to run a pilot test of the reliability of the interview questions. Rehearsing the interview and examining these questions gives the researcher a "dry run" of the interview process. However, more importantly, the dry run aims to understand the relationship between the instrumentality level and the appropriateness of the collected data.

Document Analysis

Qualitative coding is a crucial process in qualitative research, particularly in fields such as social sciences and other disciplines where researchers aim to understand and interpret the meaning behind textual or visual data (Maxwell, 2013). This method systematically analyzes and categorizes data to identify patterns, themes, or concepts from the information collected (Maxwell, 2013). Data analysis for this qualitative part of the research study was facilitated by collecting data through semi-structured open-ended questions; the aid of Delve coding software was used to ease the coding process. The Delve software is created to assist with thematic coding by analyzing and categorizing the qualitative data. The researcher inputted the participants' transcripts and created codes, such as labels or tags, for specific text sections that represented concepts, ideas, or themes. The researcher conducted coding, assisted by the online software, reviewed the text, and applied the created codes to the transcripts.

This study used a triangulation approach characterized by gathering data from multiple and distinct instruments, utilizing various methodologies, and mitigating potential sources of systematic bias (Maxwell, 2013). Each participant was asked the same questions and allowed to redact any statement they made if it did not adequately represent feelings and observations towards the questions. Because the theoretical framework supplies a robust awareness of the themes that define employee engagement and the antecedents of employee engagement, a deductive thematic approach was used during the coding analysis.

Procedures

In this section, all the steps necessary to conduct the data collection portion of the study are to be outlined; this includes, but is not limited to, information about eliciting participants for the study, steps in gathering and recording the data, and the process of securing IRB approval. All procedural material (e.g., IRB permission, instruments usage permissions, informed consent forms (see Appendix D), implementation protocols, and any other pertinent information) is included in the appendices section.

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Interview Survey/Questionnaires

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Church culture believes that a Servant Leadership model is the most desired and practiced among church leaders; however, many pastors are not trained to run and grow their Church (Hartwig & Bird, 2015). Therefore, the research questions evaluate the employees' leadership antecedents that lead to an engaged workplace culture. The questions were created to elicit open and candid responses from the test subjects. Additionally, the questions are not designed to lead the test subjects toward any answer or desired response that could reflect researcher bias. The researcher did ask the participants to "elaborate" or "explain further" if the responses were short, unclear, or needed further explaining.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data for this study used the horizontalization process, where the researcher gave equal value to all participants' statements. During the data collection process, the researcher took notes during the interview and developed tentative ideas about categories establishing correlated data relationships (Maxwell, 2013). During the analysis phase, the researcher repetitively reviewed the transcripts for accuracy.

Analysis Methods

The semi-structured, open-ended interview questions were transcribed for analysis, identifying similar themes. The coding process examines the similarities that point the researcher towards a more generalized picture of themes representing potential theories to the research question. Delve qualitative data management coding and analysis software was used to code and analyze the research data, which assisted the researcher in segmenting the data into meaningful expressions. The process followed a thematic coding approach; as stated by Braun and Clarke (2002), this approach is used to develop themes from the data. The thematic approach was used, which is ideal for this research study because it examines people's opinions and experiences with leaders and leadership theory, ultimately identifying unknown premises.

Additionally, the researcher used phenomenological reduction, suspending preconceptions and assumptions about the church, its members, and presuppositions about the study (Adu, 2019). Themes were created by considering the underlying meaning and intent of the participants' statements. The researcher opted to suspend the bracketing process during coding. Bracketing is typically employed to set aside the researcher's biases and preconceptions (Adu, 2019.) The familiarity with the Christian church made the researcher more equipped to interpret the meaning and intent reflected in the participants' transcriptions while remining impartial. The

decision reflects a commitment to embrace the complexity of the subject matter without imposing predefined assumptions.

Trustworthiness

This qualitative study used a smaller sample population, which could lead to lower levels of reliability and validity. The two surveys are proven test instruments to evaluate employee engagement and the preferred leadership culture within an organization. During the qualitative phase, the researchers conducted in-person interviews using predetermined questions to gather the participants' perspectives on the leadership culture within their church organizations. In line with Maxwell (2013), researchers should be aware that there is always intrusion into the lives of the research participants to some degree. To gain the participants' trust, the researchers reassured the interviewees of the study's intent, that their responses would remain anonymous, and that minimal personal time was taken.

Credibility

Credibility is ensured in a qualitative study; a researcher has credibility to the extent that other researchers agree with the design and methods (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The internal validity method used for the qualitative portion of this study is respondent validation. The researcher also kept comprehensive records of the research data, including data analysis and interpretation methods.

Dependability

Leedy and Ormrod (2019) suggest that reliability, or dependability, hinges on yielding consistent outcomes when replicating identical research studies. In this research study, the data obtained showed a notably elevated level of dependability. The data drew parallel conclusions from the research, emphasizing its coherence and consistency. Triangulation was pivotal in this

study, integrating two quantitative surveys and an open-ended interview to gather data for

multifaceted analysis. The foundation of dependability in this research lies in the cohesive

amalgamation of instrumentation and data collection derived from quantitative and qualitative

research methodologies. This convergence fortified the research outcomes and underscored the

robustness and reliability of the dissertation's findings.

Confirmability

The confirmability probability of this research study is shown in the research data. Other

researchers should be able to draw the same conclusions based on the collected data due to the

triangulation of the instruments associated with this study. The two quantitative surveys define

and categorize leadership methods and assess employee engagement. The interview survey is

designed to provide an interaction between the researcher and the test subjects; it is believed that

personal interaction is necessary for a social science study. Another researcher wishing to

duplicate the analysis should find a pathway free of obstacles. The study's conclusion should be

free from the researcher's basis and the inquirer's imagination.

Transferability

The transferability of this research study is meaningful to other researchers and

individuals engaged in ministry leadership. Churches typically have difficulty retaining qualified

workers (Williams & Gangel, 2004). Therefore, ministry leaders would benefit most by creating

a positive and healthy workplace culture where volunteers and other paid employees are loyal to

the organization; this position is supported by pre-existing literature. A flourishing workplace

culture is not designed by accident; it takes a conscientious effort to promote and support a

workplace culture that preserves the motivation of paid and volunteer workers. The transference

of the conclusions and theories associated with the research study should be universally applied

to both secular and Christian worldviews on leadership and organizational changes. Both organizations need help keeping valued employees in a position where they contribute to the goals and culture of the organization (Williams & Gangel, 2004).

Chapter Summary

This mixed-methods research study examined the antecedents of paid and volunteer workers in an evangelical Church organization. The Gallup (Q-12) employee engagement survey was initially administered to the test subjects. Next, the research study used the MLQ (rater format) to define the leadership style, either transactional or transformational, practiced by the church leadership team. The presupposition of using the MLQ is that one leadership style likely influences the antecedents of engagement for both paid and volunteer workers. This quantitative research data shows the organization's level of engagement, and second, the data confirms employees' antecedents of engagement. The researchers conducted in-person, open-ended interviews, with eight participants from the subgroup. The rationale is that an in-person interview(s) would uncover the antecedents of engagement that would not be available through the survey alone. During the study, great lengths were taken to ensure that the study's quality, validity, and integrity were restrained. Lastly, mixed-method research examined the independent and dependent variables through quantitative research. The qualitative question addresses the phenomenological question surrounding the research question; the expectation is an integration into the descriptive, sequential design.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The theoretical framework for this study is that the antecedents of employee engagement are affected by the organizational culture developed by leadership. The research focused on engagement for employees and volunteer workers, as well as transformational leadership and transactional leadership methodologies in a Christian church context. The earlier chapters describe the research problem, the literature review, and the research questions that guided this study. The researcher used a qualitative phenomenological method with a quantitative descriptive method to address the research questions. The following research questions examined the antecedents of employee engagement for church volunteer workers and employees. The theory guiding the quantitative phase of the study is descriptive, while the theory guiding the qualitative phase is phenomenology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Chapter Five includes interpretations of the data and a comparison of the hypotheses and questions.

