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Case Study: Member Perception of a Federal Organization's Employee Recognition Program

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CASE STUDY: MEMBER PECEPTION OF A FEDERAL ORGANIZATION'S EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION PROGRAM

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental study was to clarify the purpose of Agency ABC's Recognition Council, while identifying opportunities for staff recognition and appreciation to be optimized within Agency ABC to assist in creating and sustaining employee engagement. This purpose is in direct correlation to the study's problem, to fill in research gaps due to a lack of existing documentation, best practices and research regarding federal recognition programs. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory was the conceptual framework that the researcher applied to this study. The researcher performed semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with five former members of Agency ABC's Recognition Council members. Interview questions were asked to investigate member perception regarding role, experiences and expectation in creating and sustaining employee engagement, as well as how may staff recognition be optimized to sustain employee engagement. Seven themes and 22 subthemes emerged from the subsequent analysis, providing insight into the study's research questions. The study's results indicated that participants felt that greater executive leadership collaboration with the council was necessary to enhance the purpose and operations of the council, while improved timeliness and agreement upon defining key terms and their application concerning the awards process would improve the council's authenticity. Findings from this study may be useful for senior executives within federal organizations, private sector organizations and federal employees.

Keywords: employee engagement, organizational development, employee recognition

DEDICATION

To my parents, who instilled in me the value of always continuing my education.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Employee performance plays a significant role in the overall success of an organization and recognizing employee contributions is critical to an organization's long-term success. While both employee engagement and recognition play a significant role in enabling employees to feel appreciated, valued, and to have a sense of purpose, recognition is only a part of an overall employee engagement strategy or program (Harter & Adkins, 2015). In an effort to improve employee performance in a rapidly changing work environment, many leaders of organizations have begun engaging their employees through offering training programs, establishing recognition and appreciation programs, or creating more collegial atmospheres in an attempt to improve performance and other work-associated metrics (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013). Changing market dynamics, coupled with technological advancement, cut-throat competition, and never-seen-before customer interaction levels make it necessary for leaders of organizations to embrace employee engagement to achieve and sustain a competitive advantage (Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

Barnes and Collier (2013) have endorsed employee engagement for its superior predictive power of performance and organizational behavior. Moreover, other researchers have supported the practice of employee engagement due to its positive consequences for organizations such as improved financial and operational performance (Hughes & Rog, 2008) and higher organizational commitment (Lee & Ok, 2016).

Many leaders of organizations believe that employee engagement activities may contribute to improving job retention (Marrelli, 2011). Researchers continue to identify and expound upon any correlation between expanding employee engagement and improving job retention. While Marrelli (2011) believed that highly engaged employees are motivated to do

their best, are innovative, and contribute to a collegial work environment, Smith, Spears-Jones, Acker, and Dean (2020) asserted that employee engagement, exemplified by positive perceptions of supervisors, workplace, and job, improves employee productivity and retention.

In contrast, a lack of engagement may lead to turmoil within an organization, as Fernandez (2007), Fragoso et. al. (2016) and Liss-Levinson, Bharthapudi, Leider, and Sellers (2015) stressed that disengagement results in high turnover, which costs time and resources spent in hiring replacements, slows productivity, and causes loss of institutional memory. Not every organization's leader may be aware of the fact that the human resource is the most valuable asset in an organization (Kahn, 1990), thus efforts to engage employees are critical in an attempt to reduce turnover.

The ability of organizations to achieve their business strategy and possess a sustainable competitive advantage depends to a large extent upon the performance of employees (Amoatemaa & Keyeremeh, 2016). There exists data asserting that recognition of positive employee performance assists short and long-term organizational output. To assist in recognizing and appreciating employee efforts, leaders of organizations may wish to implement recognition programs, as a well-designed recognition program can help propel revenue growth, boost worker productivity, and improve employee retention (Ladika, 2013).

Many first-line managers experience challenges engaging with, as well as recognizing when it may be necessary to reward their employees for their work contributions. Barth and de Beer (2017) detail several barriers that first-line managers may face concerning effectively recognizing employees that include their inability to objectively recognize actual performance - which may result in reward inaccuracies or recognizing employees in an untimely or inappropriate manner.

The U.S. Department of Labor (2015) identified employee engagement as an organizational challenge, noting that only 30% of U.S. employees are engaged at work, while a staggeringly low 13% of employees worldwide were engaged (Beck & Harter, 2015; Bersin, 2015). As organizational productivity is determined by employees' efforts and engagement (Musgrove, Ellinger, & Ellinger, 2014), leaders of organizations may wish to become better equipped in creating engagement and recognition programs that may assist in improving workforce productivity.

A lack of employee engagement may have dire consequences for an organization. As Bersin (2015) discovered, twice as many employees worldwide are disengaged than those who are engaged, and unfortunately this negative behavior is often spread to other employees within the organization. As the modern work environment forces managers and their employees to respond to contradictory demands (Brun & Dugas, 2008), the adjustments they have to make, along with extra effort they put in to perform increasingly complex and burdensome tasks (Collerette, Shenieder, & Legris, 2001), compound their need for recognition. Recognition, as a form of employee engagement, may assist with improving employee engagement.

Recognizing strong employee performances may assist managers' effectiveness in both the short and long-term. Highly motivated employees serve as the competitive advantage for an organization, as their performance leads an organization to accomplish its goals while implementing a business strategy to achieve growth and prosperity (Danish & Usman, 2010). Employee recognition has been identified to be a highly effective motivational instrument that may have significant positive impact on employee job satisfaction and performance, as well as overall organizational performance (Rahim & Duad, 2013). Conversely, a work environment lacking in motivated employees has been identified to produce employees who hardly practice

their skills, lack innovativeness, and are not fully committed to the extent an organization's leader needs them to be (Amoatemaa & Kyeremeh, 2016).

A number of organizations, both government and private, have attempted to develop employee engagement programs with varying success. Successful leaders of organizations recognize the importance of developing a recognition program to recognize and validate the work of employees (Sitati, Were, Waititu, & Miringu, 2019). Unfortunately, there still exists a large number of employers who are hesitant to initiate recognition programs, as they dismiss them as high-cost activities that bring little tangible benefits to the company and its employees (Sitati, et al., 2019).

There is sufficient data supporting the value of implementing recognition programs in an organizational structure. Zani, et al. (2011) believed that employee recognition is a highly effective motivational instrument that may have significant positive impact on employee job satisfaction and performance as well as overall organization performance. Furthermore, by reinforcing expected behavior, leaders of organizations not only indicate to employees that their efforts are noticed and appreciated but also inculcate in them the organizational values, goals, objectives, priorities, and their role in achieving them (Amoatemaa & Kyeremeh, 2016). The imbedding of organizational values and objectives have been shown to affect organizations in a positive manner, as employers are likely to benefit from increased employee productivity and decreased costs that are associated with turnover rates (Sitati, et al., 2019).

When instituting a recognition and appreciation program, it is essential for leaders of organizations to consider the inclusion of three recognition areas: Everyday recognition, informal recognition and formal recognition (Robbins, 2019). Most organizations have long established organization-wide formal award programs that usually lead to evolving department-specific

awards and more informal recognition and social recognition (Saunderson, 2016). Additionally, it is essential for organizations to distinguish between recognition and appreciation endeavors, while rewarding employees accordingly. As recognition is performance based and focuses upon providing positive feedback based upon results or performance, appreciation emphasizes a person's inherent value – their worth as a colleague (Robbins, 2019).

Another significant consideration when creating a recognition program is providing employees with choices regarding the types of rewards they may wish to receive. For example, Federal employees rated non-monetary rewards such as, "The personal satisfaction I experience," "Having interesting work," "My job security," and "Being able to serve the public," as important to seeking and continuing employment with their organization compared to, "My awards and bonuses" (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 2012, p. iii). In many instances, traditional monetary awards do not necessarily correlate to employee satisfaction or long-term organizational success. Zobal (1999) wrote that organizations that rely on financial rewards oftentimes produce a motivator that equates to providing immediate incentives, versus non-monetary rewards that may produce long-term benefits for a corporation, such as new approaches to work.

Organizations - federal agencies in particular due to limited financial rewards, need to become more effective in expanding employee engagement, as well as designing and delivering effective recognition, delivering the appropriate awards to the correct employees in a timely manner, that are preferred by the employee (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 2012). The focus of this study was to identify the role and expectations of the Agency ABC's (a pseudonym of the federal agency the researcher works for) Recognition Council members in helping to create and sustain employee engagement among staff.

Statement of the Problem

There exists a lack of documentation and few best practice examples of high-performing federal employee engagement programs. According to A. Damiano (personal communication, March 2020), Agency ABC's leadership created a Recognition Council whose intended purpose was to identify and submit an award on behalf of outstanding staff performances. However, the concept of creating and/or improving employee engagement was not included in the Council's objectives, as the sole purpose of the Council was to recognize employees. As recognition and appreciation is a part of employee engagement, it is this researcher's belief that it is essential for this concept to be included in future Recognition Council discussions. As the Recognition Council worked to recognize employees during calendar year 2020, it ran into problems regarding which staff member(s) to recognize with what type of award, as well as failing to receive in some instances endorsement from employees' supervisors regarding award nominations on behalf of the Recognition Council (W. Welsh, personal communication, March 2020). Some of these challenges may have related to a lack of a charter or formalized list of objectives the Recognition Council could have operated from.

Purpose of the Study

Data was collected on feedback from interviews with Recognition Council members from the past two years to identify areas where they perceive Recognition Council operational shortfalls may have existed, areas for improvement and perhaps most important, suggestions for how to imbed itself in an Agency ABC-level employee engagement program within the context of the Recognition Council's vision and objectives. In addition, this study's literature review

identified strategies of both employee engagement programs, recognition and appreciation programs.

Research Questions

This research was completed with the goal of discovering how the Recognition Council, according to its members, may identify and imbed elements of an employee engagement program at the Agency ABC-level. Furthermore, this researcher sought to identify policies, program(s), procedures, limitations, and opportunities as they relate to the operations of the Recognition Council. Consisting of in-depth interviews of former Recognition Council members, this instrumental case study with an observational approach assisted in distinguishing patterns and emergent themes about how a group such as this Recognition Council may operate effectively in other federal organizations. The research questions that guided this study are:

Research Question 1. How do former Recognition Council members perceive the Council's role, experience, and expectation in helping to create and sustain employee engagement among staff?

Research Question 2. How, according to former Recognition Council members, may staff recognition be optimized within Agency ABC to sustain employee engagement?

Conceptual Framework

Beckman and Cook (2007) defined conceptual framework as a theory, an approach, or a model for how things work that situates a research question within the appropriate theoretical context. McGaghie, Bordage, and Shea (2001) added that a study's conceptual framework will help guide the selection of study variables through identifying categories and ultimately provides a means to interpret the study results by allowing for a "why" or "because."

There are several well-known theories of motivation that may assist in defining the categories of this research study and how they may relate to one another. Prior to selecting a conceptual framework for this study, Maslow's Hierarchy (Kroth, 2007), Ouchi's Theory Z (Ouchi, 1981), and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1982) were explored. Herzberg (1982) introduced his Two-Factor Theory in 1959, which explained that one set of factors, referred to as hygiene factors, may cause job dissatisfaction within an individual if absent; another set of factors, referred to as motivational factors, when present may create job satisfaction and motivation within an individual (Kroth, 2007). The first set of factors include hygiene or maintenance factors such as salary, working conditions and supervision, while the second set of factors, referred to as motivational factors, comprise recognition, advancement, and the nature of the work itself (Kroth, 2007).

Herzberg (2003) believed that employees were not content solely with lower-order hygienic factors, but also required motivational factors such as achievement and recognition. Herzberg (2003) also believed that both hygienic and motivational factors were of equally importance, but to effectively motivate employees for the long-term, management must enrich the content of the actual work, as improving hygienic factors will not optimize employee performance on its own volition.

In 1954, Maslow (1970) published Motivation and Personality. Though this work did not provide research findings to support his theory, it was widely respected for its common sense and simple explanations and has continued to be applied in organizational settings (Gawel, 1996). Stewart, Nodoushani, and Stumpf, (2018) asserted that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a theory that advocates employee happiness, and that from a work perspective, this theory brings together wages, perks, and company culture into one unified whole.

Maslow's theory is based upon an individual's five tiers of human needs and is represented in the shape of a pyramid (Maslow, 1970). His theory is based upon the premise that self-actualization needs are at the top level of a pyramid, whereas basic human needs, i.e., physiological needs such as food, shelter, safety, are at the bottom. An example of how Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs relates to the workplace may be witnessed by analyzing self-actualization needs, which are more difficult to satisfy and involve management actively engaging motivated employees with work that meets their potential, such as the promotion of a motivated employee into a more challenging position (Stewart, et al., 2018).

Introduced in the 1980s by American economist and professor Ouchi, Theory Z is believed to be the Japanese consensus management style promoting stable employment, high productivity, and job satisfaction (Lunenberg, 2011). The assumption Theory Z supports is that employees will demonstrate significant loyalty to a company in return for a stable life focusing on work-life balance and well-being (Ouchi, 1981). Theory Z is a soft or enlightened style of management and has eight characteristics: Collective decision-making between supervisor and employee; long-term employment; job rotation; slow promotion; focus on training; care for personal circumstances; formalized measures (employees know where they stand); and individual responsibility (Ouchi, 1981).

After consideration of the aforementioned theories, Herzberg's theory (2003) was selected as the conceptual framework for this research. There are several critical distinctions when comparing Maslow's (1970) theory to Herzberg's (2003), the latter of which were found to be more favorable to this research. Relative to the goal of this study, Herzberg's theory highlights the importance of rewards systems and monitoring when and how employees are

rewarded, also stipulating that simple recognition is often enough to motive employees and increase job satisfaction (Gawel, 1996).

Additionally, Herzberg's theory when compared to Maslow's theory, which emphasized that unsatisfied needs of an individual act as the stimulator, believed that gratified needs govern the behavior and performance of an individual (Kroth, 2007). As a result, relative to Maslow's work, Herzberg's (1982) theory relied more upon reward and recognition, compared to Maslow's, which focused more upon human needs and satisfaction (Kroth, 2007). Finally, Herzberg's theory was selected due to the fact that one of its factors addresses those motivational needs met by motivator factors such as achievements, recognition, or the work itself; it is only through boosting these motivating factors that a company can realistically expect enhanced motivation of their employees (Damij, Levnajic, Skrt, & Suklan, 2015).

Definition of Terms

The following terms that are contained and applied with frequency within this research study are defined as:

Employee Appreciation – Actions an employer may take to emphasize an employee's inherent value, or worth as a colleague, to the organization (Robbins, 2019).

Employee Engagement – Is an active, motivational, fulfilling concept that reflects the simultaneous expression of multiple investments of physical, affective, and cognitive resources in work (Eldor, 2016).

Employee Recognition - The assignment of personal rewards (i.e., interest or approval) for individual efforts and work accomplishment to recognize and reinforce the desired behaviors displayed by an employee (Brun & Dugas, 2008).

Human Capital – A unit-level resource that emerges from the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics of individual employees (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011).

Motivation – Reason for action(s); in the case of this research, the reasons for actions based upon a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, as defined in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Kreye, 2015).

Organizational Development – The study of an organization's performance and methods by which it may transform (Pavitra, 2017).

Social Recognition – The use of social networking sites by which to recognize and appreciate employee performance while improving employee engagement (Nayak, Nayak, & Jean, 2020).

Assumptions, Limitations and Scope

Assumptions

This researcher assumed that the members of the Recognition Council who were interviewed for this study provided honest feedback based upon their experiences. Another assumption is that the Recognition Council may not necessarily be the optimal vehicle by which to provide recognition to Agency ABC staff, that there may be other methods to optimize staff recognition and enhance employee engagement other than using the Recognition Council.

