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Higher Education Professional Staff Engagement: Looking In And Beyond The Great Resignation

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HIGHER EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL STAFF ENGAGEMENT: LOOKING IN AND BEYOND THE GREAT RESIGNATION

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Sarah J. Owens
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ABSTRACT

In 2021, there were 68.9 million job separations. Of those, 47.4 million people willingly left their jobs (Romans, 2022). As the "Great Resignation" in the COVID-19 era continues, many professional staff in higher education are re-examining their relationship with work (McClure, 2021). Higher education professional staff, often feeling undervalued and unappreciated, are less likely to engage and more likely to intend to turnover; leaving institutions to bear the costs of lost productivity and staff replacement.

This study examines the relationship between university professional staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement (meaningfulness, safety, and availability), employee engagement (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral), intention to turnover, and COVID-19 impact (intrusion and avoidance). A sample of 240 higher education professional staff at a Midwestern university completed an online survey in late 2021. Results from correlations indicate significant relationships between psychological engagement, employee engagement, intention to turnover, and COVID-19 impact. The hierarchical regression results indicate that emotional engagement has statistically significant predictability in staff turnover intentions. In the model including COVID-19 impact, COVID-19 intrusion and emotional engagement were also found to be significant predictors of intention to turnover.

Consideration of the implications of this study include how higher education administrators may address staff members' engagement and potential turnover intention. One way is by effecting a comprehensive and strategic focus on a caring campus culture that values

diversity, equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging amongst staff, administrators, faculty, and students—even in an era of great disruption.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to Gandhi and Robison (2021), the "Great Resignation," as it is being called, has resulted in 3.6 million Americans resigning in May 2021 alone. Gandhi and Robison further mention that 74% of actively disengaged and 55% of not engaged workers are watching or looking for new jobs, compared to 30% of engaged employees. Their work, according to Gallup's (2021) Q12 survey and based on a research-based proprietary formula, separates employees into one of three groups: engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged. The cost of disengaged workers and turnover is significant, with lost productivity costing businesses 18% of an employee's annual salary and the cost of replacing an employee at one-half to two times the employee's annual salary. Gandhi and Robison (2021) go on to argue that engagement challenges are, "not an industry, role, or pay issue. It's a workplace issue—because the highest quit rate is among not engaged and actively disengaged workers" (para. 2).

A polarized political climate, escalating racial tensions, economic insecurity, social change movements, and protest are occurring amid the Great Resignation leaving employees feeling stressed, overwhelmed, and burned out. Disengaged workers can be seen across industries, including higher education. While this era of unrest has had an all-encompassing impact on the world around us, that aim of this study was to examine the impact that COVID-19 has had on higher education staff engagement during the Great Resignation

Employee Engagement

There is confusion about what employee engagement is, how we conceptualize and

measure it, and how it is different from similar constructs. Employee engagement is a relatively new area of scholarly research that first emerged in 1990 with Kahn's (1990) work on personal engagement when individuals bring themselves into or take themselves away from a particular task behavior. Employee engagement draws from several social science-based disciplines—psychology to human resource management and development—with most research being practitioner-based (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Saks, 2005; Shuck & Wollard, 2009). Employee engagement develops at the individual level (Shuck et al., 2017; Shuck & Wollard, 2010) and is about the employee experience and how they choose to use and maintain their energy in the workplace (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015; Shuck et al, 2017).

Shuck et al. (2017) stated that "employee engagement focuses toward the fuller experience of employees active roles within the experience of their work, including their work, job, team, and organization" (p. 956). This is an important distinction when comparing employee engagement to other types of engagement, including job, work, or organizational engagement. Given the complex nature and difficulty in defining employee engagement, in this study I use Shuck et al.'s (2017) definition of employee engagement, a "positive, active, work-related psychological state operationalized by the maintenance, intensity, and direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy" (p. 269).

Psychological Engagement

Three psychological constructs are essential to understanding how employee engagement develops—meaningfulness, safety, and availability (Kahn, 1990). In this study, those three psychological constructs are referred to as "psychological engagement".

Kahn (1990) defined meaningfulness as the positive "sense of return on investment of 'self in role performance'" (p. 705). A sense of meaningfulness is when one feels valued and is influenced by (dis)incentives of self-investment.

Kahn defined safety as a, "sense of being able to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (p. 705). Safety is the feeling that one's social work environment is secure, consistent, and predictable. The sense of safety is influenced by interpersonal relationships, group dynamics, management style, and organizational norms.

Lastly, Kahn (1990) defined availability as a "sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary for investing self in role performances" (p. 705). Employees feel capable of putting their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energies into their roles and are influenced by being distracted or preoccupied at work. Later, Kahn (1992) would go on to argue that one could not expect employees to be psychologically present at work when their psychological engagement needs (meaningfulness, safety, and availability) were not being met, impacting both employee engagement and employee performance outcomes.

Intention to Turnover

Intention to turnover is an employee's cognitive decision, "to leave the organization within the near future" (Carmeli & Weisberg, 2006, p. 193) and precursor of voluntary turnover. Researchers have indicated a negative relationship between employee engagement and intention to turnover (Harter et al., 2002; Saks, 2006; Shuck et al., 2011; Shuck et al., 2014) with turnover intention being the best indicator of actual turnover (Madden et al., 2015). When employees turn over, organizations bear the cost of replacing employees and experiencing decreases in employee morale and productivity of employees who stay (Berry & Morris, 2008).

Specific to higher education, Rosser (2004) explains that, "Costs to the institution can

result in less loyal and knowledgeable labor force, the loss of valuable institutional memory, an increase in training time and professional development activities, and a greater incidence of behavioral problems like absenteeism and tardiness" (p. 319). Knowing the turnover intentions of employees allows institutions to invest in engagement programs or identify other avenues to reduce unwanted employee turnover.

Higher Education Staff

As the nature and complexity of work in higher education is changing, maximizing engagement among staff becomes even more critical. Leaders increasingly rely on employee knowledge and effort to address problems and work towards organizational success (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015; Shuck & Reio, 2011). Higher education staff are those who are often considered to be behind the scenes. They are not students or faculty; they work in positions ranging from student support, policy advisors, grant coordinators, athletic compliance, academic advisors, and information technology support, just to name a few. Higher education staff often believe that their work is a part of who they are as individuals, driven by a sense of purpose and connection to the institutional mission (Ellis, 2021). However, with the COVID-19 global pandemic and resulting Great Resignation (Klotz, 2021), staff reexamine their ways of thinking about work, including considering leaving their institutions (Ellis, 2021). According to Ellis (2021):

> Staff members say they no longer trust university leaders to have their best interests at heart, citing on-campus work requirements that feel dangerous with Delta's spike, or pointless after remote work has proved feasible. Some workers are angry at campus policies that, for nearly a year and a half, seemed to treat their health and well-being as secondary to institutional finances (para. 4).

Those who find their work to be unsafe or lack the resources to do their job, often experience

burnout (Maslach et al., 2001) and choose to disengage (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004).

With more than one-half of higher education employees (faculty [instruction/research/ public service] and graduate assistants) being categorized as other staff (Digest for Education Statistics, 2020), it is vital to recognize their work-related experience and to keep them engaged. Despite the important role of higher education staff, there is limited research on this population (Mello, 2013), with scholars calling for additional research (Kezar et al., 2019). Higher education staff often feel devalued, marginalized, and disrespected; they have low levels of job satisfaction (Kezar et al, 2019; Young, et al., 2015). Employees who do not feel appreciated and lack meaningfulness, thus they are likely to not be engaged (Kahn, 1990). Research suggests that employees who feel valued and believe they contribute to the organization are more engaged and satisfied, and less likely to leave their positions (Harter et al., 2002).

