

**Electric Cooperative
Managers' Strategies to
Enhance Organizational
Commitment to Increase
Employee Productivity**

Electric Cooperative Managers' Strategies to Enhance Organizational Commitment to Increase Employee Productivity

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Commitment to Increase Employee Productivity*

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to the one true love of my life—Amy. I want to thank you for all the prayers and your strength that has carried me through the rough times. Thank you so much for believing, with me, our Father’s plan and will for our lives. I want to thank my son for challenging me to go for this doctorate and succeed. To my daughters, I want to thank you for being a new shining light in my life that has given me so much joy. To my parents and sister, I want to thank you for always being there to make sure I have the support and love. I hope my life’s struggles and gains will be a shining light in my children’s lives that they see good things come to those who are obedient to God and work hard.

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SECTION 1

FOUNDATION OF THE STUDY

Leaders need to comprehend the significance of implementing effective leadership strategies to enhance organizational commitment to increase productivity. Small firms accounted for 64.5% of the net new jobs created in 2018 (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2019). There is a constant need for new information on best practices in the workplace. In this study, I analyzed the research data to address the research problem so that I could offer leaders proven leadership strategies to increase organizational commitment to increase productivity.

Background of the Problem

Leadership is the act of focusing on identifying factors and facilitating the implementation of innovation while motivating individuals to work toward a common goal (Farahnak et al., 2019). To be effective, leaders must communicate ideas to engage employees and evoke action to accomplish an organization's desired outcome (Porter et al., 2016). Scholars could argue that the success of a business relies on its leadership's behavioral and interpersonal skills as well as their ability to engage employees. In the United States, less than 33% of employees in the workplace are engaged (Adkins, 2016). Leaders recognize the importance of employee engagement, and implementing employee engagement strategies can increase performance and productivity (Albrecht et al., 2015). Employees' motivation, satisfaction, and engagement are productivity indicators (Shika, 2019). Most employees are engaged if they work toward

positive objectives, stay committed to the organization, and represent the company. High engagement of an employee within the organization leads to various organizational outcomes, such as high productivity and profitability, customer satisfaction, and reduced turnover of employees (Shika, 2019). Conversely, lack of effective leadership strategies reduces employee productivity (Shinm et al., 2015). A transformational leadership style has been proven to be a moderating variable with an effect on talent management and organizational performance. Almaaitaha et al. (2020) produced findings showing the significance of organizational commitment in achieving human resources performance goals.

Problem Statement

There is a weak but negative relationship between continuance commitment and job productivity when the leader's transformational behaviors are low (Sungu et al., 2019). Susilowati and Azis (2019) reported that 72% of employees surveyed indicated that organizational commitment had a significant role in employee performance and their decision to remain with the organization. The general business problem in this study was that diminished organizational commitment negatively affects businesses by lowering productivity, reducing job satisfaction, increasing employee turnover rate, and increasing employee disengagement. The specific business problem was that some rural electric cooperative managers lack leadership strategies to enhance organizational commitment to increase employee productivity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore leadership strategies that rural electric cooperative managers use to enhance organizational commitment to increase employee productivity. The population for this study included a rural electric cooperative CEO and their subordinate department managers, which included a minimum of five individuals

with offices located in rural Northwest Florida. The target population consisted of a single cooperative with proven strategies used to enhance organizational commitment to increase productivity. The implications for business change included the potential to encourage organizational commitment to increase productivity. The movement toward business change promotes better leadership strategies, which increase workplace engagement. The results of the study may bring about social change by improving employee working conditions by promoting their worth, dignity, and development.