Limitations

From the researcher's perspective, the limitations identified include a concern with interviewers' willingness to be truthful, despite the assumptions listed above. Other limitations include the possible difficulty of participants recalling events and actions the council took one-two years ago, the bias or unconscious bias specific members may possess regarding their experiences as a council member, and a possible small sample size, which may hinder the ability

to employ maximum variation to represent diverse cases and to fully describe perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, this case study only includes one case, i.e., one Recognition Council, which prohibited a larger universe of data and cases to compare one another to.

Scope

The scope of this study included the Recognition Council, its past membership, and its duties. The total number of prior council numbers is approximately 20 individuals. It was the hope of this researcher that a significant proportion of these past Council members would volunteer to participate in this study.

Rationale and Significance

The significance of this study was that findings from participant interviews of prior Recognition Council members provided an analysis concerning the role that the Recognition Council served in helping enhance an employee engagement program, including providing recommendations that may improve Agency ABC's recognition and appreciation program. An in-depth description of organizational development concepts, operational strategies and administrative tools used by managers/leaders in this case study has been provided. Further analysis and definition of future roles of this Recognition Council, including recommending staff engagement strategies versus solely focusing upon recognition and appreciation, or perhaps including the creation of another group working to improve employee engagement has also been provided.

In summary, exploration of how Council members perceived the function of the Recognition Council, as well as suggestions as to how employee engagement, specifically recognition and appreciation, may be optimized within Agency ABC, has been presented. The responses of these study participants have been analyzed through the lens of Herzberg's

(Herzberg, 2003) theory to assist in analyzing the data that the researcher collected. Findings from this study informed opportunities to improve upon Agency ABC's employee engagement opportunities, which may include a recognition and appreciation program. Finally, and perhaps most important, this research served as framework to inform and assist other federal organizations in creating a cohort of senior leaders to recognize and appreciate their own employees.

Conclusion

Chapter 1 introduced the purpose of this study, which was to discover how former Recognition Council members perceive the Council's role, experience and expectation in helping to create and sustain employee engagement among staff and how staff recognition may be optimized within Agency ABC to sustain employee engagement. Also included in this chapter are the Background, Statement of Problem, Research Questions, Conceptual Framework, Assumptions, and Significance of this study. Literature examined thus far reinforces that the practice of employee engagement for organizations includes many positive consequences such as improved financial and operational performance (Hughes & Rog, 2008), higher organizational commitment (Lee & Ok, 2016), and increase employee retention (Hakanen, Peeters, & Schaufeli, 2018; van Beek, Taris, & Schaufeli, 2011). It is also important to consider that employee recognition has been identified to be a highly effective motivational instrument that may have significant positive impact on employee job satisfaction and performance, as well as overall organizational performance (Rahim & Duad, 2013). It is anticipated that this research will be important to organizations; specifically federal organizations, as it provides analysis regarding the challenges of creating, implementing, and evaluating a recognition program.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

There exists significant research regarding the positive impact employee engagement may have upon an organization. Shuck, Reio, and Rocco (2011) wrote that engaging employees has been observed to provide significant organizational advantages such as higher levels of productivity, organizational citizenship behavior, and improve overall performance. Furthermore, Shuck, and Wollard (2010) believed that engaged employees are likely to be more productive, more profitable, less likely to resign (easier to retain), less likely to be absent, and more willing to engage in discretionary efforts. Additionally, Herzberg (1982) asserted that if managers enriched jobs, employees would be more interested in their work, exercise greater responsibility, and staff would produce higher quality output.

There also exists research regarding the benefits of employee recognition in producing positive work-related results, as managers have consistently invested in recognition programs as motivational instruments in the workplace (Feys, Anseel, & Willie, 2013). As the *Legal Monitor* (2020) has noted, employee recognition has been a positive driver in increasing employee engagement. Employee recognition, it seems, has become a key component of an employee engagement program, assisting in producing positive work results as well as increasing employee engagement.

Exploratory reviews of literature were conducted for this study and included topics such as employee recognition, employee engagement, factors relating to employee engagement, and Herzberg's (1982) Two-Factor Theory. A focus on research completed within the past five years was attempted, however, the fact that research in this field of study has existed for some time, and there was a need to include seminal pieces of literature in this discipline, it was necessary to

include older references on occasion. For example, literature describing the theoretical foundation of the conceptual framework selected for this study dated back several decades. The reviewing hundreds of resources including peer-reviewed and trade journal articles, books and websites has enabled this researcher to acquire in-depth knowledge on topics contained in the review of literature. This has also aided in this researcher's development of the research questions, further understanding on how employee engagement relates to employee recognition, staff retention and in some instances, employee turnover.

Organization of the Chapter

Chapter 2 is organized into sections that include steps taken by this researcher to conduct the review of literature in support of the identified purpose of study, specific topics of study and the conceptual framework. Computer searches of relevant literature were accomplished through the use of the University of New England's eLibrary. Keywords used during this search included phrases encompassing employee engagement, employee recognition and appreciation programs, successful employee recognition programs, the dark side of employee engagement and conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

More than two million articles contained in the University of New England's eLibrary included at least one of these key phrases. Articles were eliminated if they did not relate to the topic of study or if outdated research (more than five years old) was not considered a foundational piece of literature, i.e., describing the foundation of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (2003). Based upon the extensive literature search and the focus of the study, topical areas were developed that include (a) the importance of employee engagement, (b) the dark side of leadership relative to employee engagement**,** (c) recommendations for improving employee engagement, and (d) employee recognition and appreciation.

The Importance of Employee Engagement

As business has become more globalized and competitive, the environment surrounding recruiting and retaining employees has become increasingly aggressive, thus requiring organizations to institute employee engagement activities. Employee engagement has become a high priority for many organizations, as they need extremely competent and highly engaged employees who can meet the employer's expectations of them (Peters, 2019). According to a survey conducted by HR.com, over 90% of 717 human resources administrators within the United States who were surveyed believed that there is solid evidence linking engagement to employee performance, and that engagement has the strongest impact on customer service and quality (HR.com, 2018).

Kahn (1990), who published a seminal paper on employee engagement defined employee engagement as, "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles by which they employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance" (p. 694). Vigoda-Gadot, Eldor, and Schohat (2012) described employee engagement as, "The self-investment and resources of simultaneous physical, emotional and cognitive energies that employees bring to their work" (p. 520). Similarly, Peters (2019) defines employee engagement as, "An emotional commitment to one's work and a willingness to give one's best at work" (p. 9).

Engaged employees are those who possess a willingness to be collaborative with colleagues, take on new challenges, possess a high, positive energy and enthusiasm with their approach to work, and are willing to go the extra mile in achieving results (Damij, et al., 2015). Ugaddan and Park (2016) believed that engaged employees are more likely to engage in discretionary efforts, which is the level of effort above and beyond the minimum level of effort

required. Additionally, Eldro, and Harpaz (2016) define employee engagement as, “An active, motivational, fulfilling concept that reflects the simultaneous expression of multiple investments of physical, affective, and cognitive resources in work” (p. 214).

Throughout the literature review a concept frequently emerged which stressed that the changing demands of businesses required an engaged workforce. As such, the Korn Ferry Institute (2019) found that engaged employees are more willing to accept and embrace organizational changes needed to address customer concerns. However, due to the critical nature of employers needing an engaged workforce to meet high expectations, the employee work contract has changed (Bersin, 2015). Employees now find themselves in the driver’s seat, as companies vie for a talented workforce while seeking to provide a work experience that not only brings out the best performance in people, but also focuses on intangible factors, such as providing the opportunity to be creative, creating development opportunities, inspiring leadership, and affording recognition opportunities (Peters, 2019).

The importance of cultivating an atmosphere of employee engagement cannot be emphasized enough, as engaged employees contribute significantly to the productivity of businesses. Ram and Prabhakar (2011) suggested that engaged employees are emotionally and cognitively immersed in their job, which allows for a sense of meaningfulness and value in the work leading to higher sensitivity to an organization’s mission. As such, Carnegie (2015) noted that engaged employees are up to 202% more productive than unengaged employees. Furthermore, Ram, and Prabhaker (2011) emphasized that higher employee engagement can lead to a higher degree of teamwork, translating to higher growth, productivity, and revenue for an organization. Finally, Carnegie (2015), in supporting a higher level of employee engagement,

asserted that staff turnover costs organizations approximately $11 billion annually and may be considerably decreased with an engaged and committed employee environment.

As vital as the concept of employee engagement is, it is of equal importance for managers to apply it in a thoughtful manner to gain favorable outcomes (Peters, 2019). In 2013, Jenkins and Delbridge studied two United Kingdom companies' managerial approaches to applying employee engagement, which highlighted a soft and a hard approach. Each company employed a different strategy regarding attempting to improve their respective employee engagement. As such, the results of these companies varied dramatically.

One company, VoiceTel, was in a favorable market position and embodied a "soft approach to employee engagement, whereupon enhancing employee productivity was not the sole driver of their strategy" (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013, p. 2670). VoiceTel leadership sought to convey to their employees that they were valued and trusted and cared for in a familial sense, as the company was led by a brother and sister team. Features of their enhanced employee engagement program included not only a private health-plan and favorable holiday provision, but also bonus payments, social celebrations, interest-free loans, a pleasant working environment including a relaxed dress code, and bi-directional communications with management, including personal recognition emails from management (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013). These enhancements produced a very positive view of the work environment. Staff responded via survey that, "You don't wake up in the morning and think 'Oh my God, work! It's more like you can get up and see your friends and working in between" (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013, p. 2).

Conversely, EnergyServ, the other company studied, instituted a hard approach to employee engagement and operated from a position to maximize productivity, the opposite of VoiceTel's approach (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013). Jenkins and Delbridge (2013) explained that

the goal of EnergyServ's employee engagement program was to drive profitability through maximizing employee effort, as the overarching organizational objective was financial success. EnergyServ's strategy failed to improve employee satisfaction, as employees reported that attrition increased due to corporate failure to address hiring while overall work continued to increase (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013). Employees also complained of EnergyServ's lack of an awards program, pay inequities between EnergyServ and its competitors, the creation of an additional layer of management, and the lack of opportunity to communicate to any level of management (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013).

It was no surprise that the two organizational approaches produced different results for each organization. Jenkins and Delbridge (2013) argued that EngergyServ's hard approach, which included no recognition mechanisms, a low perception of organizational integrity and fractured social relations led to their 29% workforce satisfaction score. Alternatively, VoiceTel's soft approach, "centered on promoting positive workplace conditions and relationships between management and employees, designing work and forging a work environment which was conducive to promoting employee engagement" (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013, p. 2,670). As a result of this study, it may be concluded that a softer approach to instituting employee engagement may produce higher employee satisfaction.

The Dark Side of Leadership Relative to Employee Engagement

The dark side of leadership has been an important topic of significant research over the past decade or so (Mathieu, Neumann, Hare, & Babiak, 2013). Mathieu et al. (2013) defines the dark side of leadership as behaviors exhibited by leadership that may include ridiculing and degrading employees, lying and deceptiveness, blaming others for their mistakes, harassment, and physical aggression. Organizations that allow the dark side of leadership to permeate their

culture may experience poor employee outcomes. In 2007, the UK's Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) estimated that the costs to business of employee stress and other mental health conditions for the UK economy are 3.8 billion pounds per year.

The dark side of leadership additionally includes negative behaviors. Schyns and Schilling (2013) note that managers who exercise dark or undesirable employee engagement tactics include many negative behaviors one would expect, such as self-promotion, self-centeredness and displaying authoritative behavior. Schyns and Schilling (2013) have highlighted the negative effects of the dark side of leadership. Tepper (2000) has asserted that the negative effects of the dark side of leadership negatively impacted job satisfaction, increase stress among employees, increase turnover and absenteeism, increase emotional exhaustion, and decrease performance. Clearly, the dark side of leadership may have significant negative impact on an organization's employees.

A lack of management support, or even the perception of a lack of support, may decrease employee performance. Harris, Kacmar, and Zivnuska (2007) have written that the dark side of leadership is associated with a decrease in employee work performance. Consequently, Bakker and Demerouti (2008) have indicated that job resources, which include supervisor support, considerably enhance employee engagement, especially during heightened job strain. During times of work challenges, it is critical that employees trust their managers, as an employee's trust in their leader helps determine the productivity level of the individual, indirectly affecting the organization's performance (Gwinner, Bitner, Brown, & Kumar, 2011). Jabeen and Rahin (2021) believed that employees who work in stressful environments under despotic leaders resultantly lose their trust in their leaders, as the loss of the resource of trust reduces their task performance.

Potential negative effects of employee engagement. Employee engagement applied in the context of the dark side of leadership poses several threats, as Garrad and Chamorro-Premuzic (2016) explained that engagement itself can be a barrier to improving performance if it's taken to an extreme, as virtually any psychological attribute at very high levels is problematic. Garrad and Chamorro-Premuzic (2016) cautioned that leadership must be cautious if it intends to create just enough tension in the workplace to drive healthy competition and intrinsic motivation.

One such example of extreme behavior serving as an impediment to organizational improvement are companies who embrace the status quo (Garrad & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2016). In this instance, employees, though motivated, may resist change as it may appear as counterintuitive to them (Garrad & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2016). Garrad and Chamorro-Premuzic (2016) explain further that an engaged workforce becomes complacent if it is not self-critical enough, which may impact their ability to stay ahead of the competition.

Another possible negative effect of employee engagement is employee burnout, defined by Garrad and Chamorr-Premuzic (2016) as mental and/or physical exhaustion in the workplace. In many instances, it is easy for highly engaged employees, who exhibit an excessive degree of discretionary effort, to become so involved in their job that they stop being concerned about other parts of their lives, including their health (Garrad & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2016). As Jenkins and Delbridge (2013) cited in their study, many employees extended their discretionary effort, resulting in increased workloads and increased stress. Robertson and Cooper (2009) also reported that psychological well-being is a major health risk for employees.

Finally, an additional negative effect of employee engagement speaks to giving an unfair advantage to specific personality types, as employees who are more optimistic, positive, and

agreeable have been found to be more engaged (Garrad & Charmoor-Premuzic, 2016). Garrad and Charmoor-Premuzic (2016) explained that it's important not to exclude those with different personalities, i.e., those who may be more demanding, pessimistic, introverted, as personalities that may exhibit slight negative characteristics may assist in helping to innovate or solve complex problems, as distinct personalities thrive in different situations.

Recommendations for Improving Employee Engagement

Companies that consistently implement strategies to improve employees' trust, which may enhance employee engagement, are often more successful than companies with lower degrees of employee engagement (Jean & Pradham, 2017). Jean and Pradhan (2017) wrote that several research findings support the fact that the top 20% of multinational corporations with the highest employee engagement scores are consistently supportive of employees, such as Toyota's Georgetown plant, whose corporate culture emphasizes both individual creativity and teamwork. Jean and Pradham (2017) further assert that companies that demonstrate strong employee engagement often realize higher output, improved retention, and a higher degree of innovation among their employees.

Harter and Adkins (2015) wrote that, "Employee engagement is a tangible concept, and may be measured in both intensity and importance" (p. 2). Harter and Adkins' (2015) research asserted that employees ranked the "feeling of accomplishment that one gets from work" as a more significant motivator than" (p. 2). Engaged employees feel ownership of their work, thus expending a higher degree of effort if necessary. Jena and Pradhan (2017) defined employee engagement as a positive work attitude where an individual goes above and beyond the call of duty, elevating their level of ownership, as well as advancing organizational interests.

Jena and Pradhan (2017) listed two recommendations concerning how to assist employees to create a sense of strong work involvement, feel passion and excitement and enable them to put their heart and soul into their work. First, by initiating compelling job assignments, employees may feel a sense of greater purpose regarding their work, such as accomplishment and empowerment (Jean & Pradhan, 2017). Second, by promulgating an environment that emphasizes interpersonal harmony, employees will experience a sense of well-being and safety, which will contribute to positive and healthy relationships with colleagues and supervisors (Jean & Pradhan, 2017). Leiter and Maslach (2003) maintained that a lively, attentive, and responsive community is incompatible with employee burnout.