Compilations Protocol and Measures

The researcher employed a mixed-methods descriptive research design, incorporating a phenomenological approach to address the research questions systematically. The quantitative phase of the study included the distribution of a survey to 40 participants, and thirty-eight participants from both churches responded to the Gallup Q-12 survey. Subsequently, the survey contributed data that formulated conclusions for RQ1. A second survey MLQ was sent to the participants; thirty-seven out of the forty responded. The results from the MLQ survey yielded data that contributed to formulating conclusions for RQ2. During the qualitative phase of the research study, eight randomly selected participants completed both surveys for the in-person interview. The sub-focus group answered structured and semi-structured interview questions.

This allowed the participants to answer the question in a conversational way and was effective when some answered needed to be expanded upon for clarity. The interviews were transcribed using a voice recognition program that auto-generated transcriptions of the participants' responses. The transcripts were analyzed using deductive and thematic coding processes. The Delve software was used as an electronic alternative to the arduous coding task typical for pen and paper segmentation. The information obtained during the qualitative interview was used to analyze and draw conclusions about RQ3 and RQ4.

Demographic and Sample Data

For the qualitative phase, eight people participated in the focus group interviews: two employees and two volunteers from each church location. Once a collection strategy was selected, the next step was identifying suitable study participants. As previously stated, church employees and volunteers were selected for this study. The eligibility criteria for this study were that each participant must be 18 years of age or older and employed in a church service or volunteer activity as identified for the study. The volunteers must have been serving the church regularly; in other words, they serve in a capacity in which they otherwise could be considered "employees." The selection of the churches for this study was predicated upon the researcher's familiarity with the non-denominational church. The rationale for choosing the church is two-fold, first, the investigation examines the church's vertical organizational leadership structure, which resembles a secular corporate organization. Furthermore, it is worth noting that no known studies on leadership focus on volunteers and employees of this non-denominational Christian church network. Because gender and age would not impact the study's data, the participants were selected based on their participation and service to the church rather than multicultural considerations.

Finding the churches that fit the research profile was an obstacle to this study. The criterion was established from the onset of the research study, which limited the scope to megachurches from the non-denominational Christian church, and all the churches are of the same affiliation. The affiliates share the same theological and doctrinal beliefs, such as a strong emphasis on verse-by-verse teaching of the Bible. The worship style is often contemporary, featuring modern-day music and a relaxed atmosphere, forgoing a formal dress code. While the churches share core beliefs and practices, they generally have high pastoral autonomy. Local pastors have significant authority in leading their congregations; the core leadership is decentralized, allowing the senior pastor considerable freedom in making decisions for the congregation and allowing pastors to adapt their ministry to their local community's specific needs and dynamics.

The leadership teams are typically approachable and accessible to their congregants and are often seen as mentors. The leadership teams work under the senior pastor's direction, and individual church ministries and outreach programs require approval from the senior leaders. The church affiliates emphasize shepherding and caring for their congregations, which resemble transformational leadership principles. Many of these leaders adopt a transformational leadership style while emphasizing spiritual growth, biblical teachings, and the development of a keen sense of community and purpose within the church. However, leadership styles may still vary among different leaders within the affiliation.

Data Collection Process

The data collection phase of this research began in June 2023 and ended in September 2023. Phone calls were initially made to each church identified for the study however, not all of the churches were willing to participate in the study. The researcher then sought the individuals

responsible for managing volunteers and employees who fit the research profile. The church representatives were initially reluctant to respond to the researcher's inquiries; repetitive calls and emails were made to no avail. The researcher also made several in-person requests to the churches' senior pastors to gain their confidence in the research process; the in-person appeals proved more fruitful than the email inquiries. The pastors were told that the research process would not intrusive and that the study would not demean the church, pastors, or any staff members. Although it took an average of five weeks to synchronize schedules and to accommodate the demands of church-related business, approval to conduct the study in the churches was granted, and the participants were contacted. The churches provided the names and emails of the participants willing to participate in the research study; emails with links to the two surveys were sent to them.

Upon the participants' successful completion of the two surveys, the data for analysis was obtained from the two organizations that own the rights to the surveys, i.e., Gallup Inc. and Mind Garden Inc. Once the surveys were closed to further participation, the interviewee selection process began. The names of the participants were organized into distinct subgroups, delineated as volunteers and employees. Each set of employees was given a numerical identifier ranging from one to ten. This identical procedure was also extended to the group of volunteers. A number generator, found through a Google search, randomly selected subjects for the qualitative interview phase.

The in-person interviews were conducted on each church campus and scheduled with the help of the church office assistant(s) who initially contacted the participants. Each church generously supplied a secluded location to conduct the interviews. Each participant was given five minutes to review the questions before the recorded interview. The same questions were

asked of each participant to increase reliability; however, each participant was encouraged to offer their distinct insights. A transcript of the participants' responses was created through a computer voice recognition program that automatically developed a Word document transcription with the help of an external microphone. The transcripts were used as a textual backbone to aid the researcher in analyzing the meaning and intent of the research participants. The researcher carefully engaged in the reading of the transcripts to gain familiarity with the data. The coding phase involved segmenting the text into systematic labels, with codes representing key themes and concepts. The coding process involved data reduction, the breaking down complex segments into manageable units, which lead to broader themes. This iterative approach mandated revisiting the transcripts to refine the codes and explore emerging patterns. The use of multiple transcripts and two surveys allowed for triangulation of the data.

<div align="center">**Data Analysis and Findings**</div>

RQ1 Findings

The Gallup survey consists of 12 questions explicitly crafted to evaluate the nuances contributing to employee engagement; one additional question (Q00) assesses the participant's overall perception on engagement. This supplementary question is a pivotal tool in determining the participant's perspective on engagement. Surveys were presented discretely to each volunteer and employee individually, and their responses remained anonymous from the church leadership. Outcome of the survey was organized into two categories: Church A and Church B (see Appendix E and F). Although some participants chose to answer only some of the 12 questions, there is adequate data to attain saturation in the surveys. As identified in Chapter Two, the responses reflect the hierarchy of needs models from both Maslow and Gallup.