Engaged employees are willing to expend their discretionary effort to help accomplish the goals of the institution (Shuck et al., 2011). They are committed to the institution (Saks, 2006), focus on job performance and productivity (Rich et al., 2010; Shuck et al, 2011), experience job satisfaction (Saks, 2006), and are less likely to have turnover intentions (Saks, 2006; Shuck et al., 2014; Shuck et al., 2011). A study by Cornerstone and Ellucian (2016) found employee engagement in higher education jobs to be positively related to increased student success and inversely related to turnover. While it is clearly important to research employee engagement in higher education staff, to date there is limited academic scholarship on the topic.

In this research, a specific subset of higher education staff, called professional staff, were studied. The classification of staff as “professional” is based on the university system’s job classification system called broadbanding. In broadbanding, jobs are grouped (or banded) together based on the education, skills, and abilities believed to be required to carry out the roles

and responsibilities of the position. According to *University System (n.d.), professional staff include those in:

> Positions with the primary purpose is performing academic support, student service and institutional support activities, whose assignments would require either college graduation or experience of such kind and amount as to provide a comparable background. This includes employees such as librarians, accountants, systems analysts, and computer programmers (para. 1).

Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 global pandemic brought stress to millions of people around the world, with many facing illness, death, shutdowns, financial distress, and challenging caregiver logistics. Racial tensions brought about a resurgence in protests. An anxiety producing national election shed light on the deep political polarization seen across the country. These crises continue today, leaving many feeling overwhelmed and experiencing burnout. When reflecting on their work, many higher education professional staff feel undervalued and unappreciated and consider leaving their jobs.

The sense of a dissatisfaction, lack of recognition, and intention to turnover has been a long-standing problem in higher education that was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognized by Rosser in 2000, professional staff are, "unsung professionals of the academy—unsung because their contributions to the academic enterprise are rarely recognized and professionals because of their commitment, training, and adherence to high standards of performance and excellence in their areas of expertise" (p. 5).

In 2017, Gallup found that only 34% of faculty and staff are engaged in their jobs. In 2022, McClure, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, said "today's workers are re-evaluating their workplaces, seeking reassignment within their institutions, and in some cases resigning

from jobs altogether. But they are doing so for many of the same reasons they did 20 years ago—poor working conditions" (para 3).

When staff leave, institutions face the costs of lost productivity, decreases in morale, and job task inefficiencies, potentially impacting institutional services and stakeholder perceptions. As the nation and world work to move through challenging political, racial, social, and economic times in the COVID-19 era, the retention of professional staff in higher education is a problem that needs to be addressed. Higher education staff are a, "population that has gone massively understudied in the engagement literature" (Shuck, personal communication, July 14, 2021). While the research on the significance of employee engagement is apparent, research on its development, maintenance, and outcomes are far less clear. As higher education institutions look to create employee engagement strategies to combat turnover in the COVID-19 era, they are doing so without a strong evidence-based foundation.

Purpose of the Study

Because of the "Great Resignation", there is a need to investigate and understand the phenomena. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between university professional staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement (meaningfulness, safety, and availability), employee engagement (cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement), intention to turnover, and COVID-19 impact (intrusion and avoidance).

Research Questions

The five research questions guiding this study are as follows:

R1. What are the demographic characteristics (age, gender, race, highest degree, years in current position) of the professional higher education staff at this Midwestern University?

R2. What is the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement (and each element of: meaningfulness, safety, and availability), and employee engagement (and each subcomponent of: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement)?

H2: There are positive relationships between staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement (and each element of: meaningfulness, safety, and availability) and employee engagement (and each subcomponent of: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement).

R3. What is the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of employee engagement (and each subcomponent: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement) and intention to turnover?

H3: There are negative relationships between staff members' self-reported levels of employee engagement (and each subcomponent: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement) and Intention to turnover.

R4. Does employee engagement predict intention to turnover?

H4: Employee engagement predicts intention to turnover.

R5. What is the relationship between the perceived impact of COVID-19 and psychological engagement (and each element of: meaningfulness, safety, and availability), employee engagement (and each subcomponent of: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement), and intention to turnover?

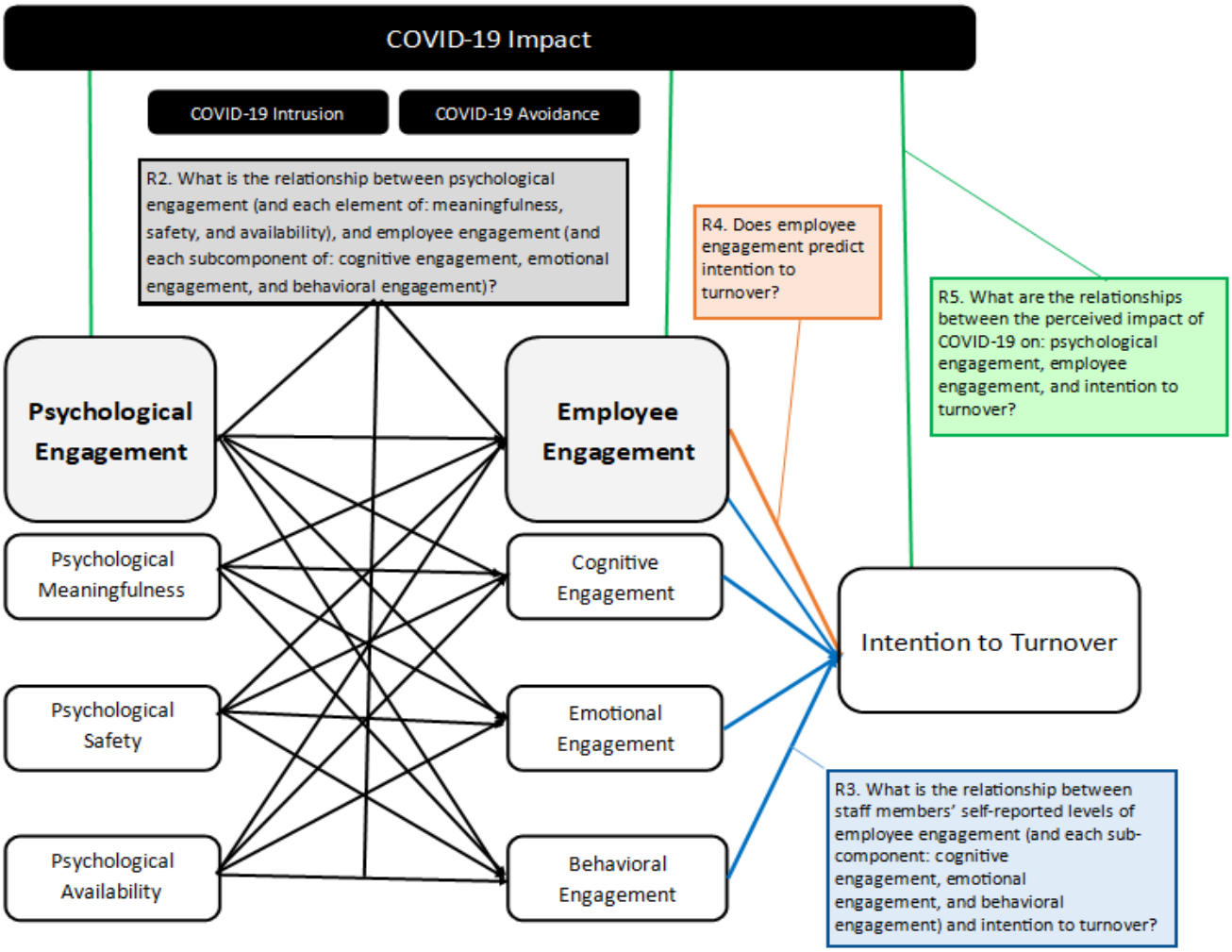
H5: There are significant relationships between the impact of COVID-19 and psychological engagement (and each element of: meaningfulness, safety, and availability), employee engagement (and each subcomponent of: cognitive engagement,

emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement), and intention to turnover.