In essence, according to research, employee engagement, particularly in the context of reward or recognition, is a critical component to an organization's growth. Macauley (2015) has written that engaged employees have a higher rate of retention, as well as a sustained and elevated rate of motivation. Macauley (2015) also believed that engagement provides employees with a feeling of value, and that this relationship helps not only retain employees but provides them with the motivation to work. Additionally, Macauley (2015) writes that the creation of a reward and recognition systems contributes to a culture of employee engagement. Macauley (2015) believed that consistent, sincere and timely feedback and interaction with employees are a necessity in sustaining a meaningful relationship between employee, manager and organization.

Employee Recognition and Appreciation

Employee recognition and appreciation are essential elements of any organization's employee engagement program. Majernik and Patrnchak (2014) wrote that recognition at work is a significant factor in driving employee engagement. As research shows that such factors such as salary, benefits and job security represent a small fraction of employees' job satisfaction

(Christensen, Allworth, & Dillon, 2012), 80% of motivation comes from motivating factors, such as recognition, responsibility, and meaningful work (Herzberg, 1968). As a result of recognition being identified as a factor that may enhance employee performance and motivation (Godkin, Parayitam, & Natarajan, 2010), managers often spend a significant amount of time considering which employees they may recognize and in what manner, in the hope of increasing employee motivation.

Many organizations face challenges in establishing a creative and consistent way to recognize and appreciate their employees (Godkin, et al., 2010). Prior to deciding upon how and when to recognize and appreciate employees, it is important to learn the difference between the two terms. Brun and Dugas (2008) defined recognition as the assignment of personal rewards (i.e., interest, approval, and appreciation) for individual efforts and work accomplishment to recognize and reinforce the desired behaviors displayed by an employee. Appreciation, on the other hand, may be defined as the emotion an employee feels when their employer emphasizes their inherent value, or worth both as a colleague and to the organization (Robbins, 2019). In summary, appreciation is a feeling and recognition is the method.

The importance of employee recognition and appreciation cannot be stressed enough, as noted in a Towers Watson (2010) study that observed that "manager-delivered recognition of an employee performance boosts employee engagement the way a turbo-charger cranks up a sports car's horsepower" (p. 2). White (2016) wrote that when individuals feel appreciated and valued for their contributions in the workplace, good results follow, including increased employee engagement, less staff turnover, and higher customer satisfaction ratings. Despite these observations by White (2016), there still exists a substantial number of disengaged workers in

the United States (White, 2016). As a result, managers face a constant struggle to help employees whom they supervise feel valued and appreciated (White, 2016).

Creating a culture of recognition and appreciation. Managers assume the responsibility of creating and sustaining an environment that supports and encourages employee recognition and appreciation. Unfortunately, there exists substantial research that details employees' failure to receive sufficient recognition (Rath & Clifton, 2004). In 2012, the Society of Human Resource Management reported that although 51% of supervisors maintain they are successful in recognizing high-performing employees, only 17% of employees in the same group reported that managers recognize them sufficiently. Similarly, a study performed by Rath and Clifton (2004) identified that 65% of the North American workforce received no recognition at work during the past 12 months.

If employees do not feel valued or appreciated, they may begin to feel like a commodity or that they are being used (White, 2014). Employees desire to feel that their contribution is important to their management, as well as their organization. Huppke (2013) cited a survey conducted by the Chicago Tribune where 30,000 individuals who worked in the Chicago area were asked the number one reason why they enjoy their work – the majority answered that they felt appreciated at their company.

In order for employees to feel appreciated, management must articulate in an authentic manner the value that the employees provide to an organization. Chapman and White (2011) have identified conditions that need to be ingrained into an organization's culture for employees to feel they are truly appreciated. First, that appreciation be communicated regularly, more often than annually. Second, that appreciation be communicated to the recipient in a manner that the

employee prefers. Finally, that appreciation be personal and individualized so that it would feel authentic.

White's (2011) article also stressed two additional suggestions in how managers of organizations may create a valuable and sustainable culture of recognition and appreciation. First, that it is important to be mindful of the fact that in many organizations, employees desire an opportunity to recognize one another versus a traditional top-down approach to recognition (White, 2011). Last, that implementing an organization-wide mandated recognition program may not be the most effective method to articulate appreciation to employees, as a mandated program may lack the authenticity to allow employees to feel truly valued by an organization (White, 2011).

Strategies for recognizing performances. White (2011) wrote that it is the responsibility of management to implement organizational policies regarding the structure of its recognition and appreciation program. Additionally, White (2011) noted that a personalized culture of recognition and appreciation should include the frequency of how often employees are considered for recognition and appreciation, as well as flexibility in the manner by which employees are recognized and appreciated. As this researcher wrote earlier, White (2011) wrote how managers may avoid establishing mandated, cookie-cutter recognition and appreciation programs whereupon employees may question the program's authenticity. Conversely, White (2011) asserted that it is important for managers to establish over-arching strategies concerning when specific employee behaviors are recognized in what manner and by whom, on a consistent timetable to be determined by organizational leadership.

It is vital that organizations develop a consistent process and a set of strategies to recognize and appreciate their employees, as a recognition and appreciation program that awards

staff capriciously or randomly is worse than having no program at all (Hastwell, 2020). Hastwell (2020) identified several strategies managers should observe while they create policies for recognizing and appreciating employees. Those strategies include: "Clearly define recognition and appreciation criteria that align with organizational objectives, reward people in a timely manner, understand that individuals are motivated by different incentives, recognize various types of success, and create awards/rewards with multiple winners" (Hastwell, 2020, p. 1).

Chapman and White's (2011) notion that appreciation should be personal and individualized and may improve employee performance was applied in an experiment administered by Bradler and Neckermann (2019). Bradler and Neckermann (2019) conducted a field experiment that measured the effectiveness of employees' production following the receipt of certain types of gifts. A cohort of 380 workers were paid a flat rate of 25 euros for three hours of data entry. Following 100 minutes of work, each member of the cohort was presented with the 25 euros earned and one of the four following gifts: (1) small monetary gift, (2) a thank you card, (3) a small monetary gift and a thank you card, or (4) a small monetary gift and a thank you card with a personalized element (in this case, the monetary gift wrapped in a bow tie and attached to the thank you card), (Bradler & Neckermann, 2019). The objective of this experiment was to see how each cohort performed for several hours following the receipt of one of the four gifts.

Bradler and Neckermann (2019) concluded that the two groups who received both the monetary gift as well as the thank you card outperformed the other two groups who did not receive both gifts. However, the group that received both the monetary award and thank you card wrapped in a bowtie outperformed all other groups significantly - roughly doubling their production during the subsequent period of time following the awarding of the gifts.

Interestingly, the group who received a monetary gift and thank you card without the bowtie performed at a level commensurate to that of the groups who received either the monetary gift or the thank you card. Bradler and Neckermann (2019) demonstrated that the presence of a personal touch significantly increased the performance of the workers.

Preferences to receiving recognition and appreciation. An important consideration for managers to keep in mind when recognizing and appreciating their employees is to ascertain from their employee the method by which the recipient may wish to receive recognition or appreciation (Chapman & White, 2012). While some employees prefer to be recognized in front of a group, others are more comfortable receiving praise from their manager in private (Chapman & White, 2012). A large increase in number of people currently in the workforce who were born between 1981 and 1996 who at times may be referred to as millennials have their own opinions regarding recognition and appreciation (White, 2018a). For example, many appear to favor working remotely, apply the effect of social media and have their own preferences regarding how appreciation is communicated from their managers (White, 2018a).

Recognizing millennials. It is important for managers of organizations to recognize the characteristics of the millennial workforce so they may create applicable employee engagement programs that match their preferences. Pollak (2015) believed that it is imperative for managers to understand this group's characteristics and preferences as they pertain to engagement, recognition and appreciation, as he noted that as of 2020, millennials will comprise nearly half of the total working population. Gallup (2016) noted that the majority of millennials are less engaged in the workplace than all other generations, and that earning more money is not a primary driving force. In addition, Asghar (2014) observed that 74% of millennials desire

flexible work schedules, while Fond (2017) concluded that millennials value feedback and acknowledgement, and they desire it weekly or immediately, when possible.

White (2018a) has found that in the context of recognition and appreciation, millennials do not prefer tangible gifts, but rather the ability to have a flexible work schedule, work collaboratively with team members and have a sense that they are improving the world. White (2018a) also found that millennials, similar to their older counterparts, prefer appreciation to be provided via verbal interactions than in writing. In step with Bradler and Neckermann's (2019) research regarding the significance of a personal touch, White (2018a) concurred and wrote that gifts feel superficial and meaningless to millennials who receive a tangible reward but is not accompanied by a word of praise or have someone stop by to see how they are doing.

Recognizing remote employees. Advances in technology may increase options employees have regarding how and where they work. As the use and quality of technology has improved, the number of remote workers has increased (Levanon, 2020). Additionally, given how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected U.S. employees' inability to physically access the workplace, there's been a dramatic increase of remote work from employees' homes since spring 2020 (Levanon, 2020). Levanon (2020) wrote that the non-profit business membership group the Conference Board conducted two surveys among U.S. human resources executives in April and September of 2020. The Conference Board indicated that prior to the pandemic, only 5% of those who responded reported that prior to the pandemic 40% or more of their employees were working primarily from home (Levanon, 2020). However, by April 2020, nearly 20% of those who responded stated that they expected 40% or more of their employees to work primarily from home after the pandemic. The last survey, which was conducted in September of 2020, asserted

that over 34% of those who responded now expect that 40% or more of their employees will work primarily from home 12 months post-pandemic (Levanon, 2020).

In 2017, Gallup reported that in 2016, 43% of American workers spent part of their week working remotely, and that the proportion of remote workers continues to increase every year. Furthermore, between 80% and 90% of the U.S. workforce would like to work remotely at least part-time (Global Workplace Analytics, 2017). When linked to Levanon's research, data and trending indicate that remote workers are increasing in number, thus managers must develop and implement solutions to recognize and appreciate this group of employees more effectively.

White (2018b) wrote how a challenge that managers frequently encounter when deciding how to recognize and appreciate remote workers is figuring out the most effective method of communicating long distance. White (2018b) suggested using multiple forms of communication (i.e., email, texts, phone, and especially videoconferencing), scheduling occasional calls when it is convenient to the employee and planning consistent calls simply to chat or check-in. In regard to receiving recognition and appreciation, remote workers highly value quality time from their managers in the sense of discussing opportunities; opportunities to collaborate on work, receive praise from colleagues and managers, and simply check-in (White, 2018b).

The effects of social media. Applying social media technology in the workplace is becoming increasingly important as organizations attempt to adapt to the needs of their customers (Nayak, et al., 2020). One challenge many organizations face is linking their human resource management strategy (i.e., employee policies and practices) to their business strategy in order to help create a competitive advantage in the workplace through initiating social recognition (Leonardi & Vast, 2017). Nayak, et al. (2020) wrote that many managers consider

how they may leverage their employees' efforts and accomplishments using social media in coordination with positioning the organization's value.

Many organizations currently use multiple social networking sites to assist in developing trustful relationships with colleagues, improve engagement with management, increase innovation and creative skills, aid in professional development, and improve communication and collaboration with management (Nayak, et al., 2020). In addition, social networking sites may also play a role in an organization's recognition and appreciation strategy, as its use presents opportunities to tap into employees' social networks, stay engaged with external talent and connect with potential customers (Nayak, et al., 2020). Furthermore, Nayak, et al. (2020) also affirmed that appreciation and recognition outside of the organization wall via social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn may drive positive traction for the organization while building both employee and employer branding.

Unfortunately, there does exist disadvantages to using social networking sites regarding recognizing and appreciating employees. Some managers do have concerns that social recognition may endanger their organization from competitors poaching talented employees, or that certain employees' have confidential contact information and thus will not be able to take advantage of social recognition (Nayak, et al., 2020). However, these concerns are outweighed by managers' beliefs that social recognition provides valuable recognition to employees, authenticates the work they accomplish and allows other employees to comment on reward decisions (Nayak, et al., 2020).

Conceptual Framework

In most instances, motivated employees tend to perform at a higher level within their respective organizations. Grant (2008) contended that motivated employees have significantly

higher levels of persistence, productivity, and work performance. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1982) stated that hygiene aspects are essential to avoid negative feelings of unhappiness or dissatisfaction while motivational factors may contribute to feelings of contentment and satisfaction, provides a framework describing how motivational needs are met by motivator factors, such as recognition, the work itself, achievements, and personal growth. Herzberg's theory connects to this study as this researcher intends to explore how BPHC's Recognition Council may help contribute to employee motivational factors, such as recognition and appreciation.

Theoretical Frameworks

The researcher will apply Herzberg's (1982) Two-Factor Theory to this study as it portrays to individual motivation, compared to Maslow's (1970) Hierarchy of Needs theory. Herzberg's theory was the first theory to state that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are affected by two distinct sets of influences, hygiene, and motivational influences (Weisberg & Dent, 2016). Through studying the application of motivational influences sans extrinsic factors in a workplace setting such as recognition and appreciation, the researcher aims to learn how individual motivation may be enhanced through Agency ABC's Recognition Council (Weisberg & Dent, 2016).

Herzberg's research also indicates that motivation factors such as opportunities for creativity, responsibility and interesting work contribute to job satisfaction (Weisberg & Dent, 2016). Throughout his research, Herzberg asserted that adequate compensation alone will not motivate employees, but it is rather an employee's achievements, recognition from managers and the work itself that will provide motivation (Herzberg, 1982). Herzberg's theory (Herzberg,

1982) will correlate to the roles and responsibilities of Agency ABC's Recognition Council, thus providing the researcher with an applicable theoretical framework.

Maslow's theory, compared to Herzberg's, failed to present as direct a path to motivational factors. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, consisting of five and later eight levels, compared to Herzberg's two sets of influences, requires that an individual meets their lower level needs before they may move to the next level (Tay & Diener, 2011). However, it is due to the presence of one significant concept that the researcher selected Herzberg's theory over Maslow's theory.

Perhaps the most striking difference between the two motivational theories is that according to Maslow, at each hierarchy of need only the unmet needs can be considered as motivators, satisfied needs are no longer motivating (Maslow, 1970). Maslow asserted that once a need has been satisfied, that need will disappear, therefore, if an employee is recognized once for an achievement, their need for recognition would be fulfilled. This concept is unrealistic in the workplace, as most employees desire recognition/reward more than once during a work year (White, 2018a).

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Recent studies validate the applicability of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory in the workplace. Jansen's and Samuel's (2014) research indicated that in the context of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors are important in motivating managers to accomplish organizational goals. Additionally, Sithole's and Solomon's (2017) research examined which factors would improve the performance of teachers in Botswana. Their analysis indicated that, similar to Jansen's and Samuel's (2014) study, employees were concerned with a mix of both factors, that teachers were anxious about establishing good

relations with administrators, having proper facilities, and receiving adequate pay (all hygienic factors), as well as motivational factors, being that they found teaching "satisfying" (Sithole & Solomon, 2017).

Perhaps most applicable conceptually to this researcher's study is Hur's (2018) research, which proved that Herzberg's Two-Factor theory was relevant to government sector employees. Given the limitations in providing monetary rewards as an incentive to employees in the public sector, Hur (2018) questioned if Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (2018) may bring benefits to public organizations if employees can be successfully motivated when they experience such feelings as achievement, recognition, and responsibility at work. Interestingly, there exists research that indicates public sector employees may be more satisfied than their private sector counterparts, despite lower salaries and humble working conditions due to their belief in the mission of their governmental organization (DeSantis & Durst, 1996).

Among Hur's (2018) several hypotheses, his question regarding if public employees became satisfied when motivating factors were met, correlates most closely to Herzberg's (1968) theory. According to his analysis, Hur (2018) found significantly higher job satisfaction among those who felt a sense of pride, those who thought they had enough authority to determine how to get their jobs done, those who found any kinds of incentives for them to work hard in their jobs, and those who found a great deal of flexibility at work. These motivational factors are associated with job satisfaction, which Wright (2001) has also supported can increase employee motivation. As Herzberg (1982) believed that an employee's job performance improved when they are recognized and commended, this researcher aims to identify methods by which to recognize and appreciate employees, which will hopefully contribute to their motivation to perform in a commendable manner.