Nature of the Study

The selected approach to this study was a qualitative, exploratory, single-case study. A qualitative approach is an efficient research method through which the researcher can gain insights into an existing business problem. Furthermore, Wilkinson et al. (2016) argued that qualitative researchers study a person, group, organization, or situation to gain new insight. The quantitative approach is appropriate if a hypothesis is testable when examining the relationship between theoretical constructs, variables, or the prediction of research outcomes (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2012). A quantitative method is suitable when researchers seek to quantify data, present findings in a numerical or mathematical form, and generalize results from a sample of a target population. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods results in the mixed-method approach. Researchers who select the mixed method employ both quantitative and qualitative research methods to gain new understandings of a phenomenon of importance (Palinkas et al., 2019). Neither a quantitative nor mixed-method study was appropriate for this study because I did not intend to examine statistical relationships or group differences.

Case studies are useful for investigating occurrences, events, and individuals (Yin, 2017). Case studies can also afford the researcher an opportunity to ask open-ended questions to address *what*, *how*, and *why* questions regarding phenomena (Yin, 2017). Case studies are a common

way to make a qualitative inquiry. A single case study design is appropriate when researchers study a person, group, organization, or situation over a period to gain a holistic understanding of the factors contributing to the problem (Keenan et al., 2015). Researchers use phenomenological design to explore participants' lived experiences as they relate to a phenomenon, which was not the intent of this study. Reeves et al. (2013) argued that an ethnographic design is appropriate to study social or cultural problems or document the customs, beliefs, perspectives, and practices of people, organizations, teams, and communities in their natural habitat. Natow (2019) described a case study as qualitative research regarding realities encompassing the interaction between self and environment, which requires collecting data from two or more sources such as observations, interviews, and documents (Natow, 2019). Researchers use narrative design to collect data from people and present findings as stories told by research participants (Yin, 2015). Scholars using narrative design construct a narrative rendition of the findings from a real-world setting and emphasize a sense of being there (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Because my objective was to explore effective leadership strategies that rural electric cooperative managers use in Northwest Florida, a case study design was the appropriate choice.

Research Question

What strategies do rural electric cooperative managers in Northwest Florida use to enhance organizational commitment to increase employee productivity?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you used to improve organizational commitment?
2. What are the most effective strategies you have used to improve organizational commitment?

3. What strategies do you consider the least effective strategies you have used to improve organizational commitment?
4. How do you measure the effectiveness of strategies you have used to improve organizational commitment?
5. What challenges have you encountered when attempting to implement these strategies?
6. How have you addressed those challenges?
7. Do you have any additional information to share about your strategies to retain entry-level employees?
8. What else would you like to share regarding strategies that electric cooperative managers could use to enhance organizational commitment to increase employee productivity?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this qualitative, single case study was transformational leadership. Burns (1978) developed the transformational leadership theory, and Bass and Avolio (1993) further developed components of the theory. Bass and Avolio's model divided transformational leadership into four components: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. McCleskey (2014) asserted that transformational leaders assist in increasing performance and the capacity of employees to overcome personal interests to increase productivity in the workplace. Transformational leadership addresses emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals (Northouse, 2016). Transformational leaders are attentive to the needs and motives of followers and try to help followers reach their fullest potential (Northouse, 2016). Transformational leaders master organizational rules and norms and then create new visions and strategies to improve and transform the organization (Northouse, 2016). Transformational leadership theories are useful frameworks for understanding the importance of leaders involving employees in decision making (Wooderson et al., 2016). Transformational leadership theory

can change an organization's culture and motivate employees to embrace the leaders' vision. Transformational leaders use employee feedback to improve organizational commitment to improving employee productivity. Transformational leadership is helpful in exploring the strategies that rural electric cooperatives use to enhance organizational commitment to increase employee productivity. This leadership theory provided a lens through which I could explore proven strategies that electric cooperative managers use to increase employee productivity. Leadership is an integral part of an organization with a direct impact on organizational productivity and profit. A desirable leader is considered one who can get the best from employees to achieve organizational goals. A leadership style that is appropriate for the needs of the organization has a positive impact on organizational performance. Karam and Tasmin (2020) conducted a study investigating the effects of transformational leadership on staff productivity using attendance and quality of work as the controlled parameters. The study revealed that employees were quite optimistic about the leadership, and they believed that their immediate team leaders had a significant role in improving their productivity (Karam & Tasmin, 2020). By using the propositions established by transformational leadership, the theory empowered participants to share their discoveries and acumen regarding leaders' transformational leadership attributes, which enhance organizational commitment to increase employee productivity.