Figure 1 ties the research questions to the conceptual framework discussed later in the chapter.

Figure 1.

Representation of research questions within conceptual framework.



Theoretical Framework: Engagement Theory

The theoretical framework used in this study was Kahn's (1990) engagement theory. Several studies (Harter et al., 2002; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Saks, 2006; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck et al. 2011; Shuck & Wollard, 2010) build on Kahn's (1990) seminal work, which provides a foundational and empirically tested framework for understanding employee

engagement (May et al., 2002; Shuck et al. 2011). Kahn (1990) defined personal engagement as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active full role performances" (p. 700). Where one's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement are grounded in the need for an employee's meaningfulness, safety, and availability (Kahn, 1990).

Kahn (1990) defined meaningfulness as the, "sense of return on investment of self in role performance" (p. 705) and occurs when one feels appreciated and believes that their work is both valuable and worthwhile. Meaningfulness at work is influenced by task characteristics, role identity, and work interactions (Kahn, 1990). Research suggests that employees who receive feedback and believe that they contribute to the organization, are more engaged and satisfied, and less likely to turnover (Harter et al., 2002).

Safety, as defined by Kahn (1990) is the, "sense of being able to show and employ self without fear or negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (p. 705). Safety is influenced by interpersonal relationships, group dynamics, management style, and organizational norms. Having knowledge of the organization's expectations and knowing how their position fits into the organization helps with one's sense of safety (Shuck et al., 2017). Predictable, consistent, clear systems with supportive and trustworthy relationships with others as well as management, help employees feel psychologically safe (Khan, 1990).

Availability is defined as the, "sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary for investing self in role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 705). Availability is related to an individual's choice to engage based on levels of physical and emotional energies, feelings, confidence or insecurity, and potential impact of their outside lives.

Availability involves coping with demands, engaging despite various distractions, and self-perception of social fit. Availability also relates to having resources available, so employees do not worry about having them to complete their work. Such resources may include things such as sufficient budget, physical supplies, to career development opportunities (Kahn, 1990; Harter et al, 2002).

Conceptual Framework: Employee Engagement

The conceptual model for this study is based on Shuck et al.'s, 2011 employee engagement model. Shuck et al.'s employee engagement model, grounded in Kahn's work, links theoretically sound employee engagement antecedents (job fit, affective commitment, and psychological climate) to employee engagement, and then relates employee engagement to two outcome variables: discretionary effort and intention to turnover. There are three key differences from Shuck et al.'s original model that I implemented: 1) a different measurement scale for the psychological engagement antecedents; 2) an updated measurement scale developed by two of the authors of the original model (Shuck and Reio) who, along with Adelson (2017), created the employee engagement Scale (EES), and examining each of the subcomponent (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement); and, 3) one outcome variable of intention to turnover. Figure 2 conveys an illustration of Shuck, Reio, and Rocco's Conceptual Model of employee engagement.

Figure 2.

Shuck et al.'s (2011) Conceptual Model of Employee Engagement.

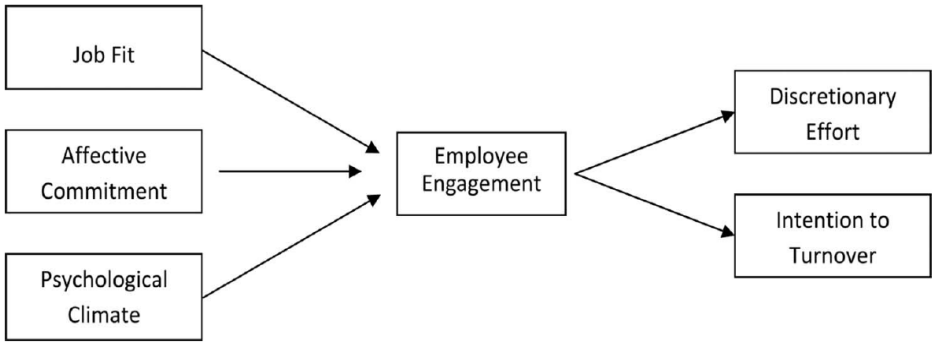
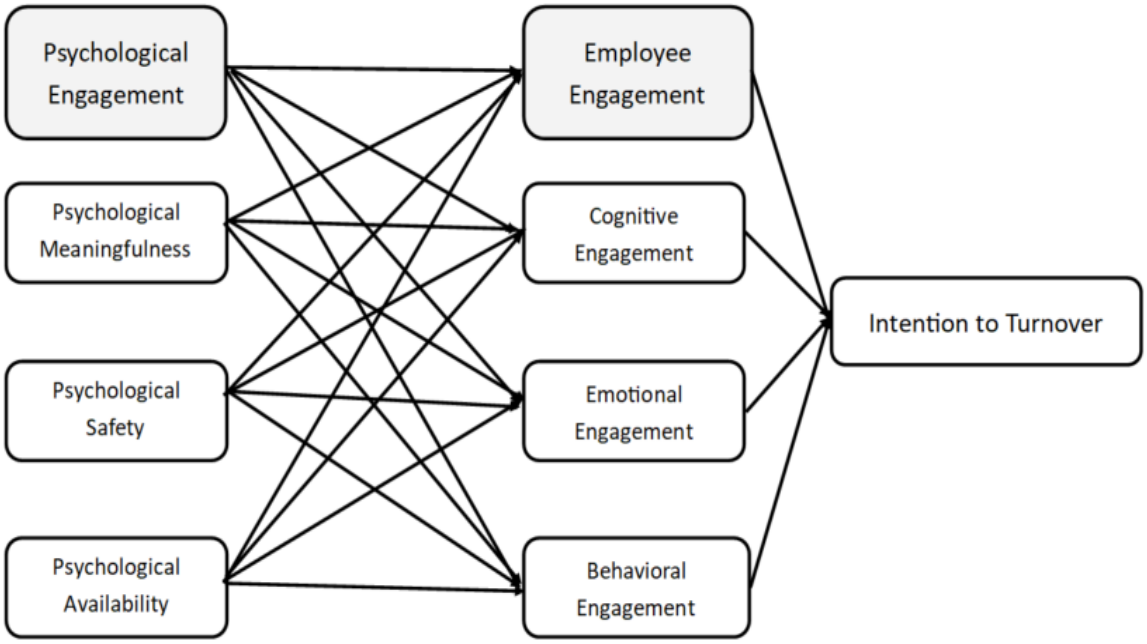


Figure 3 illustrates the connection between variables that I explored in the study. This framework highlights both the relationships between each psychological engagement element and employee engagement subcomponent, as well as the connecting employee engagement to employee intention to turnover.

Figure 3.

Framework Examining Psychological Engagement, Employee Engagement, and Intention to Turnover.



Definition of Terms

This section ensures a mutual understanding of term definitions in hopes of providing greater conceptual clarity and understanding. The definitions were sourced based on the theoretical framework (Kahn, 1990) and the measurement scales used for the concepts, the employee engagement Scale (Shuck et al, 2016) and psychological conditions sections of a survey by May et al. (2004). The terms in this section are organized based on the conceptual framework.

Psychological Engagement

- Meaningfulness: “sense of return on investment of “self in role performance” (Kahn, 1990, p. 705).
- Safety: “sense of being able to show and employ self without fear or negative consequences to self-image, status, or career” (Kahn, 1990, p. 705).
- Availability: “sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary for investing self in role performances” (Kahn, 1990, p. 705).