Conclusion

The fact that organizations that operate effective employee engagement programs, specifically those programs that include a recognition and appreciation component, possess a greater likelihood than organizations that do not possess such programs in experiencing better outcomes was addressed in this literature review. These outcomes include but are not limited to a higher proportion of employees who report a high degree of job satisfaction, feel more appreciated/valued by their organization and colleagues, and who are more productive at work (Macauley, 2015).

Moreover, through deploying specific communication and leadership strategies, managers may apply social media to help increase the engagement of specific cohort groups, such as millennials and remote employees (Nayak, et al., 2020). Finally, through the application of Herzberg's (1968) Two-Factor Theory lens, research has shown it is accepted that an employee's achievements, recognition, and the work itself provides motivation, which in turn impacts productivity and job satisfaction.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This qualitative instrumental case study focused on the experiences of a diverse group of supervisors within Agency ABC who have served on prior Recognition Councils. This research applied Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory as a lens to examine the process by which these supervisors identified and applied job motivation factors (Herzberg, 2003) to recognize performance and possibly increase employee job satisfaction. A case study design was utilized to examine the experiences and practices of these supervisors' role on the Agency ABC's Recognition Council, as well as investigate their supervisory style as it pertains to engaging, recognizing and appreciating their own employees on a daily basis. A case study methodology was selected for this research as it not only will allow in-depth understanding of these research questions, but also allow the researcher to collect data regarding specific individuals, a process and/or event within a bounded system (Creswell, 2013).

Communicating employee recognition and appreciation to team members has been observed to be critical to both employee engagement and job satisfaction (Mann & Dvorak, 2016). However, despite the increase of organizations that operate recognition programs, levels of employee engagement have not improved significantly in the past several years (Adkins, 2016). Additionally, Adkins (2016) noted that a disconnect seems to exist regarding the operation of these programs and their intended result on an organization's employees.

Purpose of the Proposed Study

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to identify and assess using Herzberg's Two Factor Theory as a lens how the Recognition Council may optimize employee engagement while identifying what the vision, objectives and operations of Agency ABC's

Recognition Council should be from the participants' viewpoint. Data was collected on feedback/documentation from Recognition Council members from the past two years to identify areas where they perceive Recognition Council operational shortfalls may have existed, areas for improvement and perhaps most important, suggestions for how to imbed itself in an Agency ABC-level employee engagement program within the context of the Recognition Council's vision and objectives.

Research Questions and Design

This researcher's case study analyzed participant's responses to the following research questions: Research Question 1. How do former Recognition Council members perceive the Council's role, experience, and expectation in helping to create and sustain employee engagement among staff? Research Question 2. How, according to former Recognition Council members, may staff recognition be optimized within Agency ABC to sustain employee engagement?

An instrumental case study approach utilizing a single case (or within-site) was applied due to the fact the researcher is studying a real-life, contemporary bounded system, multiple sources of information will be necessary (Creswell, 2013). An instrumental case study approach was applicable to this study as it provided insight into a particular issue that may reflect a larger, more global goal (Creswell, 2013), in this instance researching the perception of the Recognition Council's role from those who participate on the council, as well as how this group may optimize recognition among Agency ABC employees. A larger, global goal may be to consider how a group such as the Recognition Council may be utilized in other federal organizations.

Site Information and Population

The site of this research study is located in the state of MD. The study site is the headquarters for Department XYZ (which oversees Agency ABC) and Agency ABC, which is a policy and grant making institution that focuses on providing services to underserved communities within the United States (A. Damiano, personal communication, April 22, 2021).

Approximately 3,000 federal staff work at Department XYZ headquarters, and approximately 400 staff are located in 10 regional sites across the U.S. All work at both headquarters and within regional sites is administrative in nature, i.e. creating and administering grants to underserved communities and/or generating policy and/or regulation guidance in coordination with Department XYZ. There are no direct healthcare services offered by Agency ABC at any site. It is important to note that at the time of this research, work is being conducted on a strictly virtual basis, meaning that all interviews will be completed utilizing Microsoft Teams.

The Agency ABC is Department XYZ's largest office, composed of approximately 550 federal staff and funded at $16 billion annually (A. Damiano, personal communication, April 27, 2021). The Agency ABC's mission is to provide grant funding to over 1,000 healthcare provider organizations, as well as create and enforce polices that healthcare organizations must adhere to as a result of accepting federal funding (A. Damiano, personal communication, April 27, 2021). Staff within Agency ABC represent a multitude of educational backgrounds, including those with PhDs, MDs, various master's degrees (i.e., MPH, MSW, MPA), as well as those with bachelor's degrees. Staff within Agency ABC work in many roles, including but not limited to supervisory, non-supervisory leads, medical/public policy/architecture/other subject matter experts, grant financial specialists, and administrative support staff.

The researcher has worked in Agency ABC for approximately seven years, as a non-supervisory lead, Division Director, and currently as the Deputy Executive Officer. One of the researcher's work duties includes the enhancement and administration of the Recognition Council. Due to the importance of recognizing employees as relegated by Organization DEF's leadership to its offices, the Executive Officer of Agency ABC has provided permission for this researcher to perform research activities as they may pertain to this study. Historically (over the last two years), each year the Recognition Council has had approximately 12 voting members, who are either non-supervisory leads or supervisors (A. Damiano, personal communication, April 27, 2021). It was the hope of the researcher that at least a half-dozen prior Recognition Council members agreed to participate in this study, so their experiences regarding the Council's objectives, perceived efficacy and any challenges encountered may inform objectives, goals and operational suggestions concerning future iterations of the Recognition Council. Furthermore, it was the hope of the researcher that lessons learned may be applied to other federal organizations who desire to create a similar recognition apparatus.

Sampling Method

The researcher utilized what Creswell (2013) refers to as criterion sampling, which allowed for the study of a specific cohort that has experienced the same phenomenon, which in this case is having served as a member on the Recognition Council. Agency ABC staff who have served as a member of the Recognition Council during the past two years (16 individuals) received an invitation through their work email from the researcher's une.edu email to participate in semi-structured interviews. This study was described as an effort to examine the broader application of employee engagement, recognition, and appreciation in the Recognition Council's work, as well as former Recognition Council members' perceptions concerning the overall vision

and objectives of the Council. Those who responded to the invitation were sent an appointment for an initial 60-minute interview using Microsoft Teams. If an interview exceeds 60 minutes, then a follow-up interview was scheduled. The researcher's goal was to have five prior Recognition Council members participate in this study in the hope of achieving what Creswell (2013) refers to as a significant volume of reoccurring themes and concepts that will be collected during interviews.

The researcher took significant efforts to conceal the identities of participants who contributed to this study. The names of participants were anonymized, as a pseudonym was created for each individual. This study complied with policies and regulations concerning the protection of human subjects (45 CFR 46; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

Instrumentation & Data Collection Procedures

The researcher sent from his une.edu student email account to all prior Recognition Council members, an invitation to participate in the study describing the objectives of the study, method of the study (via Microsoft Teams) and anticipated time commitment (60 minutes). Upon receiving an email from a former Recognition Council who agreed to be a participant in this study, the researcher sent an informed consent form accompanied by several dates and times the participant may select from to interview. Once a date and time were agreed upon, the researcher sent the participant an email with a Microsoft Teams link and passcode that included an option for the participant to use the telephone if they prefer.

Interviews

Interviews were held in private rooms (the researcher asked the participants to adjourn to a room with a door in their home). Prior to beginning each interview, the participant was assured that their anonymity will be protected as they were assigned a pseudonym. Furthermore, each

participant was assured that all of their responses would remain confidential. The interviews began with a review of the informed consent form, and a reminder that the participant may stop the interview at any time or end their participation in this study. The interview then proceeded with questions posed in a semi-structured format, whereupon the researcher asked participants questions regarding potential applications of the Recognition Council's work concerning employee engagement, recognition and appreciation in the Recognition Council's work and perceptions regarding the overall vision and objectives of the Council. The researcher took field notes during the interview, as these notes assisted in further analyses of the participant interviews. Creswell (2013) asserts that fieldnotes recorded during an observation significantly assist the researcher when analyzing results.

The researcher used Microsoft Teams for participant interviews as well as transcription services. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using this platform. Interviews were saved on a thumb drive for 6 months, as were the transcribed interviews. Both the thumb drive and paper interviews were kept in a safe in the researcher's home.

Field Test

Prior to receiving IRB permission to conduct this study, a field test was conducted to test the interview instrument. This was completed to ensure participants clearly understand instructions, the wording of the questions was not ambiguous, and to determine that the interview time was not too long or participants lost interest. Interview questions were field tested using Microsoft Teams with an Agency ABC colleague who was not a member of the Recognition Council at the time of this study to assess the operation of this study's data collection instrumentation. Interview questions were approved in-advance of the field test by the researcher's dissertation advisors to ensure their appropriateness as it may pertain to the research.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using Creswell's (2013) six steps of data analysis. Following the completion of all interviews, responses were be transcribed using Microsoft Teams and coded manually by the researcher, whereupon the researcher identified critical common terms and trends in responses. Participants were provided three days to member check their responses or review their interview transcript to ensure accuracy of their responses. Merriam & Tisdale (2016) suggest that the use of open coding, i.e., that the researcher will record notes and observation within the interview documents, may assist with coding. Coding enabled this researcher to group interview data into clusters, which helped provide accurate analysis of the collected data (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Clusters, or groups of data, were assembled by theme or category, which enabled this researcher to provide answers to the study's research questions (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). A cross-case analysis was applied following the identification of themes and categories to examine commonalities across participant responses (Creswell, 2013).

Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design

A possible limitation of this research included a small number of study participants, or the chance that participant views may be similar. The number of respondents may have had an impact on the aforementioned possible limitations due to the possibility of participants having similar, or distinctly viewpoints. Additionally, another limitation of this study may have included the researcher's bias as he is a supervisor within Organization DEF's Agency ABC who on occasion has struggled to identify and apply principles regarding recognition and appreciation. The researcher at times has faced challenges recognizing and appreciating staff, as well as in the past possessed judgements and/or beliefs regarding how colleagues should apply employee engagement concepts as they pertain to recognition, appreciation, training

opportunities, etc. Despite these limitations, it is the belief of the researcher that this study may inform Agency ABC and other federal agencies of the benefits, challenges and possible shortcomings concerning establishing a Recognition Council, or similar entity to recognize employee performance.

Delimitations of this study included the singular case that the researcher studied, the number of participants eligible for interviews to answer the two research questions and the scope of questions concerning employee engagement as it related to this study.

Trustworthiness

Creswell (2013) views validation as a strength of qualitative research and recommends applying multiple validation strategies regardless of the qualitative research approach u4sed. The following concepts, including credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and member checking (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016) were applied to this study for further validation.

Credibility

Merriam and Tisdale (2016) explain credibility as how compatible the study findings are with reality. Credibility was maintained throughout this study as the researcher demonstrated his ability to disregard any bias through exercising reflexivity (Dodgson, 2019), as well as through conducting member checks with each participant to ensure data was accurate (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). To further increase credibility of this research member checking was utilized to check the accuracy of interviews, as well as help eliminate any possible bias of the researcher.

Transferability

Transferability in this study determined if the research results may be applied to a wider population or other settings (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). The goal of this research was to apply the findings to other federal agencies who may desire to implement a Recognition Council or

similar recognition entity for the purpose of recognizing their employees for their work. The degree of transferability depended significantly upon the outcomes of this research.

Dependability

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) write that dependability in research relies upon how well procedures are documented within the research so that the research may be replicated, audited or understood. Dependability of this data was proven through the researcher's detailed explanation of the collection and member checking process, as well as participation of their dissertation advisor to ensure the applicability and appropriateness of the interview questions. Dependability was a crucial element of this study as it confirmed that the results are reliable and trustworthy.

Confirmability

Merriam and Tisdale (2016) define confirmability as proving that a study's findings are based upon data gathered during the research process rather than being the feelings or biases of the researcher. It is also how the researcher asserts or supports the results of their study (Creswell, 2007). This researcher detailed the process by which they arrived at the findings, as well as provided substantial data to support any conclusions that were presented. Moreover, member checking improved confirmability as study participants were provided an opportunity to assess the accuracy of their interview transcripts.

Member Checking

Prior to Creswell's (2013) sixth step of the data analysis process (making an interpretation), this researcher asked each participant if they wished to review a draft of the final report pertaining to their interview to ensure that the researcher findings of details and themes which were discussed during the interview were accurate. This researcher allowed each participant five days to review the major findings, case analysis and other relevant information in

the report (Creswell, 2013). Any concerns on behalf of the participant regarding an inaccurate interpretation or data resulted in an additional interview between the researcher and participant.

Ethical Issues in the Proposed Study

All participants in this study were required to sign an informed consent form. Once an individual is identified as a participant, they were provided with a Microsoft Teams appointment/link, passcode, purpose of the study, confidentiality statements, and the contact information of the researcher, in case any questions should arise prior to the scheduled interview. Immediately following the interview and prior to coding, interview data was anonymized by the researcher to prevent identification of the participants. As all of the data was coded, the risk of a confidentiality breach was further minimized. The use of informed consent and confidentiality agreements, accompanied by the researcher's observance of reflexivity (Dodgson, 2019) further mitigated possible ethical concerns.

Conflict of Interest

Although the researcher is an employee of Agency ABC and has been involved with the Recognition Council in past years, there posed no conflict of interest as the researcher was neither the supervisor nor in the chain of command of any past Recognition Council member. The researcher had no personal relationships with any prior Recognition Council members, though he has participated on Agency ABC workgroups with several of them. The researcher applied a concept known as reflexivity, which required him to examine his own beliefs and judgements and accept that he is a part of this study (Dodgson, 2019).

Conclusion and Summary

This chapter detailed the research methodology applied to this study, as well as provided insight into processes this researcher used to recruit participants, collect and analyze data. This

researcher, guided by Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1982), examined through semi-structured interviews with past Agency ABC Recognition Council members the broader application of employee engagement, recognition, and appreciation in the Recognition Council's work, as well as former Recognition Council members' perceptions concerning the overall vision and objectives of the Council. In Chapter 4, this researcher discussed the data collection and analysis procedures of this research.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental study was to clarify the purpose of the Recognition Council by interviewing past Recognition Council members, while also identifying opportunities for staff recognition and appreciation to be optimized within Agency ABC to assist in creating and sustaining employee engagement. The participants in this study were former members of the Recognition Council who served either one or two years on the council. This chapter presents the results of these interviews, which were categorized into themes and subthemes throughout the data analysis process. The research questions that guided this study are: How do former Recognition Council members perceive the Council's role, experience, and expectation in helping to create and sustain employee engagement among staff?, and How, according to former Recognition Council members, may staff recognition be optimized within Agency ABC to sustain employee engagement?

Analysis Method

Prospective study participants were sent an email from the researcher's UNE student email account, briefly describing the study as well as seeking volunteers. Those who responded to the invitation were sent an appointment for an initial 60-minute interview using Microsoft Teams; none of the interviews exceeded 60 minutes. The researcher's goal, which was achieved, was to have five prior Recognition Council members participate in this study in the hope of achieving what Creswell (2013) refers to as a significant volume of reoccurring themes and concepts that will be collected during interviews.

The researcher took significant efforts to conceal the identities of participants who contributed to this study. The names of participants were anonymized, as a pseudonym was

created for each individual. This study complied with policies and regulations concerning the protection of human subjects (45 CFR 46; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

Interviews were held in private rooms (participants were asked to adjourn to a room with a door in their home). The interviews began with a review of the informed consent form, and a reminder that the participant may stop the interview at any time or end their participation in this study. The interview then proceeded with questions posed in a semi-structured format, whereupon the researcher asked participants questions regarding potential applications of the Recognition Council's work concerning employee engagement, recognition and appreciation in the Recognition Council's work and perceptions regarding the overall vision and objectives of the Council. The researcher took field notes during the interview, as these notes assisted in further analyses of the participant interviews. Creswell (2013) asserts that fieldnotes recorded during an observation significantly assist the researcher when analyzing results.