Although Gallup's Q-12 and Maslow's hierarchy of needs are two distinct frameworks, there are notable similarities between the Gallup hierarchy and Maslow's hierarchy models. In contrast to Maslow's hierarchy, Gallup's approach centers on workplace engagement and satisfaction by measuring workers' emotional connection and commitment toward their organization. Yet, the Q-12 instrument encompasses a spectrum of *basic, individual, team*, and *growth* needs, similar to Maslow's model. Table 1 provides statistics for the differentiation of questions, which is reflective of the Gallup pyramid of needs. The table also depicts the collective scores for all the participants who took the Gallup Q-12 survey. Moreover, the combined scores for both ecclesiastical establishments are represented as overall averages. The data presented in the summarized table supports the assertion that the basic needs of the sampled cohort have been well established, with a total mean of 4.42 out of a maximum score of 5 (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant's level of engagement broken down by Hierarchy

Engagement Level	Gallup Questions	Mean
Growth	Q11, Q12	3.97
Teamwork	Q07, Q08, Q09, Q10	4.08
Individual Needs	Q03, Q04, Q05, Q06	4.21
Basic Needs	Q01, Q02	4.42

Gallup Inc. stated that the average mean score on the Q-12 for an engaged workforce is 4.02. Based on the findings reported in the Gallup Q-12, the tabulated data presented evidence that the participants surveyed are engaged workers, with a total mean of 4.16 out of a top score of 5 (see Table 2).

Table 2

Gallup Q-12 Totals

Individual Mean	Church A	Church B	Total Mean
Total Mean	**4.04**	**4.28**	**4.16**

RQ 2 Finding

The research questions were developed through the literature review, which suggests that a leader's preferred leadership style affects the antecedents of employee engagement. The researcher sought to investigate the intricate relationship between church leadership methodology and the existence of a nominal correlation between leadership style and the degree of engagement exhibited by Christian church workers. To answer research RQ2, the preferred leadership style amongst pastors in non-denominational ecclesiastical organizations, participants were administered the MLQ – Rater Form survey (see Appendix G). The results are further dissected into additional classifications, represented in Table 3. The quantifiable data suggests that the sample participants believe their leadership teams lean more toward the transformational leadership methodology. Church A noted that their leadership team favors more toward a transformational leadership model, presenting a mean score of 3.19 versus a mean of 1.99 for the transactional leadership preference. Participants in Church B showed a mean score of 2.85 for the transformational model and a mean score of 2.01 for the transactional model. The total mean score for Church A & B represents 3.02 for the transformational leadership model and a mean of 2.00 for the transactional model, out of a total possible score of 4.00; laissez-faire totals 0.55 (see Table 3).

Table 3

Overall Survey Participant Rating of Church Leadership Preference (MLQ)

Church Group	Transformational Leader	Transactional Leader	Laissez-Faire Leader
Church A			
Employee	3.35	1.98	0.15
Volunteer	3.04	2.01	0.58
Total Mean	**3.19**	**1.99**	**0.36**
Church B			
Employee	3.37	2.20	0.66
Volunteer	2.33	1.85	0.86
Total Mean	**2.85**	**2.01**	**0.75**
Church A&B **Total Mean**	**3.02**	**2.00**	**0.55**

RQ 3 Finding

Following an in-depth review of the semi-structured interviews conducted with the eight participants, the thematic analysis identified and interpreted recurring patterns and underlying themes within the data. These themes encapsulate the range of lived experiences encountered by the participants during their ministry service with their church. The researcher continuously compared new data with preexisting codes and themes throughout the coding process to ensure consistency, cohesion, and accuracy. Coding included segmenting the data into meaningful expressions, ultimately revealing the participants' opinions. The researcher's main objective was to reach a state of data saturation where further gathering of new data was unnecessary. The

deductive themes were developed from the Gallup Q-12 survey and the Khan (1990) engagement

model, representing known antecedents of engagement. The thematic analysis, as per Braun and

Clarke (2012), consisted of several iterative steps, including familiarization with the data,

generating initial codes into label segments of data, searching for themes by grouping similar

codes, reviewing transcripts, and finally, interpreting the findings in relation to the research

questions. The coding process identified emergent themes, unique to church service, such as

Christian worldview. In addition, *communication* was a central theme expressed by a majority of

the participates (see Table 4).

Table 4

Coding Tree
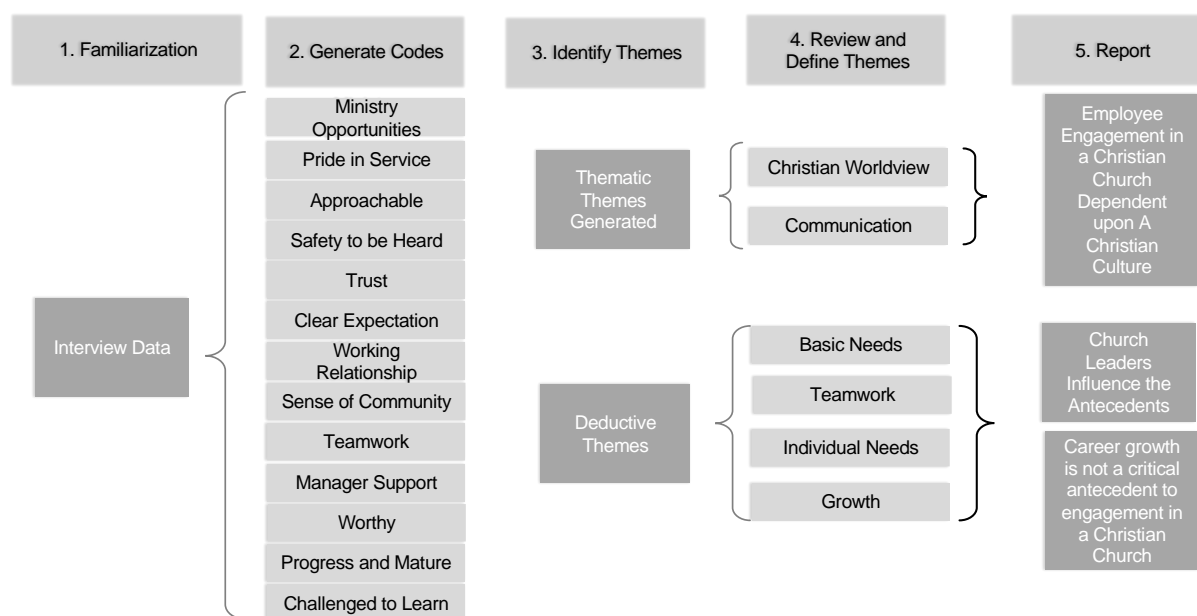
Saturation was achieved through a meticulous research approach by combining two

surveys and in-person interviews, which allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the research

topic. The surveys facilitated the collection of quantitative data from the selected respondents, ensuring statistical validity and broad representation. At the same time, eight in-person interviews enhanced the qualitative analysis by providing deeper insights into individual experiences and worldviews. During the qualitative research phase, saturation emerged when no new themes or patterns emerged, consistent with a smaller sample size approach. Through iterative data analysis, themes emerged, and redundancies diminished, signifying saturation where no added information surfaced; Creswell and Creswell (2018) support the adequacy of the sample size for achieving saturation. It is essential to note that this research study lacks independent variables susceptible to researcher biases.

RQ 4 Findings

Research question four presents how the antecedents to engagement affect the ministry's ability to create a healthy work environment in a non-denominational church. The antecedents of employee engagement play a crucial role in shaping the workplace culture within the context of a non-denominational church ministry. All participants in the study recognized that their leaders exhibited many of the leadership qualities cited by Gallup (2021) and Kahn (1990); for example, several participants from both churches cited that their leaders were good communicators. Transparent communication regarding expectations and values creates a sense of alignment with volunteers and employees.