Employee Engagement

- Behavioral Engagement: “the psychological state of intention to behave in a manner that positively affects performance and/or positive organizational outcomes”, (Shuck et al, 2016, p. 956), is synonymous with physical engagement; “the terms physical and behavioral are analogous, with both representing the overt manifestation of engagement toward behavioral intention” (Shuck et al., 2014, p. 252).
- Cognitive Engagement: “the intensity of mental energy expressed toward positive organizational outcomes” (Shuck et al., 2016; p. 956).

- Emotional Engagement: “an employee’s intensity and willingness to invest emotionality toward positive organizational outcome” (Shuck et al., 2016; p. 956).

Additional Terms

- Employee Engagement: “positive, active, work-related psychological state operationalized by the maintenance, intensity, and direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy” (Shuck et al., 2017 p. 269).
- Intention to Turnover: an employee’s cognitive decision, “to leave the organization within the near future” (Carmeli & Weisberg, 2006, p. 193) and is a strong indicator of actual turnover (Madden et al., 2015).
- Professional Staff: “Positions with the primary purpose is performing academic support, student service and institutional support activities, whose assignments would require either college graduation or experience of such kind and amount as to provide a comparable background. This includes employees such as librarians, accountants, systems analysts, and computer programmers” (*University System, n.d.).

Significance of the Study

By examining psychological engagement, employee engagement, their sub concepts, and their relationship with intent to turnover in a higher education environment, administrators could develop and deploy evidence-based employee engagement interventions to potentially decrease turnover. If turnover intention and its antecedents go unaddressed, institutions face the cost of replacing employees, decreased workplace productivity, and the loss of knowledge, skills, and experience of turned over employee.

This study also examines the potential impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on professional staff engagement and their intention to turnover. Exploring and understanding the

connection between psychological engagement, employee engagement, and turnover could more fully enable organizations to create environments where employee engagement flourishes and employees do not intend to leave.

Methodological Overview

Data for this quantitative study were collected from professional staff at a Midwestern university. Participants completed a survey where they self-reported perceptions of levels of psychological engagement and employee engagement through two scales: May et al.'s (2004) psychological engagement scale and Shuck et al.'s (2017) employee engagement Scale. Participants also reported their intention to turnover by means of Colarelli's (1984) Intention to Turnover Scale and COVID-19 Impact based on a modified version (Vanaken, 2020) of the Impact of Event Scale (Horowitz et al., 1979).

Summary and Organization of Study

This dissertation is separated into five chapters. Chapter I provides a foundational overview of the research, showing the need and purpose of the research, outline of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and poses the research questions guiding this investigation. Chapter II reviews relevant employee engagement literature. Chapter III presents the methodology and variables. Chapter IV details the analysis, and Chapter V concludes with a discussion of the results.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to ground this study in the frame of existing research, focusing on elements of employee engagement that are relevant in the higher education context. Employee engagement brings together concepts from a variety of social science fields including psychology, management, and human resource development (Saks & Gruman 2014; Shuck, 2011). Throughout this dissertation you will notice terminology often found in business literature, such as "employee" and "organization". In the higher education context of this study the business term "employee" is interpreted as "staff" and "organization" equates to "higher education institution".

As Saks and Gruman (2014) indicate, "…there continues to be confusion, disagreement, and a lack of consensus regarding the meaning and distinctiveness of employee engagement among scholars and practitioners" (p. 157). This confusion persists as researchers use different and inconsistent definitions, theoretical approaches, and measurement scales, resulting in conclusions that lack conceptual clarity, further limiting sound employee engagement research (Saks, 2006; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck, 2011; Shuck et al. 2017). This confusion and need for clarification led to the topics addressed in and organizational structure of this chapter. The sections and subsections clearly delineate the array of theoretical approaches to employee engagement, highlight the role of psychological engagement, and distinguish employee engagement from other similar constructs. The chapter concludes with addressing research specific to employee engagement in higher education professional staff.

Theoretical Approaches to Employee Engagement

There are four primary theoretical approaches to the study of employee engagement: 1) Needs-Satisfying, 2) Burnout Antithesis, 3) Satisfaction-Engagement, and 4) Multidimensional (Shuck, 2011). Kahn's needs-satisfying approach will serve as the theoretical framework in this study given that it has been empirically tested (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2002; Shuck et al., 2011) and been noted in several studies (Harter et al., 2002; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Saks, 2006; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck et al. 2011; Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

Kahn and the Needs-Satisfying Approach

The concept of employee engagement first appeared in 1990 in Kahn's "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work" article in the Academy of Management Journal. In this seminal work, Kahn (1990) integrated psychology, sociology, and group theory, basing his theory on research from scholars, including Freud (1922), Goffman (1961), Maslow (1954), Slater (1966) and Smith & Berg (1987). Kahn (1990) defined personal engagement as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's "preferred self" in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active full role performances" (p. 700). Through a series of ethnographic interviews with 32 employees (16 summer camp counselors and 16 architectural professionals), Kahn (1990) inquired about their experiences with various work-related elements such as task challenge, managerial support, role clarity, and resource availability, and how those elements affected their experiences at work. Kahn's results showed that three psychological conditions were prerequisites for influencing positive levels of personal (physical, emotional, and cognitive) engagement: meaningfulness, safety, and availability (Kahn, 1990). According to Kahn (1990), employees unconsciously ask themselves three questions in work situations in

deciding whether or not to engage or disengage; "(1) How meaningful is it for me to bring myself into this performance? (2) How safe is it to do so? and (3) How available am I to do so?" (p.703).

May et al. (2004) were the first to publish empirical research testing Kahn's (1990) theory of employee engagement. Using path analysis, via a survey of 199 employees at a Midwestern insurance firm, they found that all three of Kahn's (1990) original dimensions were "important in determining one's engagement at work" (May et al., p. 30), with Psychological Meaningfulness having the strongest relationship.

Also having found roots in Kahn's work, Shuck and Wollard (2010) conducted an integrative literature review, exploring the history and evolution of employee engagement, and from their findings they derived the first definition of "employee engagement", "an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes." (p. 103). Building from this definition, Shuck et al. (2017) operationally defined employee engagement as a, "positive, active, work-related psychological state operationalized by the maintenance, intensity, and direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy" (p. 269). This definition highlights the role of psychological state in relation to the three subcomponents of employee engagement (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) and serves as the definition of employee engagement driving this study, providing consistency across the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and research questions.

Psychological Engagement

Kahn (1990) argued that the three psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability were prerequisites to personal (employee) engagement. In this study these three

psychological elements are referred to as psychological engagement and are important to understanding how people become engaged.

Meaningfulness

Kahn (1990) defined meaningfulness as the positive "sense of return on investments of self in role performance" (p. 705), where one feels appreciated and that their work is valuable and worthwhile. Rich et al. (2010) indicated that, "perceptions of organizational and work factors related to tasks and roles are the primary influences on psychological meaningfulness" (p. 620). According to Kahn, meaningfulness at work is influenced by task characteristics, role identity, and work interactions. May et al. (2004) outline three factors that theoretically influence psychological meaningfulness: job enrichment, work-role fit, and co-worker relations. In their final model only job enrichment and work-role fit had a significant positive relationship with psychological meaningfulness. May et al. (2004) examined job enrichment in terms of an employee's skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback from the job itself. Work-role fit focused on self/job alignment, personal identity in relations to one's job, self/job satisfaction, and job match with future self-perception.

Olivier and Rothmann (2007) followed May et al.'s (2004) study with the assumptions that were proposed in Kahn's (1990) model with 171 randomly sampled employees of a South African multinational oil company. They also found that meaningfulness had the strongest relationship with engagement compared to the other psychological conditions and that job enrichment and work-role fit were essential elements of psychological meaningfulness. Britt, Adler, and Bartone (2001) found that meaningful work leads to increased levels of personality hardiness, allowing employees (soldiers) to handle stressful situations, leading to higher levels of engagement.