The researcher used Microsoft Teams for participant interviews as well as transcription services Microsoft Teams. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using this platform that were saved on a thumb drive. Both the thumb drive and transcriptions are kept in a safe in the researcher's home.

Following the interviews, member checks and coding process, the researcher identified specific emergent themes and subthemes from the participants' responses. Applying Creswell's (2013) six-steps to analyze data as well as using the coding process, the researcher first organized the interview data using transcriptions and fieldnotes. Second, the researcher read over all of the data, looking at general ideas and observations. Third, the researcher began to code the data manually, examining the data for similar terms, ideas, tones, etc. Next, the researcher began to generate common themes or categories of data. Fifth, the researcher

constructed the qualitative narrative that will be read in this chapter. The sixth step will be the focus of Chapter 5, as the researcher will interpret the findings of the research. The researcher also applied a cross-case analysis (Creswell, 2013), examining the responses of participants to one another.

Resulting from the coding process, the following seven themes emerged: *Shared Vision, Employee Engagement, Employee Recognition, Employee Appreciation, Missed Opportunities, Agency ABC Culture, and Recognition Council Operations* (Table 1).

Table 1. *Emergent Themes and Subthemes*

Shared Vision	**Employee Engagement**	**Employee Recognition**	**Employee Appreciation**	**Missed Opportunities**	**Agency ABC Culture**	**Recognition Council Operations**
Executive Leadership	Free Flow of Information	Meritorious Driven	Daily Appreciation	Selfish Behavior	Genuine and Authentic Employee Engagement	Deliberate Process
Defining Impact/ Connection to Impactful Work	Bi-directional Communication	Individual/Team Weighted Awards	Appreciation by Different Levels Of Supervisors	Participation Trophies	Cross-Collaboration	Not Currently Built for Success
Thoughtfulness/Fairness	Employee Buy-in	Above and Beyond	Collegial Support	Executive Leadership	Nurturing Staff	Adjudication/ Prioritization
		Employee Value				

Each theme produced its own subthemes, ranging from three to four per theme. The Shared Vision theme included the subthemes: a) *Executive Leadership*, b) *Defining Impact/Connection to Impactful Work*, and c) *Thoughtfulness/Fairness*. The Employee Engagement theme included the subthemes: a) *Free Flow of Information*, b) *Bi-directional Communication*, and c) *Employee Buy-in*. The Employee Recognition theme included the subthemes: a) *Meritorious Driven*, *Individual/Team Weighted Awards*, c) *Above and Beyond*, and

d) *Employee Value*. The Employee Appreciation theme included the following subthemes: a) *Daily Appreciation*, b) *Appreciation Provided by Different Levels of Supervisors*, c) *Collegial Support*. The Missed Opportunities theme included the following subthemes: a) *Selfish Behavior*, b) *Participation Trophies*, and c) *Six Months of Stagnation*. The theme Agency ABC Culture included the following subthemes: a) *Genuine and Authentic Employee Engagement*, b) *Cross-Collaboration*, c) *Nurturing Staff*. Last, the Recognition Council Operations theme produced the following subthemes: a) *Deliberate Process*, b) *Not Currently Built for Success*, and c) *Adjudication/Prioritization*.

Presentation of Results

The following sections present analysis of the seven emergent themes as well as their correlating subthemes: *Shared Vision, Employee Engagement, Employee Recognition, Employee Appreciation, Missed Opportunities, Agency ABC Culture, and Recognition Council Operations.* As previously noted each participant was assigned a pseudonym, and all references to study participants below are by the pseudonym they selected.

Shared Vision

All five participants felt strongly that a shared vision among executive leadership as well as Recognition Council participants was critical to the success of the Council. Specifically, the vision, mission and objectives of the Recognition Council would trickle down to staff, which would inform their expectations of this awards granting body. This theme included the following subthemes: Executive Leadership, Defining Impact/Connection to Impactful Work and Thoughtfulness/Fairness.

Executive leadership. All participants voiced specific concerns regarding the absence of executive leadership at the Recognition Council's meetings. Carol explained, "Even if the

Associate or Deputy Associate Administrator showed up for a few minutes during our initial meeting it would be super helpful in setting priorities." Ken stated, "If we could have check-ins during our process, to make sure the council's decisions were aligning with executive priorities, that would be great – it would negate second guessing as well as bickering among council members."

Per participant responses Executive leadership in the Recognition Council's proceedings could also assist in defining and identifying the type of impact that could be recognized, by either cash or time off. Kate stated:

> Over the past few two years on the council, I feel like I've been blindly supporting work; I have very little idea what type of work/nomination I/we as a council should be supporting, as well as what level of impact, i.e., state, national, the council should get behind – a framework would be helpful.

Nick reported similarly, asserting, "While executive input would be helpful, we still need to feel that we have enough autonomy to select what the group feels is an appropriate project to recognize."

Also, there was a shared belief among the participants that executive participation would elevate the group, making these awards seem important – more aspirational among employees. Ken shared as follows:

> We have so many awards throughout the year; the staff on the Recognition Council take a bit of time to participate, and it bums me out that this is considered just another award. The council represents the executive leadership, so it would be nice if staff appreciated the importance of these awards.

Defining impact/connection to impactful work. Executive leadership's input correlated to this theme. It was discussed during several participant interviews how helpful it would be if leadership could not only define the level of impact the Recognition Council reward, but also the type of projects or work that should receive recognition, i.e., what type of impact should be recognized from a topical perspective. Diane noted that, "As a group, we've been a bit lost regarding what level of accomplishment deserves to be recognized – does something have to have national significance, or is state/local ok?" Ken explained, "Some direction would be great, is there an ideal definition of impact, or is it just subjective, relative to the council's discussions?" Furthermore, Diane shared, "Should nominations that receive awards be one-time actions, work whose outcomes last a long time, etc. – there is no definition of impact?"

Also, from the participants' Recognition Council perspective, a challenge among the members was what to recommend for recognition. Nick explained, "So, not only does the council receive 30-plus nominations, but members are expected to discuss with our offices the type of work that should be nominated for recognition; we are blind here." All participants noted that while each year executive leadership establishes general program priorities, it is not always the case that priorities from a topical perspective are set in stone and communicated widely. Carol stated, "Do we recognize diabetes work, technology – is there are prioritization of topical work, or does it matter? Submissions are all over the place, and we cannot recognize everything."

Thoughtfulness/fairness. Several participants remarked about thoughtfulness/fairness as it pertains to nominations that are not recognized/do not receive an award. Kate remarked, "Do we have a process to somehow inform and/or recognize submissions that are still worthy of some type of recognition, but not necessarily at the highest level?" Carol shared, "Could some of the

nominations that are not recognized for the highest level of award, maybe receive a formal letter from our executive leadership, recognizing their contributions?" In a similar tone, Nick reported, "There needs to be a process thanking those who submit nominations but are not recognized, maybe explaining why they were not recognized, just to keep those staff members' spirits up."

Employee Engagement

It was insightful for the researcher to discuss the topic of employee engagement with each of the participants. Though it was discovered through data analysis and coding of participant interview responses that common subthemes did develop, each participant defined the term a bit differently. Three participants related the term to recognition and appreciation, while the others stated that engaging employees had nothing to do with recognition whatsoever. This theme included the following subthemes: Free Flow of Information, Bi-directional and Employee Buy-in.

Free flow of information. All participants agreed that engaging their employees provided an opportunity to establish a tone and structure for future communications as well as set the baseline for the employer and employee relationship. Ken stated that, "When I speak to my staff, I have an opportunity to learn about the individual and share a bit about myself; I learn how they prefer to be communicated to."

Nick shared he prefers to establish a comfort level among his staff throughout his engagement with staff, "By establishing an open-door policy, I am hoping to foster the free flow of information and dialogue between the supervisor and employee." Similarly, Kate believed it is important to communicate to staff that they should feel they can be open and honest. Kate shared, "Frequently engaging with my staff provides an opportunity for me in many cases just to listen, to understand their immediate needs. It is important that staff feel like we are listening."

Bi-directional communication. Four participants mentioned that having conversations with their staff allowed them to build confidence in their staff's work, while providing a sense of support. Carol remarked, "Frequent listening meetings with my staff allow me to see what drives them, and they can see what drives me." Two participants mentioned that it is important that their staff feel they can operate autonomously. Ken explained, "My staff need to feel they can do their work with a high degree of autonomy – that's more important than any award/reward. Many would not stay here if otherwise."

Nick spoke of the importance of providing mentorship and a peer-coach, "Bi-directional relationships allow me an opportunity to mentor and coach staff, but also give them an opportunity to mentor and coach me regarding what's going on in their public health work."

Employee buy-in. All participants shared that they believed this subtheme is a critical component of providing employee engagement. Several participants mentioned that it is crucial for staff to feel they have the support of management. Carol shared:

> Employees need to have the autonomy to collaborate with one another as colleagues, but also know that management feels fully invested in their growth and success. Furthermore, staff need to realize that we care about their development – training, recognition, and appreciation of efforts.

Diane similarly explained that employee buy-in was critical, "Employees need to buy in to different ideas or to give them the opportunity to be creative and enjoy the work they do." Conversations between supervisors and their staff allow supervisors an opportunity to reiterate their support, as well as express and understand the vision of the organization. Kate remarked that employee engagement, "Gave supervisors an opportunity to discuss our mission, how we may achieve it so all parties can have a shared vision."

Another important aspect of employee buy-in are the bi-directional conversations supervisors have with their staff. Carol explained, "It is very important for supervisors to know what motivates our staff to drive them, is it cash awards, time off, training opportunities, or short details trying new jobs? Everyone is different – some staff are simply mission driven and do not need a carrot." Nick explained similarly:

> Interestingly enough, many of my staff simply want unique training opportunities, or the chance to do unique/special work. They are not necessarily looking for extra cash, that is why these conversations are important, to make sure everyone is onboard and how to keep them there.

Employee Recognition

Interestingly enough, the researcher discovered that most of the participants were unable to distinguish between employee recognition and employee appreciation. One participant confused recognition with employee engagement. The information gathered within this theme revolved around what types of actions or tasks to recognize, as well as how to recognize it. This theme included the following subthemes: Meritorious Driven, Individual/Team Weighted Awards, Above and Beyond, and Employee Value.

Meritorious driven. Ken explained that simply handing an employee an award was not adequate, "Supervisors need to draw a connection to the outcome/impact of the award, that is how an employee and their colleagues know the value of their work, he said." Similarly, Kate asserted that, "Supervisors as a group, i.e., the Recognition Council, need to come to and understanding as a collective as to how much to recognize – to what degree of merit, certain actions are worth." Kate explained further, "To me, merit is being worthy of recognition due to an outstanding performance."

Other participants shared as to how they would define merit. Diane answered, "Consistent high performance over a prolonged period of time." Nick explained, "An over and above performance on a task one time." Already, there were variances in the definition, which signaled to this researcher that over the course of time the participants were operating from different mindsets as they defined key terms differently.

Last, in connection with the subtheme meritorious driven, two participants remarked that as leadership recognizes meritorious achievements, it should be done in a public forum. Ken stated that, "Work of this nature needs to be recognized publicly, so other staff can become familiar with high standards. Similarly, Carol shared, "Staff prefer to receive public recognition – it makes them feel valued."

Individual/team weighted awards. All of the participants had opinions regarding recognizing level(s) of effort and outcomes in a group context. Diane explained, "We need to recognize staff differently than in the past; what we have done is recognize each member of a team the same (same cash/hours off) for an accomplishment, which is not fair." Likewise, Kate explained:

> Leadership needs to recognize specific levels of effort within each project – all year round. There are always a few who go above and beyond in a group, versus the majority who are carried by those few. They need to be recognized.

Other ideas regarding individual/team weighted efforts were shared by the participants. Carol explained:

> I think as supervisors, and as a Recognition Council, we need to listen to what employees want, in terms of reward. Many prefer experiences that will position them for further

advancement, i.e., a detail or special training, versus cash or hours off. We need to pay attention.

Kate shared, "We need to do a better job regarding succession here, make it more outcome/work-based versus who is friends with whom. We do not do a good job with that and too often we miss on promoting the best talent."

Nick explained that it was important to recognize those differently who contributed at higher levels of effort to outstanding work. Nick stated, "It can be a significantly demotivating factor, if I am working hard on many projects and others receive the same award, and annual rating as a result of my efforts. That is all too common in this organization, unfortunately." Likewise, Ken shared, "However we do it, we need to recognize individuals and groups based upon level of efforts much better moving forward."

Above and beyond. Above and beyond was a common term discussed among the participants' responses associated with merit-driven recognition. Participants shared that leadership needs to recognize efforts significantly "above and beyond" the normal efforts associated with daily work.

Diane asserted that, "The term above and beyond, when defining employee recognition, is so subjective. Is it a short-term or a long-term effort, how far outside one's usual work scope, etc.? I don't think it is a particularly helpful description of effort." Similarly, Carol explained, "It is such a generic, simple term when a supervisor wants to recognize or appreciate but does not put in the effort to learn more about a project or action deemed worthy of meritorious recognition."

Nick did not know how to define the term. Stated Nick, "Above and beyond what exactly?" Nick explained that "above and beyond" is, "Way too generic of a term used to for

recognition purposes, too often; it needs to be stricken from anything related to the Recognition Council."

Employee value. Several participants throughout the interview question segment focused upon employee recognition in the context of recognizing employee value and ensuring that organization staff feel they are valued. Diane explained:

> There are many ways for us as a council, as well as for supervisors to show recognition and that leadership values staff. Different modes of recognition, cash, etc., letters of thanks from different levels of leadership – real-time recognition though, that is the key. Staff need to know that leadership is paying attention, not just once a year.

Timeliness of recognition and employee value were also discussed by Kate, who stated:

> If I am an employee who's breaking my back on a project for 2 months straight, and get recognized for it 8 months later, I know that leadership doesn't care much regarding recognizing my value or worth. We are awful at that.

Employee recognition, as well as employee value were expressed by Ken who likewise stated:

> Employee value in recognizing staff needs to be done in the moment or following an outcome/impact. Recognition award should be based on intensity of outcome, to be determined by the council but guided by executive leadership. We're going to lose quality staff if we don't pay more attention.

Employee Appreciation

In general, participants reported that providing appreciation to employees was more ad hoc/frequent versus an organized format of showing recognition. Similar to employee recognition, employee appreciation could be provided in different ways, by different individuals

at different times. This theme included the following subthemes: Daily Appreciation, Appreciation Provided by Different Levels of Supervisors and Collegial Support.

Daily appreciation. Ken explained that appreciation should be provided more frequently than recognition, that it is different in scope than recognition. Ken shared, "This is something you can show employees every day, it is just being courteous to them as they go about their work every day, thanking them for their effort – even if it is not outstanding."

Similarly, Diane stated, "Appreciation can be as simple as saying thank you, or letting staff go 59 minutes early for a tiny act or contribution that's impactful. It is saying job well done, but on a smaller scale than recognition." Likewise, Nick explained:

> Appreciation is definitely more ad hoc, spur of the moment, but takes a good amount of EQ (emotional intelligence) – something many supervisors here do not have, nor does leadership. Especially after this last year, leadership has failed to demonstrate appreciation – the understanding and belief among staff and first line supervisors at least is that we are machines, cogs in a wheel. There has been zero appreciation.

Another participant also believed that the Recognition Council can play a stronger role in demonstrating staff appreciation. Carol explained:

> The Recognition Council can play a significant role here, working with supervisors and executive leadership, calculating methods by which appreciation can be shown on the moment, by different levels of leadership. This needs to be done all year, not just for a few months – that it is pointless.

Appreciation provided by different levels of supervisors. The feelings among all participants regarding this subtheme was that leadership, at different levels, drew a connection between employee effort and impact of their work. Nick explained, "When leadership at any

level thanks or shows appreciation to an employee, they need to specify the effort – appreciation needs to be genuine and authentic, or it is meaningless." Providing genuine and authentic appreciation was a common theme among participant responses to interview questions.