In the context of the non-denominational church, the antecedents can significantly impact the ministry's ability to create a healthy work environment; for example, all participants from Church A and Church B cited their leadership as compassionate. Participant 2 from Church B recalled an instance where their leaders visited a hospital patient in a coma; the church leaders visited the patient and comforted the family members. The leader's actions were memorable to

the staff member because the church leaders, despite the patient not being an active church member, stilled visited the patient. The effectiveness of ministry leaders can set the tone of the entire work environment. The data and participant contributions reflect that the antecedents of engagement profoundly influence church leaders to create a healthy workplace environment.

Evaluation of the Research Design

The mixed-method research design employed for this study was deemed most appropriate to test the quantitative data through the second phase of qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was tailored to meet the goals and objectives by thoroughly investigating the research questions. Since there is a preexisting overabundance of literature addressing employee engagement, the researcher chose two established instruments to assist in the study: the MLQ and Gallup Q-12. Since few comprehensive studies focus on employee engagement for church workers and volunteers, the researcher created a set of interview questions that address the research questions in the qualitative phase of the study. The study offered a great learning experience and was particularly rewarding for the researcher. The following section of this chapter includes a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the research design.

A strength of the study was the mixed method used to gather data for analysis. Mixed-methods studies are known for their strengths in comprehensively appreciating complex phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By combining qualitative and quantitative research approaches, the study leveraged the strengths of each method, which compensated for their respective limitations (Maxwell, 2013). A strength of the study was the use of two established instruments which have confirmed validity and reliability. The instruments were validated and reliable, the strength of the surveys resides in the participants (stakeholders) providing their first-hand perceptions of their church's leadership culture. While the mixed-method research

approach offers numerous strengths, it also has its challenges (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The complexity and resource intensity associated with conducting a study encompassing qualitative and quantitative research can be a potential area for improvement. Integrating the diverse data set required careful planning and considerations, such as time management and researcher biases. A possible opportunity for improvement to the mixed method is that a researcher might favor one method over the other and thereby unequally prioritize the data, which might impact the subjectivity of the study. The researcher however, applied the data equally, allowing all data elements to contribute to the study. Initially, the researcher sought to have three of the five churches participate in the survey. However, several pastors were reluctant to allow the researcher access to their staff and volunteers. If the researcher had been in contact with the prospective churches, to build trust without violating IRB rules, months before the research period, more pastors might have cooperated.

The researcher carefully read the transcripts to review the data and become familiar with the content. The deductive-thematic coding method was used to find themes within the participants' statements. The coding of themes is a critical element of the qualitative research phase of the study; in compliance with Belotto (2018), the coding process categorizes data into similar themes. Adu (2019) position is that the researcher's focus is to organize the district features of a study group to share their uniqueness with the reader while addressing the research purpose or questions. The phenomenological research method justified the coding of transcripts, which offered a deep and nuanced understanding of the lived experiences and perspectives of the research cohort.

The process included carefully executing a procedure involving interviews with eight sample group participants. Data source triangulation was used to ensure comprehensiveness by

selecting two distinct groups from the working church staff. During the interview, each

participant was told about the purpose and process of the research study, as well as the initial

introductions. The premise of explaining the process and introductions was to create a relaxed

atmosphere, and therefore, the participants could answer openly. It was presumed that church

members would not be willing to provide information about their church leadership that might be

unfavorable or unpleasant; yet, the researcher did not observe participant reluctance. The

research participants revealed themselves to be sincere and forthright in their comments about

the church where they worship.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Research Purpose

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the antecedents of employee engagement among church volunteers and employees of a non-denominational church and the influence church leaders have on workplace culture, as well as the impact that antecedents have on the church to foster a healthy workplace environment that is recognized by a thriving Christian ministry. The theory most suitable for guiding this study for the quantitative phase of the study is descriptive, while the theory guiding the qualitative phase is phenomenology (Creswell, 2020).

The first phase of the study collected data from two surveys. The second phase of the study collected qualitative data from in-person interviews. The data was then analyzed to understand the antecedents of engagement with the ultimate objective of equipping pastors and other church leaders with insight that builds a flourishing workplace culture, thereby inspiring employees and volunteers to continue serving the church. The distinctive interpretations and concepts confirm the research questions. By delving into the unique insights and viewpoints of the participants, the researcher aimed to show a profound understanding of the implications that the antecedents of employee engagement have on a healthy workplace culture, church volunteers, and employees. The study's primary purpose was to better understand the antecedents of employee engagement for volunteers and employees in a religious institution. The data was collected and analyzed, and judgments were created from the phenomenological information.

The desired outcome was to understand two specific areas of employee engagement further. First, the researcher sought to understand the professional and scriptural relationship pastors have with their congregants who serve in the church. Second, the researcher looked at the

antecedents and behaviors of church leaders that created a healthy workplace culture within their church. The study revealed fresh insight into Christian leadership, leadership development, and education. The empirical findings of this study exposed a conspicuous connection between the favored leadership style of a church leader and the antecedents of employee engagement. The study identified unknown antecedents of employee engagement unique to an ecclesiastical organization. This chapter summarizes the research questions and hypotheses and provides applications, findings, and ramifications for additional study.

Research Questions

RQ1. What is the current level of employee engagement in a non-denominational church?

RQ2. What is the preferred style of leadership amongst pastors in a non-denominational church?

RQ3. What are the antecedents of employee engagement of employees and volunteer workers in a non-denominational church?

RQ4. To what extent do the antecedents to engagement impact the ministry's ability to create a healthy work environment in a non-denominational church?

Research Conclusions, Implications, Applications, and Limitations

This study examined the relationship between the antecedent of employee engagement, specifically within the context of employees and volunteer workers of an ecclesiastical organization, and the consequential effects this has on salubrious workplace culture. The mixed-methods design incorporated two well-established surveys as primary instruments for collecting data and an in-person interview with randomly selected subgroup participants. The study involved thirty-eight participants who voluntarily responded to the Gallup Q-12 and the MLQ surveys. The data from the two surveys mentioned above was organized into four subgroups for each of the two churches (see Appendix H). Furthermore, within each subset, the respondents

were placed into more subgroups, representing employee's and volunteers' responses. The data from the coded transcripts obtained from the interviews represented the qualitative phase of the study.

Based on the research data, the study concluded:

- The church employees and the volunteers from the focus group maintain positive level of employee engagement.

- Church employees and volunteers rated their leadership as having a greater propensity towards transformational leadership.

- There is little distinction between the antecedents of engagement for employees and volunteers in an ecclesiastical organization.

- Christian workers, employees, and volunteers support similar engagement values as their secular counterparts. However, there is a substantial Christian theological preference in which both groups place significant value within their engagement profiles.

Summary of RQ1 Findings

The primary focus of research question one was to investigate the existing degree of employee engagement with the selected cohort of employees and church volunteers. The principal variables were the participants' emotional competencies and their Christian worldview. Gallup analyzed the data, and the results were sent to the researcher for further examination (see Appendix E and F). The data shows that church workers and volunteers have the equivalent employee engagement requirements as workers in other fields, reflecting both Maslow's engagement theory and the Gallup hierarchy. The data from the Gallup Q-12 revealed that church employees and volunteers have a positive state of engagement (see Table 2).