Research has shown meaningfulness to be the strongest psychological condition of the three included in this study. Job enrichment and work-role fit have been shown to play a significant role in an employee's sense of meaningfulness (May et al., 2004; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007). Employees who see their work as worthwhile, valuable, important, and meaningful to themselves and the organization are more likely to be engaged (Kahn, 1990).

Safety

Kahn (1990) defined safety as the "sense of being able to show and employ self without fear or negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (p. 705). Rich et al. (2010) indicated that, "perceptions of social systems related to support and relationships are the primary influences on psychological safety" (p .620). Safety is influenced by interpersonal relationships, group and intergroup dynamics, management style and process, and organizational norms (Kahn, 1990). Predicable, consistent, clear systems with supportive and trustworthy relationships with others as well as management, help employees feel psychologically safe (Kahn, 1990). Coworker relations and supervisor relations were positively associated with psychological safety, whereas co-worker norms and self-consciousness were negatively associated with psychological safety (May et al. 2004; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007). In a similar fashion, Carmeli et al. (2009) found that the quality of interpersonal relationships, as expressed by how someone feels and acts in relationships with others at work is related to psychological safety.

Employees who feel that they can be themselves at work, express their opinions, share their challenges, and express concern for others are more likely to be engaged (May et al., 2004). When employees feel safe to engage in their work, they will try new ways of doing it; whereas those who see their work as unpredictable or unsafe will withdraw and disengage and not take risks (May et al., 2004). Employees who feel they have supportive coworkers and supervisors are

likely to have an increased sense of psychological safety, leading to greater employee engagement (May et al., 2004).

Availability

Kahn (1990) defined availability as the "sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary for investing self in role performances" (p. 705). Rich et al. (2010) indicated that, "self-perceptions of confidence and self-consciousness are the primary influences on psychological availability" (p. 620). Availability is related to an individual's choice to engage based on their levels of physical and emotional energies, feelings of confidence or insecurity, and the role and impact of their lives outside of work.

Availability involves coping with demands, engaging despite various distractions, and self-perception of social fit (Kahn, 1990). Cognitive, emotional, and physical resource availability was positively related to psychological availability, whereas outside activities were negatively related to psychological availability (May et al., 2004). An individual's home/personal life can significantly influence employee engagement, especially as it relates to psychological availability, as both work and home life require substantial amounts of time and emotional effort (Halbesleben, 2010; Rothmann &Bauman, 2014). When home-work relationships are negative, an employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral/physical resources are depleted, resulting in the employee becoming psychologically unavailable and disengaged (Halbesleben, 2010; Rothmann & Bauman, 2014).

The role of an employee's life outside of work can have a significant impact on their level of engagement. Employees who feel they have the resources and support needed to be successful at work and can be mentally and emotionally absorbed in their work are more likely to be psychologically available and engaged (May et al, 2004). Engaged employees are likely to

feel mentally sharp; not overwhelmed, emotionally taxed, or drained.

Kahn's (1990) three-part psychological engagement conditions (meaningfulness, safety, and availability) as prerequisites to engagement (physical, emotional, and cognitive) is known as the needs-satisfying approach as employee's psychological needs within the work environment need to be met for employees to fully engage. Engagement is most likely to occur when an employee finds their job to be challenging and meaningful; are in safe, consistent, and predictable social situations, and they have available cognitive, emotional, and physical resources (Kahn, 1990).

Subcomponents of Employee Engagement

Employees choose to apply varying amounts of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy when they work (Kahn, 1990). This three-element concept is also reflected in the definition used in this study: "positive, active, work-related psychological state operationalized by the maintenance, intensity, and direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy" (Shuck et al. 2017, p. 269). While there is limited research that delineates the role of each subcomponent, literature suggests that cognitive engagement is the foundational, leading to emotional engagement, followed by behavioral engagement (Saks, 2006; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck et al., 2014; Shuck et al., 2017).

Cognitive Engagement

Cognitive engagement starts the employee engagement process, before behavioral and emotional engagement, and precedes the decision to engage (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Kahn's (1990) conceptualization of engagement comes from an individuals' assessment of whether their work is meaningful and safe, as well as whether they have the resources to complete their work. Those who feel supported in their work and that their work matters are more likely to engage

(Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Shuck et al., 2011), whereas those who find little meaning in their work, find it unsafe, or lack the resources to do their work often experience burnout (Maslach et al., 2001) and choose to disengage (Kahn, 1990).

Cognitive engagement centers on how an employee thinks about their job and their intellectual commitment to the organization. This most rational level of engagement, cognitive engagement, is defined as, "the intensity of mental energy expressed toward positive organizational outcomes" (Shuck et al., 2016; p. 956). Employees who are cognitively engaged are focused and attentive at work and invest their energy in that work or job (Rich et al., 2010; Shuck et al, 2016). Cognitively engaged employees make an investment in an understood and shared purpose with their organization (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015).

Joo et al. (2017) examined the relationship between work cognition, cognitive engagement, and psychological well-being in 518 knowledge workers from various companies within a for-profit South Korean conglomerate. Cognitive engagement was measured using the six items of Rich et al.'s (2010) cognitive engagement scale. Employees reported higher levels of cognitive engagement when they felt positive work cognition (R^2 = .31). Thus, employees were more cognitively engaged when they reported higher levels of meaningful work, feedback, job autonomy, distributive fairness and growth, and having positive relationship with their leader and colleagues in the organization. The researchers also found that work cognition and cognitive engagement positively influenced psychological well-being (R^2 = .50) and that cognitive engagement modestly and partially mediated the relationship between work cognition and psychological well-being.

Once an employee's psychological engagement conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability have been addressed, they can begin the employee engagement process. The first

step in this process is cognitive engagement, which is characterized by an employee's expression of focus, attention, and concentration toward work-related tasks. Cognitively engaged individuals can become absorbed in their work, seeing themselves contributing something of meaning in their task (Shuck et al., 2017).

Emotional Engagement

Following a positive cognitive engagement appraisal, emotional engagement is the personal bond following cognitively engaging in the common strategic goals of the institution, "when employees share, identify, and take on a common purpose with the organization's vision and mission, they give of their knowledge, skills, and abilities" (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015, p. 24). Shuck et al. (2016) defined emotional engagement as, "an employee's intensity and willingness to invest emotionality toward positive organizational outcome" (p. 956). Emotional engagement involves an individual's willingness to invest personal emotional resources such as pride, belief, and knowledge. With those who are more emotionally engaged feeling more attached and connected to an organization (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Emotional engagement involves the alignment of an organization's goals and values with those of the employee (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015). Alagaraja and Shuck (2015) go on to state that, "emotionally engaged employees further identify their personal values and norms with those of the organization and are invested in productive, organizationally aligned behavior" (p. 27).

Reina, et al. (2018) surveyed 90 high-level employees from the marketing division of a large financial services institution located in the northeastern United States, examining the relationship between managerial pressure, inspirational appeals, emotional engagement, and voluntary turnover. They surveyed employees twice, the first-time asking questions related to managers' use of influence tactics and job satisfaction; the second time, three months later, the

researcher's asked about emotional engagement. Later, they integrated that data with company based voluntary turnover data. Using the six items of Rich et al.'s (2010) emotional engagement scale to measure emotional engagement, they found a significant relationship between emotional engagement and voluntary turnover (r=-0.704, $p < .010$). Using multilevel path modeling they also found that emotional engagement was a significant mediator between the antecedents of managerial pressure and inspirational appeals and the outcome of voluntary turnover, even more so than what job satisfaction could predict.

Overall, emotional engagement involves an employee's willingness to invest themselves emotionally into their work and toward positive organizational outcomes (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck et al., 2014; Shuck et al., 2017). Emotionally engaged employees feel a sense of belonging, that their job has personal meaning, believe in mission and purpose of organization, and are invested in the organization's future.