Kate had a few thoughts regarding authentic leadership, as she explained:

> Immediate, genuine and authentic should be the considerations given when we discuss employee appreciation. Leadership needs to be informed as to what and why they are appreciative of an employee. I know that sounds ridiculous, but again, we have such a low EQ among office directors on downwards, that many times recognition and appreciation are meaningless as it is apparent it is not genuine. That just p----s off staff, and that feeling spreads quickly.

Diane reported that it would be nice for executive leadership to be more involved, in real-time, in displaying appreciation among staff. Diane remarked:

> Can the Recognition Council create some formatted letters from our SES leadership that we could give to staff on an ad hoc basis? That would make such a significant difference, show that high levels really are paying attention, that progress and outcomes are being shared at the highest levels. There is too much distrust among staff and their leadership – staff would like to make sure executive leadership is aware of the goings-on.

Ken explained that the Recognition Council can help create guidelines regarding what levels of leadership may show appreciation (and recognition) moving forward, to what extent. Ken stated:

> It would be similar to our tangible benefits chart but geared towards appreciation at different levels – first line supervisor, office director, SES, then agency leadership. It

> would make a huge, huge impact regarding staff knowing and feeling that their impact and effort is being noticed.

Collegial support. All participants noted that employee appreciation should come from all levels, including colleagues. Diane explained, "We need to set up a program or process for colleagues to show appreciation as well as just supervisors. This cannot be only supervisor driven – the Recognition Council can set-up and implement a program."

Similarly, Ken stated that he believed leadership should display appreciation on an annual basis, as he stated explained:

> Colleagues know best what their co-workers are doing and have accomplished, even if it is just critical project milestones and not an entire project. Leadership needs to show appreciation, through colleagues also, all year in different ways. Publicly and not so much.

Likewise, Kate explained why it is important for leadership to impress upon the need for staff to support their colleagues:

> Colleagues here do want to support one another, especially during that past year when all of us have struggled in one way or another. Leadership has failed here in providing an avenue by which coworkers may recognize one another in real time, all year. What are we doing here?

Along similar responses Nick explained that perhaps we could look at a different business sector. He stated:

> Can we look to the private sector or something? Why are we so ingrained in our process and methods that we can only recognize and appreciate staff during a certain time of the year, in only one of three ways, cash, time off or honor awards? It is archaic.

Missed Opportunities

The term "missed opportunities" was discussed frequently during participant interviews. Participant interview responses connected to this theme and correlating subthemes alluded to specific areas they felt the Recognition Council could enhance, but also have executive leadership to help create standards for future operations. This theme included the following subthemes: Selfish behavior, Participation Trophies and Six Months of Stagnation.

Selfish behavior. Most participants during their interviews alluded to selfish behavior among other Recognition Council participants at one time or another. Stated Nick, "After two years on the council, I was tired of members only promoting and defending submissions from their own office – it was disappointing. Especially work that didn't seem merit-based." Carol stated, "I enjoyed my year on the council, but after a while, it would've been nice for us to work in an unbiased manner, and really focus on the most critical outcomes."

Ken also explained his thoughts on selfish behavior and how it may be improved among members of the Recognition Council:

> What disappointed me was the fact that council members would not help one another with edits, or really go out of their way to recognize cross-collaborative efforts unless instructed to by senior leadership. We have so much talent here, I am not certain as to why we cannot work together for the greater good.

Diane shared, "We as a council should be working together to recognize priorities and work, set by executive leadership. We always end up competing with one another, office against office. It is exhausting."

Several participants felt that this attitude came from top leadership and worked its way down to council members. Nick explained:

> Look, it is no secret that office leaders stack the council with proxy members, who are going to do whatever they say – no independent thought, sense of team or greater good. There is a lot of selfish behavior here, at all levels, too much competitive behavior.

Likewise, Diane stated why it is important for Agency ABC's senior leaders to work together more cohesively:

> It is disappointing. We have leaders who are practically SES, but do not have a team-first mentality, they cannot see past their own staff in terms of recognizing or appreciating staff. At the end of the day, we are one giant team, and should operate that way.

Participation trophies. Another belief shared by several participants was that too many nominations received recognition – that the council did not do a good job with promoting the best work of Agency ABC. Ken shared, "I blame office senior leadership for this; it is a race, always has been regarding who can receive the most awards. There's no sense of working for the greater good." Kate explained, "We should put a cap or limit on the number of awards we move forward, promoting the best of the best versus everyone's efforts." Similarly, Diane stated:

> What happens is that the bar lowers, and staff feel that anything at all remotely above a normal day's effort deserves some type of recognition; and that makes it very difficult for supervisors to ferret out the best work, when everything is considered best.

Participants explained that if Agency ABC showcases its best work, agreed upon by set priorities communicated by executive leadership, it would make us even more attractive regarding recruiting and retaining top talent. Carol explained how this may help us attract employees, "Awards at this level are a great opportunity to market and communicate our work."

Carol also explained, “It is a small world, employees across this agency and the department talk about the best places to work. We are good, but not great.”

Similarly, Nick asserted, “It sends a message to our staff that leadership will recognize anything, any effort. It makes the top performers feel less worthy, as the mid-level performers, and in some instances the lower-level performers receive recognition. It is not right.”

Six months of stagnation. All of the participants felt that perhaps the most significant opportunity for improved recognition and appreciation is to operate throughout the year as opposed to only several months. Diane stated, “I do not understand why we are only discussing at a top level recognition and appreciation only a handful of months out of the year.” Likewise, Ken explained, “We need to discuss outcomes worthy or appreciation or recognition all year round, at lot of work and efforts do not receive recognition as they are forgotten.”

None of the participants were certain as to how the Recognition Council could operate or should operate continuously throughout the year. Kate shared, “Something like this, how to recognize and appreciate, or at least consistent guidelines and recommendations, would have to come from executive leadership.” Diane stated:

> Supervisors, council members, etc., need more money and training opportunities to work with regarding awarding. Why is there just a pot of money at one time during the year? It defeats the purpose of real-time appreciation and recognition.

Likewise, Ken explained why it is important for the Recognition Council to operate throughout the year as it relates to staff retention:

> The leadership at the very, very top needs to change the way we appreciate and engage employees. They do not stick around like they used to, especially younger ones. It is

> going to be more and more difficult to retain staff unless we become more flexible in some of our operations.

Agency ABC Culture

All of the participants discussed their thoughts regarding how the Recognition Council may affect Agency ABC culture, based upon its mission to provide recognition and appreciation. This theme included the following subthemes: Genuine and Authentic Employee Engagement, Cross-Collaboration and Nurturing Staff.

Genuine and authentic employee engagement. Each of the participants discussed that all forms of engagement – including recognition, appreciation, discussions regarding specialized training or detail opportunities, etc., need to be conducted in an authentic and genuine manner. Nick explained:

> It is so obvious when supervisors, the Recognition Council or executive leadership fake or feign praise. They do not know the specifics of a project, who did what, the aims or goals of each individual. It is kind of sad, given the efforts many staff put into their work.

Similarly, Kate replied, "At a minimum, supervisors need to be aware of who is doing what type of work, and levels of effort."

Recognizing staff in a timely manner was also discussed by participants in the context of being genuine and authentic leaders. Carol remarked, "If a staff member's accomplishment is recognized 10 months later, it loses a lot of luster and the staff member is going to wonder why it was not recognized sooner." Likewise, Diane explained, "Being authentic is being in the moment, and supervisors as well as executive leadership need to improve their levels of engagement, with all levels of staff."

Acting in a genuine and authentic manner includes following through on promises. Ken explained:

> I cannot tell you how many times I have been a part of conversations that involved promises to send individuals to specific trainings, or that they would receive an award or other recognition. Then, the supervisor or director does not follow through. That is the worst, and this organization has a track record of that, unfortunately.

Cross-collaboration. Participants stressed that cross-collaboration, working across the six offices, should be encouraged more strongly by executive leadership. Nick explained:

> Unfortunately, though sometimes competition is helpful, this organization is way too competitive, office versus office, employee versus employee. There is a significant lack of cooperation and peer-learning here, and that hurts overall staff and program development.

Similarly, Diane shared, "If there existed more cross-collaboration, this program would be stronger, and staff would be more prepared to assume leadership roles, which plays into succession planning." Ken replied, "We need to reward somehow those leaders who cooperate and encourage cooperation among different offices and divisions. It comes down to leadership though, and some of our leadership just does not want to work with one another."

Cross-collaboration is not limited to this organization, as several participants mentioned. Kate explained, "It is odd, but reaching out and working across agencies is somewhat discouraged, it is such a complicated process that most do not attempt it." Nick stated:

> Executive leadership needs to encourage, plant the seeds for us to work with other organizations, which would only enhance our staff's skill set and create more advancement opportunities. We do not look for those types of opportunities,

> unfortunately. We are a very one-dimensional organization, not looking at how our program affects other health and non-healthcare programs within underserved communities.

Nurturing staff. Participants provided comments on this topic, discussing the role of supervisors versus the role of the Recognition Council. Overall, participants stated that there is a lack of developing or nurturing of staff, not only concerning recognition and appreciation but also overall engagement, pertaining to the assessment of training needs, learning the goals of staff and the work the prefer or enjoy completing.

"I have been an employee here for 13 years, and not once has a supervisor discussed with me what my career goals are, training I may need, work that I would like to do. Thirteen years," exclaimed Kate! Similarly, Nick stated, "This place is like Lord of the Flies, only the strong survive. Expect no nurturing." Diane's comments were a bit different, as she explained:

> I have been here nine years and have had three supervisors. Two were nurturing, providing training opportunities as well as recognition, and appreciation. The other supervisor could have cared less, she did not know what any of her staff were up to – and she is still a division director.

Carol discussed how executive leadership could help set expectations concerning training and developing staff, stating:

> Our executive leadership, the most senior, needs to set the tone and lay down some expectations regarding training-up our most talented mid and lower-level staff. There is no demand for it, no expectation. Senior staff just provide these opportunities to their friends, not the most talented staff. Everyone knows it, but nothing is ever done about it.

Recognition Council Operations

All of the participants explained during their interviews how the current Recognition Council's operations do not produce optimal results. This theme included several subthemes: Deliberate Process, Not Currently Built for Success, Adjudication/Prioritization.

Deliberate process. Three participants were concerned that although the council takes time to deliberate and discuss nominations, results have been predetermined. Carol explained, "The last two years, it has come down from executive leadership who is getting what. It has been pre-determined. What is the point of the council, then?" Likewise, Kate shared, "It is obvious when we have come together what our charge is, and it is not so much priority-wise or impact-wise, but it is personal, at least in my mind, regarding who is receiving what type of recognition."

Nick explained that it would be helpful to have the process and any directives explained by executive leadership, stating, "If the priorities and directives come from the most senior leadership, there would be a level of transparency. Nick further stated," "Can the two of them [Agency ABC's two senior executive service leaders] meet with us for 10 minutes, just to set the tone?"

Not currently built for success. Participants identified several challenges with the current operations of the Recognition Council. Ken explained, "We need to operate year-round, be involved with helping set some type of employee engagement standard. I do not know why our scope of operations is not larger." Diane stated:

> How come the council does not do more? Can we weigh-in or recommend certain types of training, share best practices regarding appreciation and recognition across the

> organization, with other supervisors? We are not being utilized to our fullest extent, that is for certain.

Two participants provided comments regarding operating without bias and with transparency. Nick shared, "The council needs to operate without bias, maybe its members should not be allowed to support their offices' nominations, something to that effect." Kate explained:

> Transparency is key. No one knows really what we do, how we do it, etc. It would be nice for other supervisors to serve, get to know each other. There are a lot of opportunities to share what we do, but we need to work all year around. I do not understand why we do not do so.

Adjudication/prioritization. Currently, the focus of the Recognition Council is the adjudication and prioritization of Honor Award submissions, as well as assist in determining other staff work that deserves organizational recognition that is not deemed Honor Award-worthy (A. Damiano, personal communication, July 26, 2021). Some participants considered this process deliberate, that awards have been pre-determined by senior executives prior to the Recognition Council meeting.

To that effect, Ken explained, "Council members do not work in a vacuum. We are required to cooperate with our office leadership and supervisors in assessing and recommending staff who work on specific projects, as well as comment on level of effort." Kate similarly stated, "It is helpful to learn what other offices are doing, projects that are being recognized. Everyone, to some extent, is doing recognition and appreciation different – some really are not doing much of anything, which is sad."

One participant provided comments describing that the same staff receive recognition each year, regardless of effort. Nick explained:

> For too long, the same staff keep receiving recognition. To a large extent, that is accurate. High performers do lead a lot of our work, year in and year out. However, we do leave out up and comers, lower-level staff frequently. Far too often, supervisors who do not contribute much of anything receive praise and awards. That bothers all of us on the council, and it is widely known who these individuals are.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental study was to clarify the purpose of the Recognition Council from interviewing past Recognition Council members, while also identifying opportunities for staff recognition and appreciation to be optimized within Agency ABC to assist in creating and sustaining employee engagement. The participants in this study were former members of the Recognition Council who served either one or two years on the council. Seven themes emerged from the researcher's interviews with these participants, which included: Shared Vision, Employee Engagement, Employee Recognition, Employee Appreciation, Missed Opportunities, Agency ABC Culture, and Recognition Council Operations. All of these themes produced subthemes as well.

Within the Shared Vision theme, which produced the subthemes Executive Leadership, Defining Impact/Connection to Impactful Work, and Thoughtfulness/Fairness, participants discussed the possibility of greater executive leadership participation, working to define the meaning and application of the term "impact," and how to apply the principles of thoughtfulness and fairness to the recognition council's processes.

Within the Employee Engagement theme, which produced the subthemes Free Flow of Information, Bi-directional Communication, and Employee Buy-in, participants discussed how the free flow of information in a bi-directional manner between supervisor and employee helped to create and sustain and open and honest relationship, whereupon an employee would have a greater likelihood of buying into organizational culture and goals.

Within the Employee Recognition theme, which produced the subthemes Meritorious Driven, Individual/Team Weighted Awards, Above and Beyond, Employee Value, participants discussed why it is critical to connect one's impact of their work to an award, awarding different levels of effort within a team construct, why using the term "above and beyond" is not recommended, and how to demonstrate employee value.

Within the Employee Appreciation theme, which produced the subthemes Daily Appreciation, Appreciation Provided by Different Levels of Supervisors, and Collegial Support, participants discussed the frequency of how often appreciation may be provided to staff, the importance of having different levels of supervisors show appreciation to staff, and the significance of colleagues recognizing one another's achievements.

Within the Missed Opportunities theme, which produced the subthemes Selfish Behavior, Participation Trophies, and Six Months of Stagnation, participants discussed how council member's behavior spending disproportionate time promoting their own office's awards versus other awards hinders the recognition process. Also discussed was the over-saturation of recognizing work that may not be award-worthy at the highest levels, and the fact the council operates only part of the year, which has a negative effect upon organizational recognition.

Within the Agency ABC Culture theme, which produced the subthemes Genuine and Authentic Employee Engagement, Cross-Collaboration, and Nurturing Staff, participants

discussed the importance of recognizing staff in a genuine and timely manner, the critical nature of working across offices and organizations, and the need for supervisors to take significant time in nurturing their staff.

Last, within the Recognition Council Operations theme, which produced the subthemes Deliberate Process, Not Currently Built for Success, and Adjudication/Prioritization, participants discussed the possibility that results may be pre-determined by executive leadership, reasons why the current structure of the council limits its success, and the manner by which the council currently discusses and decides upon which nominations to move forward.

In Chapter 5, interpretation of findings of this study, implications, and recommendations for action and further study will be discussed.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental study was to clarify the purpose of the Recognition Council by interviewing past Recognition Council members, while also identifying opportunities for staff recognition and appreciation to be optimized within Agency ABC to assist in creating and sustaining employee engagement. This chapter includes a summary of the study, an explanation of data that was collected and analyzed, includes implications and recommendations for action, and provides recommendations for further study. This research was conducted to provide insight as to how Agency ABC's Recognition Council has been utilized as a tool to foster employee engagement, and to investigate how its role may be enhanced or modified.