Table 2

Gallup Q-12 Totals

Individual Mean	Church A	Church B	Total Mean
Total Mean	**4.04**	**4.28**	**4.16**

Similarly, Gallup (2021) states that the basic needs of employee engagement include *basic needs, individual needs, teamwork,* and *growth*. Furthermore Gallup's, position is that an employee's *basic needs* antecedent consists of clearly understanding what it takes to succeed. An individual need includes an employee's feeling that their contribution and worth to the organization are a factor and that the leadership team supports their efforts. Also, an individual *need* is to feel a profound sense of inclusion and camaraderie within their team, and that management encourages opportunities that contribute to an employee's sense of belonging (Hewitt, 2012). Lastly, employees must feel challenged to mature in their organizational roles (Gallup, 2021).

The research participants stressed several antecedents analogous to the AOH-Hewitt Model. For example, employees and volunteers can actively participate and contribute to the ministry's goals (Hewitt, 2012). Participant four (volunteer) from church B, who volunteers in the security ministry, said he was allowed to work in the youth ministry, where he felt he possessed a gift for working with young Christians. Participant four said that he can serve his church by bringing his expertise as a safety expert and that he is proud to serve and feels useful to the church. The work element of the AOH-Hewitt model stresses that workers need to feel a sense of accomplishment coupled with autonomy. The results from the Gallup Q-12 show that the church sample groups have an interconnection with the four categories represented in the Gallup Hierarchy of Engagement.

Interestingly, the churches scored a 4.16 total mean in the Gallup Q-12, while the growth category represents the lowest total mean of 3.97; The individual means scores for the Gallup Q-12 are categorized and presented as Church A and Church B. (see Table 5). This lowest score could imply that church leaders do not foster a culture of professional growth. Based on the

qualitative data, a new hypothesis could be developed stating that church workers, both

employees and volunteers, have already created a skillset that they apply to church service, and

the need for professional and personal growth is not of high importance for them to serve their

church.

Table

Q-12 Hierarchy Results Presented as Church A and B with Totals

Questions	Church A	Church B	Total
Basic Needs- What do I need?	4.42	4.42	4.42
Individual-What do I give?	4.01	4.42	4.21
Teamwork- Do I belong Here?	4.00	4.16	4.08
Growth-How can I grow?	3.83	4.11	3.97

Summary of RQ 2 Findings

Research data showed that transformational leadership in the Christian church is the

cornerstone of flourishing ministries predicated upon high employee engagement. Participants

clearly expressed feelings about their leader that define transformational leadership. The

participants' sentiments reflect that their leadership team inspires others to serve something

greater than themselves and stand for a compelling commitment toward spiritual development.

The church leaders ignite a sense of purpose and dedication from those who serve their church.

Furthermore, the participants expressed that their church leadership cultivates a climate of trust,

which empowers them to continue to serve the church selflessly. The pastors' leadership style

reflects many of the tenets of Christianity, which promote servant leadership, faith, and caring

for the well-being of others. However, the data does not support a differentiation in the

emotional enthusiasm felt by employees versus volunteers. Both groups equally appreciated the transformational leadership characteristics shown by their church leadership.

Summary of RQ 3 Findings

The statements from the subgroup of participants in the research study showed parallels between the widely accepted antecedents of employee engagement in a secular culture and those that impact workers in an ecclesiastical organization. In addition to notable similarities in the antecedents, the respondents' engagement relies heavily on a Christian theological worldview. For example, Participant three from church A (volunteer) said that the enjoyment of working at the church is because she can "feel the love of Jesus" on the campus, emitting from the church culture." Towns (2007) describes Christianity as the transforming life that springs up from the pages of the Bible; all of the subgroup participants mentioned that their church leaders are men of faith. Some participants focused on other antecedents, such as communications; for example, Participant number two (employee) from church B said, "The leadership sets the priority of keeping the staff informed." Both church employees and volunteers have similar workplace values. At the same time, there is a minuscule divergence between the building blocks of employee engagement and the Christian-themed precursors. The thematic coding process revealed that core Christian values (world view) stand out as a common sentiment among the participants; Pazmino (2008) suggests that "values and choices of ultimate concern by their very nature embody theological considerations for Christians" (p. 101). The Christian-based antecedents of engagement include integrity, humility, a calling from God, and a Bible-based church. A Christian worldview emerged as a prominent antecedent of employee engagement with church employees and volunteers.

Basic Needs

The Gallup engagement model states that employees must know what is expected of them and have adequate materials and supplies to do the job. The Maslow model, as applied to engagement, suggests that disengaged employees, as noted at the bottom of the pyramid, are in survival mode when they are not excited about work or are jaded and are only there for a means of financial support. Collectively, the participants represent a total mean of 4.42 on the Gallup Q12 for the *basic needs* questions. The deductive coding revealed that the participants see *approachability* as the top influencer that drives the antecedents (*basic needs*) of engagement; also, safe to be heard, trust, and clear expectations have equal importance (see Appendix I). There is no discernible variation in the antecedents between church employees and volunteers, as presented in the research data for the *basic needs* category.

Individual

The individual needs framework speaks of the value workers feel within the organization, and the leader's support is critical. Church employees and volunteers who participated in the study are highly proud of their service to the ministry. Macey et al. (2011) states that pride is not a manifestation of engagement but rather a reflection of an organization that serves a meaningful purpose. Workers from both church locations expressed elevated satisfaction levels with serving the ministry. They are happy with their leadership and feel like they are part of a team, an essential engagement component (Gallup, 2021). Participant three (Volunteer) from church A said, "I love serving this leadership, and it makes me proud to serve them because they are loving and kind…" Other participants said they were "honored to serve" and "fun old church," expressing a sense of support from their leadership teams and acknowledging their contribution. Also, while recognition and appreciation are typical elements of an engaged workforce, they

were not exclusively expressed by the participants during this study of Christian workers. Yet, feeling supported and valued in their roles was acknowledged by both volunteers and church employees as an essential antecedent. The leaders of both church locations support a culture that values their workers; this is in step with Irving and Strauss (2019), who state that leaders should encourage employees and appreciate their strengths.

Teamwork

Employees must have a sense of community within their organization, receive encouragement, participate in collaborative efforts, and think that their actions contribute to the betterment of the whole. Kahn (1990) cites that employees need to feel meaningful and purposeful. Study participants noted a significant inclination toward a personal working relationship with their leadership teams. Participant three (volunteer) from church A stated that those who serve in the church are friendly and love to serve the church, which encourages others to serve; this shows how abundantly important a sense of community is to church workers. These leadership teams cultivate a sense of community and belonging, consistent with Maslow's needs model (Cadiat & Probert, 2015; Burns, 2003). The Bible clearly emphasizes the importance of the community and working together. For example, the Apostle Paul wrote about the collaborative nature that is indicative of a Christian congregation (NKJV, Romans 12:4-5).

Additionally, Christianity promotes unity amongst its believers, and working together as a team and feeling a sense of belonging and camaraderie is vital to church workers, volunteers, and assemblers. Effective teamwork allows volunteers to combine their talents to achieve common objectives more efficiently. Christian workers might not be looking for professional development, per se; however, they still need teamwork, communication, and a sense of community to achieve the ideal level of employee engagement. For example, the importance of

community was a common theme during the interview phase of the study. The church volunteers

expressed that volunteering in a church gives them a sense of community and belonging, and

building solid relationships and connections with other church members gives them a sense of

purpose. The concept of the church as a body of Christ emphasizes collaboration throughout the

congregation and is taught as part of Christian theology (NKJV, 1 Corinthians 12:21-26).