Behavioral Engagement

Behavioral engagement is a "proactive behavior" (Macey & Schneider, 2008, p. 19). It is defined as, "the psychological state of intention to behave in a manner that positively affects performance and/or positive organizational outcomes" (Shuck et al., 2016, p. 956) and is an employee's expression of both cognitive and emotional engagement (Shuck & Reio, 2011). Behavioral engagement is the intensity of physical effort, "not yet action-related behavior" (Shuck et al 2016, p. 957) directed towards work related tasks and organizational goals and the only form of engagement that can be seen by others (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Rich et al., 2010; Shuck & Wollard, 2010; Shuck & Reio, 2011). Behaviorally engaged employees are proactive seeing, "themselves as psychologically willing to give more and often going above and beyond in a way that characterizes their forward movement" (Shuck

et al., 2016, p. 957). According to Macey and Schneider (2008) behavioral engagement is related to levels of discretionary effort (Macey & Schneider, 2008), a multidimensional variable associated with performance and effort, where an employee will go above and beyond basic job duties (Lloyd, 2008).

In a survey of 207 health care workers, Shuck, Twyford, Reio, and Shuck (2014) explored the relationship between employees' perceived support of participation in human resource development practices, employee engagement, and turnover intention. Utilizing scales within Rich et al.'s (2010) job engagement scale to measure cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement they found that greater perceived support for participation in HRD practices predicted behavioral engagement ($F(1, 197) = 8.70$, $p = .004$, r^2 adj = 0.037, $\beta = 0.21$) and that behavioral engagement had a significant negative relationship with turnover intent ($\beta = –0.24$, $p < .001$). Cognitive and emotional engagement were also shown to have similar significant relationships with perceived support for participation in HRD practices and turnover intention.

Behavioral engagement involves an employee's discretionary effort (Macey & Schneider, 2008) and their willingness to invest resources, going about and beyond what is required, and working harder without being asked to do so. This might be seen as persistence on difficult tasks or putting in extra time (Lloyd, 2008).

The Burnout Antithesis Approach

Maslach et al. (2001) argued that engagement is a "positive antithesis of burnout" (p. 418) and the opposite of three burnout dimensions of, "overwhelming exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment" (p. 399). In this approach, work engagement is defined as, "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption"

(Schaufeli, Salanove, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002 p. 74). Vigor involves persistence, resilience, and energy and effort in one's work (Maslach et al., 2001). Dedication is related to one's sense of inclusion, importance, pride, and enthusiasm at work (Maslach et al., 2001). Absorption is the extreme focus on one's work (Maslach et al., 2001). With this Maslach et al. (2001) identified six areas of work-life that can lead to engagement or burnout: workload, control, rewards and recognition, community and social support, perceived fairness, and values. Each of these elements are noted in relation to one's work, narrowing the concept of engagement to focus on an individual's engagement with their work tasks (Schaufeli, 2014). Work engagement that is focused on vigor, dedication, and absorption is different from employee engagement, which is more about the immediate and active experience, including work, job, team, and organization.

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002) is a 17-item scale focused on work engagement. This scale is used worldwide and has been found to be the most cited engagement scale (Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck et al., 2017). While there is less confusion of terms with work engagement, given the consistent use of the UWES, some studies (Moura et al., 2014; Poon, 2013) have used employee engagement and work engagement interchangeably, using employee engagement literature and measure to address work engagement (Shuck et al 2017).

Addressing the need to include both individual and situational factors, Maslach et al.'s (2001) framework reflects the relationship between employees and the work environment, which they describe in terms of imbalance between individual capacity and job demands. This is also the premise behind another stream of literature related to the Burnout Antithesis Approach, the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) Model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001).

This model views engagement and burnout as two distinct concepts that connect through a conceptual model, where burnout is related to health impairment processes and engagement being related to motivation at work. Interventions for preventing burnout have logically focused on reducing job demands and providing employees with supplemental resources (Leiter & Maslach, 2010).

The JD-R model shows how job burnout and work engagement are produced by job demands and job resources, irrespective of the environment; with job demands impacting health and job resources being related to motivation (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) surveyed 1,698 employees from four different Dutch organizations (insurance, pension fund, Occupational Health and Safety Service, and a home-care institution). They use a Dutch version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to measure burnout (exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy) and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli et al., 2002) to measure engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption). Using structural equation modeling, they found burnout and engagement were negatively related and that engagement was predicted by job resources, while burnout was predicted by both job demands and job resources. They went on to find that engagement was related to turnover intention, while burnout was related to both health problems and turnover intention. With burnout and engagement having dissimilar antecedents and outcomes, goals of reducing burnout and increasing engagement should be addressed differently, clearly delineating the two constructs (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Operating from the stance that burnout is the same thing as disengagement, one could argue that engaged employees could not be burnt-out, which I would argue is debatable. The burnout anthesis approach, while sound in relation to work engagement and measured in such a way, is not consistent with the research questions or framework proposed for this study.

The Satisfaction-Engagement Approach

Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) conducted a meta-analysis examining the relationship between employee satisfaction and engagement at the business unit level and its relation to business unit outcomes including customer satisfaction-loyalty, productivity, profit, and employee turnover. In their study they referred to employee engagement as, "the individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work" (p. 269). In this meta-analysis of 7,939 business units across 36 companies in multiple fields of industry, the proprietary Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA) asked 13 questions about employee satisfaction and employee perceptions of work characteristics. Results indicated that employee engagement was positively correlated to profit, productivity, and customer satisfaction. This was the first research to note an employee engagement to profit connection (Shuck & Wollard, 2010; Shuck, 2011). This is noteworthy as in the competitive for-profit business world, employee engagement can have significant impact on the bottom line, thus the success (or failure) of a business. Other significant findings note that two-thirds (Harter, 2021) of the U.S. workforce is disengaged at an estimated cost of between $483 billion to $605 billion per year because of lost productivity. Companies spend more than $720 million annually on employee engagement efforts (Gallup, 2017; LaMotte, 2015) with a cost to companies of 34% of a disengaged employee's salary (Borysenko, 2019).

More recently, Harter et al. (2020) conducted an updated version of their meta-analysis; now encompassing 456 research studies across 276 organizations in 54 industries, including 112,312 business units and 2,708,538 employees. In their meta-analysis, the researchers found that employee engagement was related to 11 outcomes: customer loyalty/engagement, profitability, productivity, turnover, safety incidents, absenteeism, shrinkage, patient safety incidents, quality (defects), wellbeing and organizational citizenship behavior. Harter et al.

(2020) found that "units scoring in the top half on employee engagement more than double their odds of success compared with those in the bottom half" (p. 2).

Also utilizing the GWA, Arakawa and Greenberg (2007) surveyed 103 information technology professionals (86 employees and 17 managers) at an insurance company in Worcester, Massachusetts. They found that employee engagement was related to both employee optimism and project performance. Managers that have a positive perspective, employ a strength's-based management approach, and provide frequent recognition were more likely to have engaged employees.

This approach brings together scholarly research on employee engagement and important organizational outcomes such as profitability, productivity, and turnover. A study by Cornerstone and Ellucian (2016) found employee engagement to be positively related to increased student success and inversely related to turnover in higher education, bridging the gap between business and higher education sectors in terms of employee engagement.

The Multidimensional Approach

Saks (2006) published early research on the antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement. Saks (2006) defined engagement as "a distinct and unique construct consisting of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that are associated with individual role performance" (p. 602), viewing employee engagement as job engagement (employee's work-related role) and organizational engagement (employee's role within an organization). Saks's (2006) engagement model was based on social exchange theory (SET), arguing that it might provide a sounder theoretical base, allowing more for varying levels of engagement. Saks wrote:

> SET argues that obligations are generated through a series of interactions between parties who are in a state of reciprocal interdependence….one way for individuals to repay their

> organization is through their level of engagement. That is, employees will choose to engage themselves to varying degrees and in response to the resources they receive from their organization (p. 603).