With the advent of increasing telework and a competitive workplace regarding retaining employees, many employers have begun to examine how they may create and sustain employee engagement (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013). In an effort to improve employee performance in a rapidly changing work environment, many leaders of organizations have begun engaging their employees through offering training programs, establishing recognition and appreciation programs, or creating more collegial atmospheres in an attempt to improve performance and other work-associated metrics (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013). Furthermore, Acker and Dean (2020) asserted that employee engagement, exemplified by positive perceptions of supervisors, workplace, and job, improves employee productivity and retention.

Employee recognition is a critical component of employee engagement, and organizations that have recognized their employees have witnessed organizational benefits. Employee recognition has been identified to be a highly effective motivational instrument that

may have significant positive impact on employee job satisfaction and performance, as well as overall organizational performance (Rahim & Duad, 2013). Additionally, many organizations have long established organization-wide formal award programs that lead to evolving department-specific awards and more informal recognition and social recognition (Saunderson, 2016). Agency ABC has such a formal award program, identified as the Recognition Council.

The researcher studied several theories of motivation prior to identifying one for this research. Ouchi's Theory Z (Ouchi, 1981), Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1970) and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1982) were examined prior to the researcher selecting Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Relative to the goal of this study, Herzberg's theory highlights the importance of rewards systems and monitoring when and how employees are rewarded, also stipulating that simple recognition is often enough to motive employees and increase job satisfaction (Gawel, 1996). However, what solidified the selection of this theoretical framework for this research was that throughout Herzberg's research, he asserted that adequate compensation alone will not motivate employees, but it is rather an employee's achievements, recognition from managers and the work itself that will provide motivation (Herzberg, 1982), both of which have been goals and objectives of Agency ABC's Recognition Council.

Five members of Agency ABC's Recognition Council participated in this study. Criterion sampling was utilized, which allowed for the study of a specific cohort that has experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2013), which in this case is having served as a member on the Recognition Council. Agency ABC staff who have served as a member of the Recognition Council during the past two years (16 individuals) received an invitation through their work email from the researcher's une.edu email to participate in semi-structured interviews and were sent consent forms once their eligibility was confirmed.

Interpretation of Findings

Using Microsoft Teams, the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with participants that were held in private rooms (the researcher asked the participants to adjourn to a room with a door in their home). Prior to beginning each interview, the researcher assured the participant that their anonymity will be protected as they were assigned a pseudonym and that all responses would remain confidential. The interviews began with a review of the informed consent form and a reminder that the participant may stop the interview at any time or end their participation in this study. The interview then proceeded with questions posed in a semi-structured format, whereupon the researcher asked participants questions regarding potential applications of the Recognition Council's work concerning employee engagement, recognition and appreciation in the Recognition Council's work and their perceptions regarding the overall vision and objectives of the Council.

Data collected from these interviews assisted in distinguishing emerging themes and subsequent subthemes, which helped answer the study's two research questions of (1) How do former Recognition Council members perceive the Council's role, experience, and expectation in helping to create and sustain employee engagement among staff? and (2) How, according to former Recognition Council members, may staff recognition be optimized within Agency ABC to sustain employee engagement?

Utilizing Creswell's (2013) six steps for data analysis, as well as performing cross-case analysis, the researcher organized, transcribed, and coded interview responses via manual coding. As a result of this process, seven primary themes and various subthemes emerged:

Theme 1: Shared vision. This theme presented three subthemes of (a) executive leadership, (b) defining impact/connection to impactful work and, (c) thoughtfulness/fairness.

Theme 2: Employee engagement. This theme presented three subthemes of (a) free flow of information, (b) bi-directional and, (c) employee buy-in.

Theme 3: Employee recognition. This theme presented four subthemes of (a) meritorious driven, individual/team weighted awards, above and beyond and, (c) employee value.

Theme 4: Employee appreciation. This theme presented three subthemes of (a) daily appreciation, (b) appreciation provided by different levels of supervisors and, (c) collegial support.

Theme 5: Missed opportunities. This theme presented three subthemes of (a) selfish behavior, (b) participation trophies and, (c) six months of stagnation.

Theme 6: Agency ABC culture. This theme presented three subthemes of (a) genuine and authentic employee engagement, (b) cross-collaboration, and (c) nurturing staff.

Theme 7: Recognition council operations. This theme presented three subthemes of (a) deliberate process, (b) not currently built for success and, (c) adjudication/prioritization.

Interview data derived from each of these themes contributed significantly to answering the two research questions that guided this study.

Research Question 1: How do former Recognition Council members perceive the Council's role, experience, and expectation in helping to create and sustain employee engagement among staff?

Four themes and their correlating subthemes assisted in enabling the researcher to answer the study's first research question. These themes included shared vision, employee recognition, missed opportunities and recognition council operations.

Theme 1: Shared Vision

Upon analyzing data collected from the participants' interviews, it was apparent to the researcher that an absence of executive leadership (shared vision) contributed significantly to participant questions concerning what the true objectives of the council should be. The lack of consistent feedback from executive leadership, guidance from executive leadership and specifically the inability to define the term "impact" contributed to a lack of a shared vision among the participants' responses. Per participant responses, an increased shared vision among executive leadership and Recognition Council members is a necessity regarding future council operations.

Theme 3: Employee Recognition

All the participants struggled with defining the term, "recognition," which is a key component of the council's purpose. Ideas among the participant group varied significantly in defining what type of work should receive recognition, how merit is measured and how the council can recognize different levels of effort within the same project. The participants produced varying responses to definitions and terms, such as "above and beyond" and "merit" that it became obvious to see as to why the objectives of the council were challenging for its members to identify. How to best demonstrate "employee value" was also identified as a challenge among all participants, as participants equated this principle to timely recognition, awarding cash and/or advocating for different awards. In all of these instances, a lack of shared vision/executive leadership led the participants to express they have had difficulty in perceiving the role and expectations of the Recognition Council.

Theme 5: Missed Opportunities

Four participants did not describe the majority of their time serving on the Recognition Council in a positive manner. Four of the participants highlighted other council members' selfish behavior, which included supporting only their own offices' awards or strongly criticizing the work/awards of other offices. There also existed, according to four participants, a lack of cooperation in helping one another edit awards.

All participants communicated to the researcher that too many awards moved forward – that this process diluted significant achievement or outcomes demonstrated by groups and/or individuals – those awards were used as "participation trophies," and many staff were just doing their assigned work well. All participants also believed that if the executive leadership could have helped define several key terms such as "merit" the process of nominating staff for awards could have been made easier. Additionally, all of the participants felt that the council should operate all year, that a prolonged period of stagnation hurt timeliness of recognizing award-worthy efforts, which in turn adversely affected employee engagement.

Theme 7: Recognition Council Operations

As stated above, four participants described their experiences and expectations as a member of the Recognition Council in a negative manner. Four participants complained about the council's limited scope, i.e., Ken explained "Can trainings, details, forms of appreciation be discussed year-round for our staff, with this group?" The lack of transparency regarding operations, bias among its members and limited scope seemed to significantly hinder what the participants felt could be a significant tool in, "Exchanging ideas, leveling and setting the awards

playing field and working with our colleagues to make sure all appropriate staff are recognized and appreciated," explained Nick.

Research Question 2: How, according to former Recognition Council members, may staff recognition be optimized within Agency ABC to sustain employee engagement?

Three themes and their correlating subthemes assisted in enabling the researcher to answer the study's second question. These themes included employee engagement, employee appreciation and Agency ABC culture.

Theme 2: Employee Engagement

Answering the second research question in the context of employee engagement is essential, as each participant defined the term "employee engagement" differently. Per literature reviewed, employee engagement is critical to an organization's culture. Marrelli (2011) noted employee engagement activities contribute to improving job retention as well as motivating employees to perform at an optimal level, while contributing significantly to a collegial work environment. As all of the participants defined the term "employee engagement" differently, participants shared they believed that the lack of a standardized definition of a term so critical to Recognition Council functions proved to be an insurmountable hurdle regarding the Council's operations.

Additionally, employee buy-in emerged as an important subtheme per participant responses. Three participants described to the researcher that through bi-directional communications, supervisors and members of the council could gain a sense of how employees may wish to receive recognition and/or appreciation. Per participant responses, this element of employee engagement seemed to be missing from the executive leadership and council member

communications, as well as council member and their respective office leadership communications.

Theme 4: Employee Appreciation

All participants communicated that employee engagement may be enhanced by increasing the number and scope of employee appreciation activities. All participants noted that there should exist more opportunities to show appreciation to staff, from different levels of supervisors, colleagues, and with more frequency, and that the Recognition Council could play a role in sharing best practices throughout offices and within the agency pertaining to employee appreciation.

Theme 6: Agency ABC Culture

All participants shared they felt that the philosophy of the Recognition Council and its members must transform to meet the needs of Agency ABC staff if in-fact recognition is to be optimized. The participants also communicated to the researcher that Genuine and authentic behavior must be exhibited for staff to buy-in completely to the mission of Agency ABC, which includes recognizing work in the manner by which staff would like to be recognized, in a timely manner. Per participant responses, staff will not buy-in to a recognition program if it is not genuine. Participants also communicated that such a program may have adverse effects upon staff, as participants believed that inauthentic recognition could result in employee turnover or low annual job satisfaction scores.

Additionally, four participants noted that there is a scarcity of staff nurturing or development, as well as cross-collaboration. All participants communicated to the researcher that the Recognition Council should strive to recognize impactful outcomes based upon collaborative work in a timely manner, with some type of frequency. Four participants discussed

that the collaborative work encourages a more team-like atmosphere, less competition, and an atmosphere that is more prone to developing and maintaining talented staff.

Implications

The findings of this study not only have implications for the future operations of the Recognition Council, but also for Agency ABC's current staff and future staffing recruitment. The first implication of this study is to understand the manner by which operations of the Recognition Council must be further defined and enhanced. Second, there are implications for current Agency ABC staff regarding how they view the workplace as a result of the current Recognition Council operations. Last, there exists an implication regarding harming future staffing recruitment to Agency ABC, resulting from current recognition activities.

The first implication of the study if that all participants shared with the researcher that for the Recognition Council to operate effectively, all of its members must have a common understanding of key terms, objectives, and operations. The fact that all participants of this study defined key terms such as "merit," "employee engagement" and "above and beyond" differently, as well as had different views as to how to apply impact of an award, does not bode well for consistency of operations. Also, the fact that all participants did not understand objectives or focus areas of the council regarding what work to award, as well as felt that greater executive leadership participation was critical, are crucial points that must be remedied in order for the Recognition Council to move forward. All study participants shared they believed that the council will not operate in an effective manner in the future if direction from executive leadership is lacking, and members of the council do not possess a common understanding of the council's objectives and operations,

The second implication of this study lies with how Agency ABC staff view the workplace as a result of how the Recognition Council operates. All participants in this study shared they believed that an organization's culture must be genuine and authentic for employees to conform to the needs of an organization or buy into an organization's culture. Authentic recognition and appreciation, per the participants interviewed, should be provided to staff in a timely fashion and in a consistent manner across all of Agency ABC. Per interviews with participants, it was communicated to the researcher that staff should receive recognition and appreciation in the manner by which they prefer based upon their bi-directional communication with supervisors. If staff recognition and appreciation are not carried out in a genuine and authentic manner, this could likely imply current staff may leave the organization to seek employment elsewhere.

The last implication is a critical data point collected from participant interview responses that future staffing recruitment to Agency ABC may be harmed as a result of current recognition activities. Four of the participants communicated to the researcher that employees will not choose to work for an organization that does neither recognize nor appreciate staff in a consistent, genuine, or authentic manner. Recruitment and retention are competitive enough among federal government agencies, without the prospect of an agency engaging in sub-optimal recognition and appreciation practices. Furthermore, participants shared they believed that federal employees often discuss with one another desirable, and not desirable places to work; as such, federal employees may not wish to work for an organization that fails to recognize and appreciated its staff in an appropriate manner. Per participant responses, it is necessary for Agency ABC to improve and enhance the Recognition Council, as well as its recognition and appreciation practices as soon as possible so they may remain competitive regarding recruiting and retaining the most qualified talent.

Recommendations for Action

In this study, results indicate several enhancements that are recommended to be made to the Recognition Council's operations without further study. Recommendations for immediate action to be taken by executive leadership and Recognition Council members are supported by this study's findings and conclusions. The findings of this research may assist not only the executive leadership as well as Recognition Council members of Agency ABC, but could also assist other Agencies within Department XYZ, as well as other Departments within the federal government who wish to create and sustain similar staff recognition groups. The following recommendations are intended for the executive leadership of Agency ABC, Recognition Council members and other federal government organizations who wish to implement a similar staff recognition group.

Recommendations for the Executive Leadership of Agency ABC

The researcher of this study recommends that the executive leadership of Agency ABC consider the following actions. First and foremost, consider increasing their involvement in the process of Recognition Council deliberations, even if that involves only checking in periodically. Second, it is recommended that executive leadership work in collaboration with the council to suggesting Agency ABC work priorities that may deserve recognition and appreciation, as well as discuss the definition of "impact," "merit," and other key terms so as to agree upon a working definition for the council to operate off of. Last, it is recommended that executive leadership expand the council's scope of operations to include more activities under the employee engagement umbrella, i.e., appreciation and training activities, as well as allow the council to operate all year round so impactful work is recognized in a timely manner.

Recommendations for the Recognition Council

The researcher first recommends that Recognition Council, working in collaboration with the executive leadership, agree upon the definition and application of key terms, such as "merit," "impact" and "above and beyond." Second, it is also recommended that the council, with direction provided by executive leadership, create and agree upon a charter that establishes their scope, duties, term of service as a council member and other aspects of operation that are critical to sustained success. Third, it is recommended that the council determine what type of employee engagement activities this group will engage in and how it will communicate and with what frequency/manner with Agency ABC supervisors for bi-directional input.

Recommendations for Sharing This Work with Other Federal Organizations

The researcher of this study also recommends that this work be shared with other federal organizations within Department XYZ. It is recommended that executive leadership of Agency ABC share these findings, as they are well positioned to do this at Department senior staff meetings or during one-on-one meetings with the department administrator or other agencies. Though the researcher could not find many examples of federal recognition and/or appreciation programs, they may exist within other federal agencies. Conversations with other executive leaders may be an opportunity to exchange best practices, provide a network(s) to Agency ABC's Recognition Council and create new opportunities for Agency ABC staff, i.e., work-related details or new work-related projects.

Recommendations for Further Study

The researcher recommends the following three areas for further study based upon this study's results and limitations: Follow-up research on the operations of Agency ABC's Recognition Council, research on the existence and operations of recognition groups in other

federal organizations to study best practices, and interviewing Agency ABC staff to assess their feelings, and suggestions regarding Agency ABC's recognition and appreciation activities.

First, further study of the Recognition Council should be scheduled at some future point in time, to determine what, if any, changes were made as a result of this study's recommendations and what impact, if any resulted from any changes that were made. Recognition Council members could be interviewed once again to assess any changes in operations and structure of the council.

Second, additional research such as identifying organizational best practices could be conducted, which examines recognition programs within similar sector federal organizations, i.e., agencies that focus on healthcare or energy. This type of research, identifying best practices of other recognition groups across the government, would be helpful not only to the operations of Agency ABC's Recognition Council, but perhaps to other recognition programs throughout other agencies as well. Perhaps in the future, a mechanism to share federal agency recognition and appreciation best practices can be created to share with private sector organizations, and vice-versa.

Last, future research could pursue one of this study's limitations, which included interviewing the staff of Agency ABC to assess their perceptions and recommendations concerning employee engagement activities within Agency ABC. Collecting the input of Agency employees could be critical in helping to assess the needs or shortcomings of the Recognition Council, as well as provide ideas for future employee engagement programming.