Operational Definitions

The terms in this section are unique and concrete to the topic of the strategies used by electric cooperative managers to enhance organizational commitment to increase employee productivity. These definitions of the terms assist the reader in understanding the study. The following terms are implemented in the peer-reviewed literature.

Counterproductive behavior: Unethical, dishonorable, defiant, harmful, and corrupt acts are counterproductive behaviors that employees display

when they are not satisfied. Counterproductive (destructive) behaviors occur when employees cannot conform and can be harmful practices such as revenge, aggression, and bullying that affect individual, group, and organizational outcomes (Boies et al., 2015).

Employee disengagement: Richards (2014) referred to disengagement with and among key stakeholders as the fourth deadly sin of innovation. A synonymous term used to describe disengagement is *presenteeism*, which is the state in which employees are physically present but mentally or emotionally distracted or disengaged (Moore, 2012).

Onboarding: This term refers to a comprehensive approach that an organization uses to ensure that each employee is immersed in culture, quality, and operational systems to better serve the organization's customer base (Carter, 2013).

Organizational citizenship behavior: Organizational citizenship behavior is defined as a performance supporting the social and psychological environment in which tasks are conducted (Somech, 2015).

Organizational commitment: Organizational commitment is understood as an employee's sense of belonging, acceptance, passion, and pride toward their organization, which motivates them to work actively for the interest of the organization (Sanjeev & Rathore, 2014).

Transformational leadership: The process of motivating, encouraging, and inspiring followers to perform above their personal best (Northouse, 2016).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are a collection of inferred guidelines to direct a researcher through the course of a study and determine facts as true but unprovable (Yates & Leggett, 2016). Each participant provided open and honest responses to the interview questions. It was an assumption that the leaders offered in-depth data toward future research and business practices to increase organizational commitment to increasing productivity.

Limitations

A limitation is a potential weakness that may affect the external validity of a research study (Santora & Bozer, 2017). A limitation of this study had to do with the snapshot of the organization in time and what was occurring during the period. Participants selected for the study resided in a geographic area of Florida, limiting the sample size for collecting data to conduct the study. Another limitation was the unfamiliarity that the participants had with me causing them to be nervous. The availability of documentation to support the participants' interview responses limited the results of the study.

Delimitations

Delimitations consist of the boundaries or scope of the study (Thomas et al., 2015). I interviewed enough electric cooperative managers in Northwest Florida to reach data saturation. The bounds of this study consisted of the geographic location, which was restricted to Northwest Florida, and the sample consisted of managers in the electric cooperative who developed strategies to increase employee engagement to increase productivity. In this study, each participant had different qualifications based on years of experience, number of subordinates, degrees, specialized training, and job titles. Another delimitation was choosing leaders with different titles. By choosing leaders with different titles, I was able to gather different perspectives on how they leveraged strategies differently to enhance organizational commitment to increase employee productivity. I conducted semistructured interviews through Zoom, observed participants, and collected company documents via email. I realize that this study may not be relevant to other industries.

Significance of the Study

The primary focus of this study was exploring leadership strategies that electric cooperative managers used to enhance organizational commitment to increase productivity. Leaders might decide to use this study as a tool to reevaluate their practices and organization. The results of

this study could assist leaders by implementing leadership strategies that increase organizational commitment and increase employee productivity.

Contribution to Business Practice

The findings of this qualitative single case study may contribute to business practice by providing information on leadership strategies to improve overall employee performance and organizational commitment. Managers could gain increased knowledge on various strategies for enhancing employee commitment through engagement and motivating techniques. Price and Whiteley (2014) asserted that developing and sharing core strategies positively affects employee engagement among all organizational members. Data from this study provide leaders with strategies to enhance organizational commitment and increase employee productivity. The findings in this study address a gap in business practices by identifying strategies to help managers enhance employee organizational commitment and productivity.