Using a sample of 102 employees across industries, Saks (2006) examined antecedent effects on employee engagement and the effects that employee engagement has on both individual and organizational outcomes. Antecedents that were related to job and organization engagement included: job characteristics, rewards and recognition, perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, perceptions of distributive justice and perceptions of procedural justice. Perceived organization support being the only significant predictor of both job and organization engagement. Saks (2006) also found significant relationships between job and organization engagement and outcome variables including: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior directed to the individual and the organization, and intention to quit. Job and organization engagement mediated the relationships between the antecedents and the consequences (Saks, 2006).

Wollard and Shuck (2011) followed up on Saks's 2006 work in addressing antecedents to employee engagement. In a structured literature review of 265 abstracts, they used relational analysis and identified 42 antecedents of employee engagement that they then separated into two levels: individual antecedents to employee engagement and organizational antecedents to employee engagement. The 24 antecedents they identified as having empirical evidence are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

Antecedents to employee engagement with empirical evidence as identified by Wollard & Shuck (2011).

Individual Antecedents to Employee engagement	Organizational Antecedents to Employee engagement
Absorption	Authentic Corporate Culture
Dedication	Clear Expectations
Higher levels of corporate citizenship	Corporate Social Responsibility
Involvement in meaningful work	Job Characteristics
Link individual and organizational goals	Job Fit
Perceived organizational support	Level of Task Challenge
Vigor	Manager Expectations
Work/Life Balance	Manager Self-Efficacy
Core Self Evaluation	Perception of Workplace Safety
Value Congruence	Positive Workplace Climate
Perceived Organizational Support	Rewards
	Supportive Organizational Culture
	Use of Strengths

As a follow-up to his 2006 seminal work, Saks (2019) revisited his earlier work to examine the extent to which his model held true more than a decade later, especially considering the significant use of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) as a measurement scale in engagement research. The UWES was not included in Saks' 2006 work, however participants did complete the UWES as part of the original survey. In his original study, Saks (2006) used a job characteristics scale that combined six job characteristics—autonomy, task identity, skill variety, task significance, feedback from others and feedback from the job—into one measure, finding a relationship between job characteristics and engagement. In his most recent study, Saks (2019) examined the data again, this time separating the job characteristics finding that still variety predicted job engagement. Job characteristics and perceived organizational support were also significant predictors of work engagement. The antecedents Saks incorporated in his revised model included: job characteristics, perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, rewards and recognition procedural justice, distributive justice, fit perceptions,

leadership, opportunities for learning and development, job demands, dispositional characteristics, and personal resources.

Outcomes of Employee Engagement

Research shows that engaged employees can play a significant role in helping organizations achieve their goals (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015; Harter et al., 2002; Saks, 2006; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck et al., 2011; Shuck & Reio, 2011). For example, Harter et al. (2002) found that employee engagement is related to customer satisfaction (r = .33), productivity (r = .20), and profitability (r =.17). Rich et al. (2010) identified the relationship between job engagement and task performance (r = .25); Saks (2006) related employee engagement to organizational commitment (r =.53); and Shuck et al. (2011) related it with discretionary effort (r =.43). Along with these organizational outcomes, on a more personal level, engaged employees experience feelings of job satisfaction (r =.52; Saks, 2006), personal accomplishment (Shuck & Reio, 2014), psychological well-being (r =.37; Shuck & Reio, 2014), and a negative relation between engagement and feelings of depersonalization (r=-.41; Shuck & Reio, 2014) and emotional exhaustion (r=-.30; Shuck & Reio, 2014). Alagaraja and Shuck (2015) noted that, "it seems plausible that employers should reasonably expect engaged employees to perform better than those employees who are not engaged" (p. 25). New outcome variables that have been consistently shown in the literature to be related to engagement were included in Saks' (2019) revised model include: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to quit, organizational citizenship, behavior, task performance, extra-role performance, health and well-being, stress and strains, and burnout.

In this study I also explored the relationship between employee engagement and intention to turnover. Intention to turnover is an employee's cognitive decision, "to leave the organization

within the near future" (Carmeli & Weisberg, 2006, p. 193). When employees turn over, institutions face the costs of retraining and replacing an employee. Knowing the turnover intentions of employees affords institutions the opportunity to invest in engagement programs to reduce unwanted employee turnover. Along with Saks (2006; 2019), additional studies have indicated a negative relationship between employee engagement and intention to turnover including Harter et al., 2002 (r = -.36); Halbesleben, 2010 (r=-.22); Shuck et al., 2011 (r=-.56); Shuck et al., 2014 (r=-.34).

Building on the works of Kahn (1990, 1992), Shuck et al. (2011) explored potential antecedents (job fit, affective commitment, and psychological climate) of employee engagement and employee engagement as a precursor to discretionary effort and intention to turnover as outcomes. With a sample of 283 employees in various industries, they found no significant differences in employee responses based on gender or position. Using a revised version of May, Gilson, and Harter's (2004) engagement scales to measure employee engagement, Shuck et al. (2011) found employee engagement to be significantly correlated with both discretionary effort ($r = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$) and intention to turnover ($r = 0.56$, $p < 0.001$). Employees who reported higher levels of meaningfulness (β=-.21) and availability (β=-.19) were less likely to have an intention to turnover.

Differentiating Employee Engagement

The term "employee engagement" is often used in place of other constructs because of researcher's not having a comprehensive understating of employee engagement (Saks, 2006; Shuck, Ghosh, Zigarmi, & Nimon, 2012) and often defining employee engagement in one fashion but measuring it in another (Shuck 2012; Shuck 2017). Employee engagement is a unique construct with its own definition and theoretical base (Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck et

al., 2014; 2016) and thus needs to be differentiated from other related engagement constructs, such as job engagement (Rich et al., 2010) and organization engagement (Saks, 2006). Shuck et al., 2016 refers to these as "engagement-like constructs" and argues that employee engagement is different "in both focus and definition to allow for differentiation in between the engagement like constructs and employee engagement" (p. 4).

Job Engagement

Job engagement is defined as a, "multi-dimensional motivational concept reflecting the simultaneous investment of an individual's physical, cognitive, and emotional energy in active, full work performance" (Rich et al., 2010 p. 619). Rich et al. (2010) goes on to state, "in even more direct terms, engagement is a multidimensional motivational construct of the latent form with dimensions, serving as indicators of the higher-order engagement concept" (p. 619). The word "work" is in the definition of job engagement, yet how the construct is measured via the Job Engagement Scale (JES) (Rich et al., 2010) involves responding to questions that end with "at my job", thus limiting engagement to the context of one's job. Employee engagement is more encompassing of the full active employee experience of their work (role, position, work, job, team, and organization). Shuck et al., 2017 found that when addressing job engagement, most studies relied on aspects of work engagement to measure job engagement.

Organizational Engagement

Organizational engagement is defined as "the extent to which an individual is psychologically present in a particular organizational role" (Saks, 2006, p. 604) and includes "participant's psychological presence in their job and organization" (Saks, 2006, p. 608). In his seminal work on organizational engagement, Saks used employee engagement as the focus, however he did not define or measure employee engagement and viewed it in terms of job

engagement and organizational engagement. These terms have different meanings, with organizational engagement describing how an employee experiences their institution, whereas employee engagement is not defined by the bounds of the institution or organization. Studies on organizational engagement have been found to focus their literature and/or measurement scales on employee or job engagement, continuing the confusion around terminology, framework, and research design (Shuck et al., 2017).