Conclusion

Rahim and Duad (2013) wrote that employee recognition has been identified to be a highly effective motivational instrument that may have significant positive impact on employee

job satisfaction and performance, as well as overall organizational performance. This study was conducted to clarify the purpose of the Recognition Council from interviewing past Recognition Council members, while also identifying opportunities for staff recognition and appreciation to be optimized within Agency ABC to assist in creating and sustaining employee engagement. The conceptual framework that supported this study was Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which stated that employees are not content solely with lower-order hygienic factors, but also required motivational factors such as achievement and recognition (Herzberg, 2003). As a part of this research 5 former Recognition Council members participated in one-on-one interviews, providing data in connection to this study's two research questions: (1) How do former Recognition Council members perceive the Council's role, experience, and expectation in helping to create and sustain employee engagement among staff? and (2) How, according to former Recognition Council members, may staff recognition be optimized within Agency ABC to sustain employee engagement?

This study's results explain that former Recognition Council members perceive the role of the council as one that needs to be improved, and that improvements regarding its current operations must happen in the imminent future. Study participants explained that the role, experience, and expectation concerning creating and sustaining employee engagement among staff is ill defined due to a lack of executive leadership in conjunction with council operations and concurrence on key terminology that assist in defining the scope and impact of awards and appreciation mechanisms. Furthermore, it was also explained to the researcher that due to the fact awards and appreciation are not provided in a timely manner and that there exists a lack of cooperation among not only council members but office leadership within Agency ABC

regarding recognizing work worthy of an award, there exists a work culture lacking in authenticity.

It is important to note that staff recognition, according to study participants, may be optimized in Agency ABC through happening on a continual cycle throughout the year, having executive leadership outline award priorities, council goals and objectives, assist in defining key terminology that award criteria is based upon, and participate in council operations with some frequency. Though there does exist significant literature supporting employee engagement, recognition and appreciation within private sector organizations, there exists insufficient literature describing recognition programs that exist within federal organizations. The researcher of this study sought to fill this need with this research.

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APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY

February 24, 2021

Research Proposal
University of New England Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership

This proposal serves as the request to conduct research in the "*Organization DEF"* and "*AgencyABC"* per Administrative Regulation 6162.8

Name of Researcher

My name is David A. Dietz and I am a graduate student in the doctorate program at the University of New England, Maine.

I am conducting a research study designed to investigate prior Recognition Council members' perceptions of employee engagement, recognition and appreciation as it related to their experiences serving on the Recognition Council, relative to their responsibilities and expectations as a supervisor to practice employee engagement, including but not limited to recognition and appreciation of their staff.

Method of Study

The method of study I will utilize is a case study methodology deriving data from interviews of staff who have participated on prior Recognition Councils. Staff names (as well as the agency name and bureau) will be anonymized.

Benefits to the Federal Agency

Though there will be no direct benefits to either *"Agency ABC"* or *"Organization DEF"* staff who participate in this research. It is my hope that the findings of my study will provide insight that will assist BPHC in enhancing the Recognition Council's vision, as well as provide a possible framework for improving BPHC employee engagement.

Proposed Project Period

The proposed research proposed is from May 2021 through August 2021.

Participation

All participants will be explained of the purpose of this research and asked to sign an informed consent form prior to participation. Participants will be informed that their participation is

completely voluntary, and may decide to answer only the questions they feel comfortable answering and may withdraw from the study at any point in time. All data collected will be stored for a period of no longer than two years, after which it will be destroyed per IRB requirement.

There is a risk of loss of privacy. However, no names or identifying information will appear in any published reports of the research. The research material will be kept in a secure location away from public access, and only the researcher will have access to this data. At the conclusion of this study, all audio recordings of interviews will be deleted.

Certification

This letter is to certify that information obtained from this research will not include names of interviewees, agencies, bureaus, or other personal identifying information.

David A. Dietz -S3
David Dietz/Student Investigator

Digitally signed by D_____17:51:53 -05'00' _____
David Dietz/Student Investigator

Digitally signed by AngelaDamiano Holder -S
Angela Damiano Holder -S Date: 2021.02.26
11:59:49 -05'00' _____
Angela Damiano-Holder/Supervisor

Appendix B: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

University of New England
Consent for Participation in Research

Project Title: Case Study: Member Perception of a Federal Organization's Employee Award RecognitionProgram

Principal Investigator(s): David A. Dietz

Introduction:
Please read this form. You may also request that the form is read to you. The purpose of this form is to give you information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document that choice. You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether or not you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

Why is this research study being done?
The purpose of this proposed study is to identify the purpose of the Recognition Council fromminterviewing past Recognition Council members, while also identifying opportunities for staff recognition and appreciation to be optimized to assist in sustaining employee engagement.

Who will be in this study?
Past members of the Recognition Council will be invited to voluntarily participate in this study.

What will I be asked to do?
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be sent an email describing the objectives of this study, method of conducting this study (via Microsoft Teams) and anticipated time commitment (60 minutes). The researcher will also send you an informed consent form accompanied by a several dates/times which the participant may select from to interview.
Once a date/time is agreed upon, the researcher will send you an email with a Microsoft Teamslink and passcode that will include an option for the participant to use the telephone if they prefer.

What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?
There are no known risks associated with taking part in this study.
What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?
A possible benefit of participating in this study is contributing to possible enhancements of the Recognition Council.

What will it cost me?

The cost to you will be the time it takes to participate in the interview and complete a member check.

How will my privacy be protected?

Interviews will be held in private rooms. You will be asked to adjourn to a room away from public access/view with a door that can be closed. Prior to beginning the interview, the participant will be assured that their anonymity will be protected from persons other than to the researcher as they will be assigned a pseudonym. Furthermore, each participant will be assured that all of their responses will remain confidential.

How will my data be kept confidential?

Data will be kept confidential to the greatest extent possible. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed using this platform. Recorded participant interviews will be saved on a thumb drive and stored in a safe that only the researcher has access to. Both the thumb drive and paper interviews will be kept in a safe in the researcher's home. All data will be kept for a period not to exceed two years, whereupon it will be destroyed.

What are my rights as a research participant?

1. Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your currentor future relations with the University.
2. Your decision to participate will not affect your relationship with David A. Dietz.
3. You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.
4. If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefitsthat you are otherwise entitled to receive.
5. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason.
6. If you choose to withdraw from the research there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
7. You will be informed of any significant findings developed during the course of the research that may affect your willingness to participate in the research.
8. If you sustain an injury while participating in this study, your participation may be ended.

What other options do I have?

You may choose not to participate.

Whom may I contact with questions?

The researcher conducting this study are David A. Dietz

For more information regarding this study, please contact DDietz@UNE.edu

If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a researchrelated injury, please contact Jacqueline Lookabaugh, Ed.D., (281) 910-4522 or email jlookabaugh@une.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may

call Mary Bachman DeSilva, Sc.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4567 orirb@une.edu.

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?

You will be provided a copy of this consent form.

Participant's Statement
I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with myparticipation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

_____ _____

Participant's signature or Date

Legally authorized representative

_____
Printed name

Researcher's Statement
The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity toask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

_____ _____

Researcher's signature Date

_____
Printed name

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Invitation to Participate in Study
Invitee Name:

Dear _____:

I would like to invite you to be a participant in a one-on-one interview as a part of the research I am doing here at Agency ABC. In addition to my position at Agency ABC, I am also a doctoral student at the University of New England, and this research is part of my dissertation requirement.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to clarify the purpose of the Recognition Council from interviewing past Recognition Council members, while also identifying opportunities for staff recognition and appreciation to be optimized within Agency ABC to assist in creating and sustaining employee engagement. Data will be collected from interviewing individuals who have had the experience of serving on the Recognition Council.

Eligibility to participate in this study is limited to individuals who have served on the Recognition Council for at least one year. Participation is voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any time during this interview. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes and will be audio recorded.

As part of this study, I will take measures to protect your anonymity by assigning each participant a pseudonym. Once the interview is complete, it will be transcribed into a text file that I will share with you to make certain I captured your statements accurately. Furthermore, once the study is completed, I will share a summary of the findings with you.

Please let me know if you are interested in participating in this research by emailing me at DDietz@une.edu by (date).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David Dietz
Doctoral Candidate
The University of New England

Appendix D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL & QUESTIONS

Heading: *Member Perception of a Federal Organization's Recognition Council*
Name of Interviewer: David Dietz
Name of Interviewee:
Location of Interview:
Date of Interview:

Opening: Good morning/afternoon XXX. Thank you for agreeing to meet with me to discuss the member perception of a federal organization's recognition council. As you know, I am currently enrolled in the University of New England's Doctor of Education program and this interview is part of my dissertation research project. I asked you for this interview because you served as a member of the Bureau of Primary Health Care's (BPHC) Recognition Council, and I am interested in your perspective on this topic. This interview will last between 45 minutes and an hour. In addition to gaining knowledge about your experiences as a member of the Recognition Council, I will also gain experience as a researcher with collecting data in conjunction with an interview. With your permission, I would like to record this session and have it professionally transcribed. Recording this interview will ensure that I have our exact communication exchanges. I will provide you the opportunity to read the transcription of the interview so you may confirm its accuracy. This data will be used first for the purposes of my dissertation to make recommendations as they may pertain to objectives of the Recognition Council, in addition to how employee engagement may be sustained among staff throughout BPHC. I will remove all identifying information for confidentiality purposes, as well as keep all data encrypted on my laptop with a backup copy also encrypted and locked in a file at my house. This interview is voluntary; please feel free to decline to answer any questions or stop the interview at any time. Do I have your permission to proceed with the recording? Do you have any questions for me before we get started?

Introduction: My vision for this project is to provide recommendations to BPHC senior leadership regarding future objectives of the Recognition Council, as well as how employee engagement may be sustained among staff throughout BPHC. Employee engagement comes in many forms: recognition, appreciation, opportunities to advance or complete specific types of training, etc. The intention here is to listen to, summarize and provide recommendations to BPHC executive leadership from previous Recognition Council members as to how the Council may play a role in employee engagement, as well as obtain their thoughts as to how employee engagement may be optimized throughout BPHC. Throughout my journey researching this topic and preparing for this interview, I have come to appreciate the concept of appreciative inquiry, which is an evaluative approach focusing on strengths rather than weaknesses. For example, I would like to hear your thoughts and stories about your best experiences as a Recognition Council member, so that we may translate them into objectives and possible operational plans moving forward. Are you comfortable with this?

Interview Questions

1. Background: How many years have you worked at HRSA/BPHC in a supervisory role and howmany years have you been on the Recognition Council? Are you a PHS officer or a civilian?

2. How do you define the term employee engagement?

3. How do you define the term employee recognition?

4. How do you define the term employee appreciation?

5. In your opinion, do you think it is a supervisor's role to provide an employee with engagementopportunities, recognition and/or appreciation?

6. In your opinion, what do you think the Recognition Council's role is in providing an employeewith recognition and/or appreciation?

7. How would you compare the role of a supervisor with the role of the Recognition Council in providing employee recognition and/or appreciation?

8. How would you describe your recruitment to participate as a member of the RecognitionCouncil?

9. Did you receive any training/indoctrination or description of your responsibilities upon joiningthe Recognition Council?

10. Were you familiar with the objectives and goals of the Recognition Council upon joining thisgroup?

11. How would you describe the Recognition Council's process regarding the distribution ofemployee recognition and appreciation?

12. In your opinion, how has BPHC executive leadership articulated the goals/objectives of the Recognition Council to its participants?

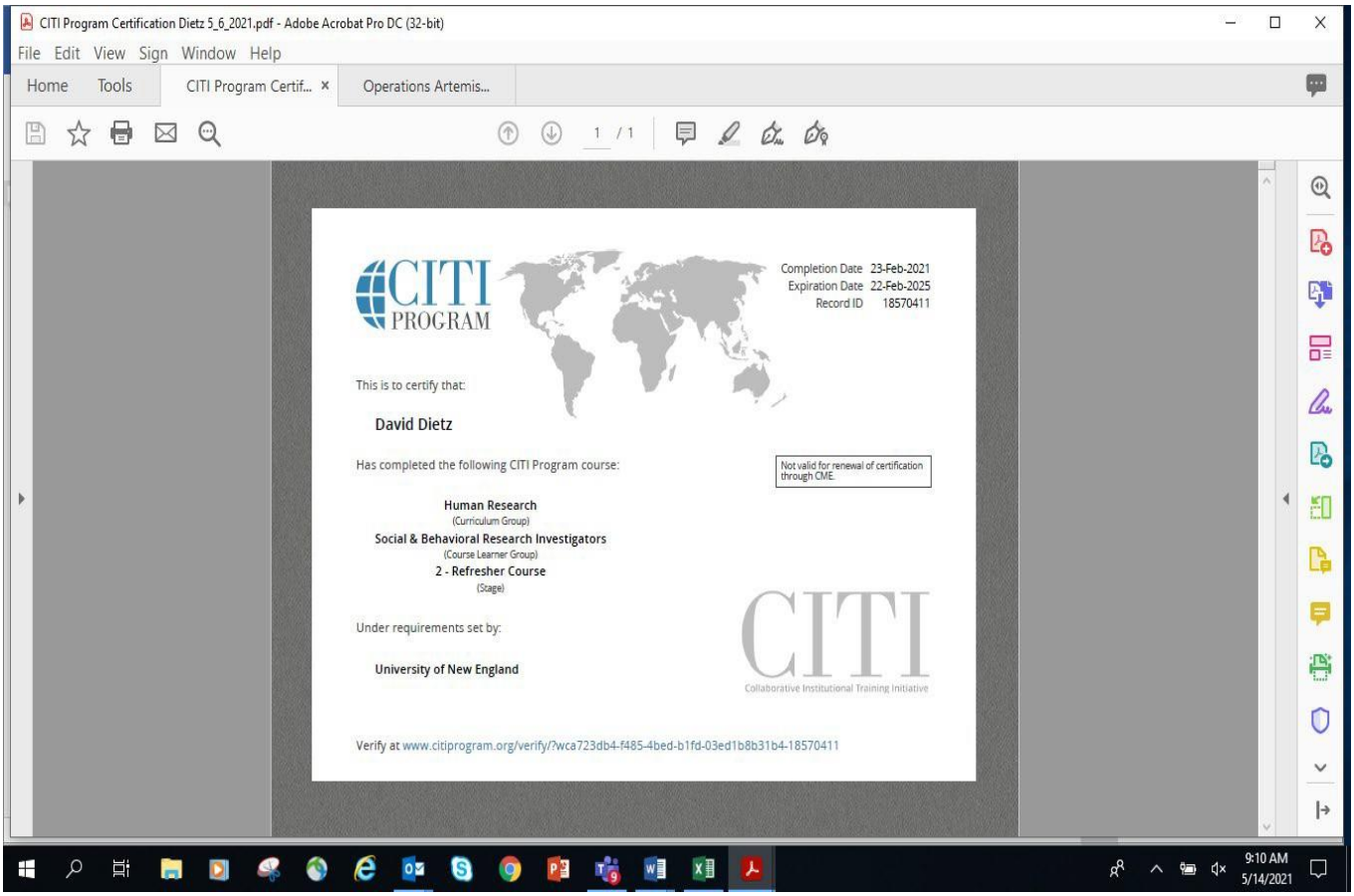
13. In your opinion, how might the objectives and vision of the Recognition Council be enhanced, if at all?

14. In your opinion, how might the operations of the Recognition Council be improved, if at all?

15. In your opinion, do BPHC staff receive appropriate, timely recognition and appreciation from the council? If not, what suggestions might you have to improve this?

16. Would you want to participate as a member of the Recognition Council in the future? Why or why not?

APPENDIX E: COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI) PROGRAM CERTIFICATION



CITI Program Certification Dietz 5_6_2021.pdf - Adobe Acrobat Pro DC (32-bit)

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 23-Feb-2021
Expiration Date 22-Feb-2025
Record ID 18570411

This is to certify that:

David Dietz

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Human Research
(Curriculum Group)
Social & Behavioral Research Investigators
(Course Learner Group)
2 - Refresher Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

University of New England

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wca723db4-f485-4bed-b1fd-03ed1b8b31b4-18570411