Growth

In the engagement paradigm, growth is typically defined as employees need to feel

challenged and the desire to mature and grow in their profession (Gallup, 2021). Although the

typical definition is well recognized as a professional necessity, the desire to advance in their

church related vocation is less critical for Christian workers, as represented in the thematic

coding data. An employee from church A said that her role has changed in the twenty years she

has been serving the ministry and that, although she has been given added responsibilities, she

has not sought career advancement. Furthermore, church volunteers appear to have even less

interest in professional advancement in the church. The research data implies that personal

growth and career advancements are less critical to Christian ministry workers because of their

presumed contentment in serving the ministry as faithful servants. Additionally, based on the

Gallup Q-12 score (3.97) which infers that the church leadership does not foster a culture of

growth. Church workers do not have a workplace environment that focuses particularly on

professional development; therefore, professional growth is not of interest. This finding could

also imply that church volunteers are content serving the church without needing professional

development because many volunteers derive their professional fulfillment outside of the church

in other related and non-related careers. It could be theorized that the volunteers' contentment in

their primary vocation outside of church does not foster a need for personal growth within their volunteer role at the church.

Christian Worldview

A Christian worldview stands out as an emerging antecedent of employee engagement for an ecclesiastical organization. A Christian worldview includes a firm commitment that the Bible is God's inspired and authoritative word, typically reflected in a bible-based church (Towns, 2007). In such a church, the primary focus is preaching and teaching the tenets of the Christian Bible. Participants stressed the importance of a personal relationship with Christ. All the participants expressed a profound yearning to participate in an actively engaged congregational fellowship led by a scriptural-based pastor. They also voiced that the Holy Spirit should lead their senior pastor; this further exemplifies a community exchange of cultural, philosophical, and theological values, which ecclesiastical leaders often find great difficulty formulating (Bredfeldt, 2006).

Employee two from church B said leaders should "take extra time to care for others during turbulent situations with kindness and empathy and seeing people like Jesus did." Volunteer three from church B stated that leaders should have a "commitment to the people not just in your congregation but to all staff like the relationship Jesus had with His disciples." The research study suggests a Christian worldview is a novel antecedent of employee engagement tailored explicitly for parishioners adhering to the Christian faith. Volunteers placed a slightly higher value on having a Christian worldview than their employee counterparts.

Summary of RQ 4 Findings

The study revealed that pastors play a crucial role in guiding their employees and volunteers, providing spiritual support as they navigate the complexities of Christian leadership;

pastoral leadership's culture affects the church's ability to progress ministry goals. The church leaders' behaviors, values, and priorities influence the overall workplace culture and the ministry program's pathway. A healthy workplace culture with engaged employees typically comprises loyal, productive, and satisfied employees (Lockwood, 2007). The research data showed that the participants value meaningful work and see their ministry service as a spiritual calling to impact the church community positively. All the participants interviewed expressed that their senior pastor leads a positive, inclusive, and biblical-influenced leadership team that nurtures a shared community with a commitment to ministry goals. The data suggests that church leaders are not prioritizing *growth*, which means employees are not experiencing a culture conducive to professional development in the church. This lack of focus on growth could be why church workers are scoring lower on the growth section of the Gallup Q-12.

The data shows that church leaders significantly impact the factors contributing to employee engagement among church workers. The churches' leadership culture is consistent with Hartwig (2015), who identifies a thriving ministry team as one where workers are trusted and allowed to work in a collaborative, diverse, and "focused" environment. None of the participants referred to their church service as a divisive and toxic leadership culture, counterintuitive to Christian values. The study does support the indication that church leaders play a critical role in shaping the church's culture, where their actions can be either a catalyst for continued growth or an obstacle hindering ministry goals.

Outcome of the Hypotheses

Hypotheses one (H_01) proposed that there is no correlation between the antecedents of employee engagement and the level of employee engagement. From a quantitative perspective, there is insufficient data to objectively support the null hypothesis. Yet, the data obtained from

the research study does lead to other conclusions. Based on the data, the antecedents of employee engagement—precisely basic needs—significantly influence church employees and volunteers. Additionally, the qualitative data supports the antithesis to H_01 because the churches flourish by biblical and Christian benchmarks, and employees and volunteers exhibit an elevated level of engagement.

Hypotheses two (H_02) proposed no statistical correlations detailing employee engagement antecedents between paid and volunteer workers. As with H_01, the available data does not support a null hypothesis. The data supports a slight difference between the antecedents of engagement between church employees and volunteer workers. The study revealed a moderate distinction with the antecedent of *growth*.

Theological Implications

The two churches were selected because of their recognizable ministry success. Although a church's success should not be based on the size of its congregation, both churches are highly regarded as mega-churches and are contributors to the local community. The churches have a ministry program that supports the sick, feeds and clothes the needy, and preaches Christ's gospel. Per a Christian worldview, both churches are successful and are recognized as "bearing fruit," as cited in Matthew 7:20. Additionally, both churches are faithful to the Great Commission, as in Matthew 28:16-20. The pastors of both churches have created a culture of effective leadership, as reflected in the research data, and the sentiments of the research participants substantiate the results.

Although the data recognizes pastoral efforts toward building a healthy workplace culture, this does not imply other churches' success through mere culture modeling. A widely accepted Christian point of view is that it is God who decides the success of a church ministry.

The belief that God chooses the success of a church is ingrained in the Christian faith, suggesting that the prosperity and impact of a church are not conditional upon the efforts of humans but are governed by God's will and presence. However, as selected shepherds of the flock, pastors must foster a culture conducive to nurturing high employee engagement.

There is enough data and literature to recommend how church leaders should strive to build and develop the workplace antecedents that drive engagement, for example:

- Pastors can empower their ministry workers (volunteers and employees) by developing a culture of trust and allowing workers to make independent decisions. Employees who feel trusted are more likely to contribute positively to the ministry.

- Pastors can openly recognize the contribution of their work during services, which will drive a sense of gratitude from their workers. Acknowledging and appreciating workers, mostly volunteers, can significantly impact the church's ability to grow the ministry.

- Church leaders should know their workers' work-life balance, particularly for volunteers who might be stressed with church-related duties beyond their regular work hours.

- Most important to church workers is when pastors lead by example. Senior church leaders set the tone for engagement by demonstrating the Christian values and leadership behaviors they want to see in their employees and volunteers.

Practical Implications and Application

The data clearly shows that the *growth* need represents the lowest score on the Gallup Q-12; additionally, also the in-person interview substantiates that profession *growth* is not a focal point for church workers. Nevertheless, this score falls within an acceptable range for an engaged workforce; this should however be recognized as an opportunity for church leaders to reflect on strategies that will foster the personal growth of their workers. Christian pastors can improve

employee engagement and volunteers' interest in professional development by promoting a culture of support, appreciation, and collaboration. First, church leaders can prioritize open communication; *communication* is another one of the antecedents identified during this study. Pastors could also provide regular feedback and guidance and actively listen to the needs and concerns of their staff. Integrating learning frameworks such as Bloom's Taxonomy into the strategies that can affect employee engagement (Hess, 2013); this strategy could further enhance the effectiveness of the personal growth antecedent. Although Bloom's Taxonomy is primarily used in an academic setting, its principles can be adapted to enhance an organization's level of employee engagement. Encouraging teamwork through shared goals and values can strengthen engagement, and employees and volunteers feel connected to a common purpose.