Implications for Social Change

Enhancing employee organizational commitment and productivity for rural electric cooperatives can contribute to the social well-being of the people and communities that they serve by improving efficient and effective power delivery to homes and businesses. Improving service to its members' rural electric cooperatives can increase members' satisfaction and strengthen relationships with staff. Increasing member value may have a positive social impact on communities by stimulating local economies. Through this added value, developers can more easily develop subdivisions and schools, which can create both present and future social benefits.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this single case study was to explore the strategies that rural electric cooperative managers use to enhance organizational

commitment to increase employee productivity. Transformational leadership theory provided the conceptual framework for the study and was used as a guide to examine related theories and concepts in the literature review. The primary purpose of the literature review was to examine the literature on leadership strategies, organizational commitment, and employee productivity. The literature used in this study was obtained from multiple online research databases. In the literature review, I used peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and dissertations. Keywords for retrieving the electronic sources included the following: *leadership strategies, leadership styles, employee commitment, organizational commitment, organizational leadership, employee performance, employee effectiveness, transformational leadership, and the relationship between leadership style and employee performance.* I used Walden’s electronic library databases, including ABI/INFORM, Business Source Complete, Emerald, Academic Search Complete, Google Scholar, and other related databases. Among the references in this single case study, 89% were published less than 5 years from my October 2021 anticipated graduation. Walden University’s Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) doctoral research study requires that a minimum of 85% of articles be peer reviewed, as outlined in Table 1.

The literature review consists of six sections that address the following: (a) leadership and leader-employee relationship, (b) transformational leadership, (c) organizational commitment, (d) employee performance, (e) employee productivity, and (f) engagement strategies. I outline the

Table 1 Literature Review Source Content

Literature Review Content	Total #	# Less than 5 Years at February 2021	% Peer Reviewed Less than 5 Years from Graduation
Peer-reviewed journals	295	263	89%
Books	16	8	50%
Non-peer-reviewed journals	0	0	0%
Older articles	23	0	0%
Total	334	270	

various leadership styles and strategies and how they affect organizational commitment. Additionally, I attempt to show intrinsic and extrinsic forms of organizational commitment concerning employee productivity. Allowing open communication, developing employee empowerment, fostering employee commitment, offering reward systems, and creating a safe business culture are types of leadership strategies (Atmojo, 2015). By influencing followers, managers can accomplish the organization's internal and external goals (Blomme et al., 2015). Boies et al. (2015) asserted that to improve employee and leader relationships, the management and employees must communicate. Throughout this literature review, the conceptual framework for this study, transformational leadership as developed by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), is incorporated to justify and explain the perspectives of previous and current research.

Leadership and Leader-Employee Relationship

Being a supportive leader assists in building and maintaining effective interpersonal relationships (Elsaied, 2019). A manager who is considerate and kind toward people is more likely to win employees' loyalty (Farrukh et al., 2019). Employees find it more satisfying to work with a leader who is friendly, cooperative, and supportive than with someone who is cold and impersonal, or worse, hostile and uncooperative (Yao et al., 2019). According to Stouten et al. (2010), leaders who encourage a positive work environment—specifically, by communicating what is appropriate and ethical behavior—will positively impact employees through a supportive role.

Managers need to shift their mindset from managing tasks and planning to the role of focusing on people and their dreams, development needs, and emotions. Burns (1978) attempted to link the roles of leadership and followership. Followers who feel that they receive leaders' favorable treatment are likely to have positive, effective responses, such as job satisfaction. Fiaz et al. (2017) stated that an effective leader is needed in identifying and stamping out repetitive and negative behaviors. Leaders fail when they lack the motivation to be innovative and ignore changing times (Teece et al., 2016). According to Bass (1985),