Church leaders could create mentorship programs, pairing experienced volunteers and organizing regular training and workshops aimed at spiritual, theological, and professional development related to Christian ministry and tailored to workers' specific aspirations. This type of training and development progression can keep employees engaged by challenging them through various cognitive levels. By integrating Bloom's Taxonomy, and other strategies, into multiple sides of employee development, church leadership could see a culture transformed into a more engaging and enriching work environment. By prioritizing the development of both employees and volunteers, church leaders can foster a culture of continuous learning and development, ultimately advancing the church's ministry.

Research Limitations

The findings of this study have some possible limitations:

- The sample size of the participants who responded to the survey could be more extensive and include all the employees and volunteers from the church staff; this would generate a more significant sub-group to interview.

- It is plausible that there was a cultural bias stemming from the participants' affiliation with the church, which might have prevented them from expressing opinions that might have cast a negative light on the leadership cadre, thereby skewing the data.

- There needs to be a previous reference to the antecedents of a Christian workforce to prove a comparative baseline.

- Future studies might recruit more survey participants and include the leadership staff in the qualitative phase.

Threats to Internal Validity

Threats to internal validity could result in the research participants taking a second survey. The participants took two surveys, the Gallup Q-12 and MLQ, which differ in purpose while examining leadership theory. Repetition may have affected the results; participants may have formulated assumptions during the initial survey that could have altered their responses on the second survey. Conversely, because there were two surveys the participants might have experienced fatigue or boredom and answered the questions without fully contemplating their meaning. Also, the first survey could have changed the participants' exposure to the focus of the study, thereby preparing them for the second survey and the subsequent interview, which could create a presupposition to the interview questions.

Threats to External Validity

Threats to the external validity could be that although the participants were from two different church locations, they were, in fact, from the same non-denominational Christian church network. It is a possibility that the collective opinions of the participants were biased by the church's theological and philosophical teachings. Therefore, the data might not reflect a correlation between the antecedents of engagement and church leadership, which could be applied to other non-denominational churches outside of a Christian worldview. Additionally,

the data could have been contaminated due to the Hawthorne effect, which says that individuals change their behavior when they know they are being studied (Sedgwick & Greenwood, 2015).

Further Research

- To increase generalizability, the study could be repeated and include a church identified as a non-thriving church. Selecting a non-thriving church could test the veracity of antecedents and leadership's influence on the antecedent of employee engagement.

- A new study could include a larger sample group, including workers from all church ministries.

- Additional research is needed to study the antecedents of engagement in other religions outside of the non-denominational Christian church.

Summary

The study examined the antecedents of employee engagement, specifically the antecedents of engagement for volunteer-focused Christians, with a reasonable degree of certainty, this research study showed a statistically significant correlation between the antecedents of engagement and the progression of a productive Christian ministry. As with any organization, employee engagement is crucial for its success, and the Christian church has unique dimensions to a healthy workplace environment. For instance, church leaders need to possess a Christian worldview, a significant antecedent of engagement for the Christian worker. Church workers and congregants often look to their pastors not just as administrators but as exemplars of their faith, whose worldview shapes the character and direction of the entire organization.

The phenomenological evidence reinforced a connection between the leadership style, specifically the application of the transformational leadership method, and an engaged workplace culture. In a religious context, effective leadership sets the tone for the organization, providing

employees with guidance, support, and inspiration; strong leadership is paramount. Kahn (1990) states that the antecedents of engagement are "value congruence, perceived organizational support, and self-evaluation, proceed or support core self-evaluation," which is also reflective of both subsets of those church workers who took part in the study. While pastors and other leaders desire to be leaders who transform culture, not all pastors have the insight to excel in leadership. Consequently, Christian leaders must develop a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of engaging the workforce and the necessary building blocks contributing to a thriving workplace environment. The research data support that a healthy workplace culture originates from informed leaders. Pastors are ultimately responsible for all aspects of their parish, including the workplace culture, which motivates and drives employees and volunteers.

Christian employees and volunteers scored the lowest on personal growth and development and showed less interest in this area. Gallup (2021) asserts that the average score for individual sections of the Q-12 is 4.02; the research participants scored 3.97 collectively. The research data does shows however, that Christian church workers are committed to serving the church. Their drive is based not on personal growth or financial gain but on selfless service driven by their religious beliefs, and a deeply ingrained Christian worldview dependent upon a cultural framework predicated on scriptural tenets and biblical pedagogy.

The study revealed the shared perspectives of numerous research participants: effective communication of the church's mission and Christian values emerged as a cornerstone for nurturing engagement among its members. Within the intricate fabric of a Christian community, such as a church, cultivating a profound sense of belonging and relationship stands paramount, particularly for those dedicated to serving the ministry. The sense of belonging extends beyond humble camaraderie; it encompasses a professional spiritual, and symbiotic relationship between

leadership and team members. While pursuing personal career advancement may not be the most essential prerequisite for the church worker, fostering the antecedents of engagement remains a steadfast significance. Through the vibrant nurturing of church culture, the church's divine mandate to spread the message of faith and love as outlined by The Great Commission, is sustained.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

In-Person Interview Questions Script

Introduction

1. My name is Greg Rodriguez, and I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University. I am conducting a research study on leadership in the church. At an earlier time, you indicated that you would be willing to participate in research on (Brief statement on purpose of survey).

2. The interview should take 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

3. All of your personal information and answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with any person or group that is not associated with this study.

4. Your participation is voluntary, and you may refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.

5. The data collected from this study will be summarized, and no individual person will be knowingly identifiable from the summarized results. Responses to questions may be quoted, but without identifying the individual source.

6. Please answer the following questions honestly.

7. Before we jump into specific research questions, can you tell me a little bit about yourself and any research you have been involved with on this topic or the level of familiarity you have with this topic?

8. Are you ready to continue?

Questions for Coding and Analysis

1. In your opinion, what leadership traits are most important to progressing ministry objectives?

2. Describe the working relationship you have with the pastor or other church leaders.

   a. Describe the relationship you have with your direct leader.

   b. Describe the relationship you have with the pastoral staff.

3. What excites you most about serving with (Church Name) in church service or volunteering?

   a. Other than a calling from God, what draws you to serve in this church?

   b. If you chose to serve at another church, which would it be?

      i. why?

4. If God made you a church leader, what leadership qualities do you believe you should have as a leader?

   a. What makes you give that response?

   b. Please provide examples to your response.

5. What are the most important values the church leadership possesses?

   a. If you could add or take away a leadership trait, what would that be?

6. What makes you most proud to serve this church's leadership?

7. How would you describe the church leadership's sensitivity to the needs of the congregants?

Interview Conclusion

1. Before we wrap things up and talk about next steps, are there any last comments you have regarding this area of research?

2. Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions

APPENDIX B

Gallup Q-12 Questions

The twelve questions in the Q-12 are:

1. Do you know what is expected of you at work?

2. Do you have the materials and equipment to do your work right?

3. At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?

4. In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?

5. Does your supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about you as a person?

6. Is there someone at work who encourages your development?

7. At work, do your opinions seem to count?

8. Does the mission/purpose of your company make you feel your job is important?

9. Are your associates (fellow employees) committed to doing quality work?

10. Do you have a best friend at work?

11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to you about your progress?

12. In the last year, have you had opportunities to learn and grow?

APPENDIX C

Permission Request

Dear (Church Name),

As a graduate student in the Rawling School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education in Ministry Leadership degree. I am conducting research to better understand the antecedents of employee engagement, which motivates church volunteer workers and employees to serve in the ministry. The title of my research project is A Mixed-Method Approach Identifying Antecedents of Employee Engagement in Nondenominal Church: Perspectives from Volunteers and Employees.
The purpose of my study is to build a theoretical framework that will support an effective church leadership methodology. I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research with select employees and select volunteers of (Church name). I would personally contact members of your church to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will be asked to complete an employee engagement survey and a leadership survey, and a small number of participants will be randomly selected to participate in an in-person interview. The data will be used to draw conclusions on the antecedents of employee engagement for both employees and volunteer church workers. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to grodriguez5@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Gregory Rodriguez
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

APPENDIX D

Consent

Title of the Project: A MIXED-METHOD APPROACH IDENTIFYING ANTECEDENTS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN A NONDENOMINATIONAL CHURCH: PERSPECTIVES FROM VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES
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Principal Investigator: Gregory Rodriguez, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be an active member of your church, at least 18 years of age, either employed by the church or a regular or scheduled volunteer of the church. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to investigate the antecedents of employee engagement for both employees and volunteers who work at an evangelical church.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. First, do you agree to participate in two electronic survivals, both of which would take about 15 minutes to complete?
2. Next, some of those who completed the survival will be asked to participate in an in-person interview with the principal investigator. The interview should take about 20 minutes to complete.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

1. Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

2. Benefits to society include a better understanding of the leadership behavior(s) that contribute to a healthy workplace environment, which motivates church volunteers and employees to continue to serve the ministry.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely

- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer, and after three years, all electronic records will be deleted and/or all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years, then deleted. The researcher, Gregory Rodriguez, and members of his doctoral committee, etc., will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University [Church Name] If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please note that your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher[s] conducting this study is Gregory Rodriguez, a doctoral candidate at Liberty University. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at garodriguez5@libertyuniversity.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Don Bosch, at dbosch@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher[s], **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subject research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. [You will be given a copy of this document for your records/you can print a copy of the document for your records.] If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher, Gregory Rodriguez, using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio record me as part of my participation in this study during the in-person interview phase of the study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

APPENDIX E

Gallup Questions Response Church A

Gallup Questions Church A

Gallup Q-12	Respondents	Church Overall Mean
Q00: On a five-point scale, where 5 means extremely satisfied and 1 means extremely dissatisfied, how satisfied are you with your company as a place to work?	20	4.19
Q01: I know what is expected of me at work.	19	4.36
Q02: I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.	20	4.47
Q03: At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.	19	4.17
Q04: In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.	15	4.27
Q05: My manager, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.	20	4.53
Q06: There is someone at work who encourages my development.	19	4.05
Q07: At work, my opinions seem to count.	15	3.38
Q08: The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.	20	4.31
Q09: My coworkers are committed to doing quality work.	15	3.57
Q10: I have a best friend at work. 4	18	3.57
Q11: In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.	20	3.31
Q12: This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.	19	4.33

APPENDIX F

Gallup Questions Response Church B

Gallup Questions Church B

Gallup Q-12	Respondents	Church Overall Mean
Q00: On a five-point scale, where 5 means extremely satisfied and 1 means extremely dissatisfied, how satisfied are you with your company as a place to work?	18	4.06
Q01: I know what is expected of me at work.	18	4.44
Q02: I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.	18	4.39
Q03: At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.	18	4.44
Q04: In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.	18	4.22
Q05: My manager, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.	18	4.72
Q06: There is someone at work who encourages my development.	18	4.28
Q07: At work, my opinions seem to count.	18	4.06
Q08: The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.	17	4.47
Q09: My coworkers are committed to doing quality work.	18	4.44
Q10: I have a best friend at work. 4	18	3.67
Q11: In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.	18	3.27
Q12: This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.	18	4.50

APPENDIX G

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Rater Form Sample

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire
Rater Form

Name of Leader: _____ Date: _____

Organization ID #: _____ Leader ID #: _____

This questionnaire is used to describe the leadership style of the above-mentioned individual as you perceive it. Answer all items on this answer sheet. **If an item is irrelevant, or if you are unsure or do not know the answer, leave the answer blank.** Please answer this questionnaire anonymously.

Important (necessary for processing): Which best describes you?

___ I am at a higher organizational level than the person I am rating.
___ The person I am rating is at my organizational level.
___ I am at a lower organizational level than the person I am rating.
___ Other than the above.

Forty-five descriptive statements are listed on the following pages. Judge how frequently each statement fits the person you are describing. Use the following rating scale:

Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently, if not always
0	1	2	3	4

The Person I Am Rating. . .

1. Provides me with assistance in exchange for my efforts 0 1 2 3 4
2. *Re-examines critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate 0 1 2 3 4
3. Fails to interfere until problems become serious 0 1 2 3 4
4. Focuses attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions, and deviations from standards.................0 1 2 3 4
5. Avoids getting involved when important issues arise 0 1 2 3 4
6. *Talks about his/her most important values and beliefs 0 1 2 3 4
7. Is absent when needed 0 1 2 3 4
8. *Seeks differing perspectives when solving problems 0 1 2 3 4
9. *Talks optimistically about the future 0 1 2 3 4
10. *Instills pride in me for being associated with him/her 0 1 2 3 4
11. Discusses in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets 0 1 2 3 4
12. Waits for things to go wrong before taking action 0 1 2 3 4
13. *Talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished 0 1 2 3 4
14. *Specifies the importance of having a strong sense of purpose 0 1 2 3 4
15. *Spends time teaching and coaching 0 1 2 3 4

Continued ➔

APPENDIX H

MLQ Survey Results

MLQ Average of Participants' response to the Survey

Leadership Style	Subscale	Church A Employee	Church A Volunteer	Church B Employee	Church B Volunteer
	Transformational Leadership	3.35	3.04	3.37	2.33
	Builds Trust	3.38	3.16	3.38	2.56
Transformational	Acts with Integrity	3.65	3.50	3.65	3.23
	Encourages Others	3.58	3.30	3.42	2.81
	Encourages Innovative Thinking	2.62	2.66	2.98	1.7
	Coaches & Develops	2.92	3.11	2.98	2.2
	Reward Achievement	2.92	2.41	2.85	2.54
Transactional	Monitors Deviations & Mistakes	1.06	1.16	1.25	1.12
	Transactional Leadership	1.98	2.01	2.2	1.85
Laissez-Fair	Laissez-Fair (LFL)	0.15	0.58	0.66	0.86
Outcomes of Leadership	Generates Extra Effort Is Productive	3.21	2.87	3.42	2.34
	Satisfaction (SAT)	3.71	3.45	3.5	2.81

APPENDIX I

Deductive and Thematic Coding

Coded Transcripts with numerical values

Codes	Volunteers	Employees	Totals
Communications	3	6	9
Christian Worldview	5	8	13
Integrity	3	2	5
Humility	2	1	3
Calling from God	1	1	2
Pastor Man of Faith	4	5	9
Bible Based Church	5	3	8
Basic Needs			
Approachable	9	8	17
Safety to be Heard	2	5	7
Trust	3	4	7
Clear Expectation	4	3	7
Individual			
Pride in Service	2	6	8
Manager Support- Value	4	5	9
Contributions and Worth	2	2	2
Teamwork			
Personal Work Relationship	9	6	15
Opportunities for Teamwork	1	3	4
Sense of Community	7	8	15
Growth			
Ministry Opportunities	5	5	10
Progress and Mature in Role	0	4	4
Challenged to Learn	1	2	