When looking at research on organizational engagement it is important to consider the unit of analysis, with employee engagement being based on the individual, studies may also address organizational engagement at the organizational level, Barrick, Thurgood, Smith, and Courtright (2015) refer to this as, "collective organizational engagement" (p. 112). Barrick et al. investigated 83 credit unions across the United States with a model that explored the role of three antecedents: motivating work design, human resource management practices, and CEO transformational leadership and their impact on engagement and then studied the relationship between engagement and firm performance using a revised version of Rich et al.'s (2010) individual job engagement scale. They found that collective organizational engagement mediates the relationship between the three antecedents and firm performance.

In another study examining organizational engagement, Mahon, et al. (2014), explored the impact of emotional intelligence, shared personal vision, shared positive mood, and perceived organizational support on organizational engagement. Using a revised version of Saks (2006) to measure organizational engagement, data was collected from 231 employees at two organizations, a for-profit public company, and a nonprofit educational institution. They found that shared vision, shared mood, and perceived organizational support had a positive association with engagement.

Job Satisfaction in Higher Education Professional Staff

Conceptual and empirical research has shown conflicting results in distinguishing job satisfaction from employee engagement (Nimon, Shuck, & Zigarmi, 2016). Given the similar nature of these constructs and a lack of United States-based research on employee engagement in higher education staff, this section examines job satisfaction research on higher education staff.

Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as, "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (p. 1300). Tull (2006), in a study of new student affairs professionals, identified dissatisfaction in terms of "role ambiguity, role conflict, role orientation, role stress, job burnout, work overload, and perceived opportunities for goal attainment, professional development, and career advancement" (p. 465). In a seminal work on professional staff in higher education, Rosser (2004) conducted a nationwide study of midlevel leaders in higher education (n=1,966) examining the impact of work life issues, satisfaction, and morale on turnover intention. Defining midlevel leaders as non-contract employees, in non-academic support roles, such as "directors and coordinators of admissions, institutional research, registrars, business officers, computing and technology, human resources, communications, alumni affairs, student affairs, placement and counseling services, financial aid, student housing, development and planned giving" (p. 324) as being similar to the positions that were included in this study. Work life was a construct initially comprised of seven scales: career support, recognition for competence, interdepartmental relations, perceptions of discrimination, working conditions, external relations, and review/intervention. Utilizing a single level structural equation model, Rosser simultaneously tested the direct effects of demographic characteristics and work life variables on satisfaction and morale. The quality of work life perceptions of career support, recognition for competence, external relations, review/intervention, and discrimination

experiences had a direct relationship with a staff member's level of satisfaction. Perceptions of working conditions and intradepartmental relations had no significant impact on their level of satisfaction, morale, or their intent to leave, and were subsequently removed from the model. Midlevel leaders' satisfaction had a significant effect on their morale and intent to turnover.

In similar research, Rosser and Javinar's (2003) studied midlevel student affairs leaders' individual perceptions of work life issues, job satisfaction, and morale on turnover intention. Finding the work life issues of recognition for competence, intradepartmental relations, working conditions, perceived career support, and external relations had a direct relationship with a staff members level of satisfaction and that student affairs staff satisfaction had a significant impact on morale and intent to turnover.

These findings on work life issues, job satisfaction, and turnover intent in higher education staff are in alignment with the foundational work of Kahn (1990) and the conceptual model that will be used in the proposed study. Many of Rosser's (2004) work life elements relate to psychological engagement. For example, psychological meaningfulness relates to Rosser's recognition of competence. Psychological safety links intradepartmental and external relations in terms of supportive coworker and supervisor relations. Rosser's career support relates to psychological availability in terms of having the support, resources, and training needed to complete one's work.

This section highlighted the challenges in distinguishing job satisfaction and employee engagement. I examined Rosser's (2004) research results showing work life elements impact job satisfaction and job satisfaction impacts turnover intention in higher education staff and connects those work life issues to psychological engagement.

Employee Engagement in Higher Education Staff

Research on employee engagement in higher education staff is limited with most published empirical research being found internationally. In examining five such studies there were no known significant contextual differences that are relevant to this study given the use of engagement definitions, theoretical approaches, and measurement scales discussed throughout this chapter. Although this continued use of different definitions, theoretical approaches, and scales to measure engagement, it continues to add to the confusion of the construct.

In exploring the extent to which the psychological conditions (meaningfulness, safety, and availability) predict work engagement, Chikoko et al. (2014) surveyed 149 higher education employees at a South African University. Using May et al.'s (2004) scale to measure work engagement, they found that psychological meaningfulness ($F = 22.924$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.0391$) and job enrichment ($\beta = 0.351$, $p < 0.001$) predicted work engagement, with job enrichment predicting meaningfulness ($\beta = 0.522$, $p < 0.001$).

In addressing the high turnover rate in higher education, Takawira1, et al. (2014), surveyed 153 employees at a higher education institution in South Africa. Exploring the relationships between job embeddedness, engagement, and turnover intention they utilized a burnout approach using the UWES to measure engagement and the Mitchell et al., (2001) Turnover Intention Scale. They found significant relationships between job embeddedness and work engagement (r=.51, p <.001) and work engagement and turnover intention (r=.-.32, p <.001).

Examining the influence of needs-supplies fit and demands-abilities fit on employee engagement, Basit and Arshad (2015) surveyed 161 employees at a large public university in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Using Rich et al.'s (2010) Job Engagement Scale, they found that both

needs-supplies fit (r= 0.557, p <.001) explaining 29.3% of the variance in employee engagement and demands-abilities fit (r= 0.198, p <.001) and explaining 2.33% of the variance in employee engagement. Another interesting finding from their study was the significant role that employee education played in engagement levels, Those who had higher education had greater levels of engagement (standardized beta = .193, p < .05) with the difference between groups being statistically significant (F(5,152) = 4.332, p < .001). Those with doctorate-level education (4.53 ± 0.37) were more engaged than those in the other educational groups. The researchers went on to state that this may be due to those with higher levels of education experiencing greater levels of psychological meaningfulness via task identity and significance.

Hanaysha (2016) studied the relationship between work engagement and employee productivity in higher education surveying 242 employees at a public university in northern Malaysia. Using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) to measure engagement and conducting structure equation modeling, they found that work engagement had a positive effect on employee productivity (β = 0.354, t-value = 4.565, p < 0.05) with employee engagement explaining 33% of overall variance in employee productivity.

Lata, et al. (2021) studied the relationship of physical, cognitive, and emotional engagement on intent to turnover along with the moderating role of organizational politics in 307 public higher education staff in Sindh, Pakistan. Using structural equation modeling and a modified version of Rich et al.'s (2010) physical engagement scale to measure physical engagement, they found a significant negative relationship between cognitive engagement and turnover intention (β = -0.589, t-value = 14.947, p < .05) with a similar negative relationship found between emotional engagement and turnover intention (β = -0.206, t-value = 2.983, p <.05). However, there was no significant relationship found between physical engagement and

turnover intention (β = -0.081, t-value =1.527, p >.05). The negative relationship between these measures was moderated by organizational politics (t = 1.77, p < .05). The relationship between emotional engagement and turnover intention was also mediated by organizational politics (t = 1.955, p < .05). Lata et al. (2021) also found that the negative relationships between physical and emotional engagement and turnover intention were found to be stronger with those higher up in the organization. These research findings suggest that employees might think and feel positive at work but not be completely engaged, lacking in physical engagement.

These international studies explored engagement, and predominately work and job engagement in higher education employees (often including both faculty and staff in their surveys). In general, higher education faculty engagement was more comprehensively researched than administrative staff (Wasilowski, 2016), finding that relationships between employee engagement and job embeddedness, organizational commitment, psychological conditions (meaningfulness, safety, and availability) fit (needs-supplies fit and demands-abilities fit), employee productivity and turnover intention.

Summary

Confusion continues to surround the definition, meaning, theoretical approaches, and measures of employee engagement. In this chapter I explored elements of employee engagement that are relevant in the higher education context. Based on the lack of information in the literature on employee engagement in American higher education, it is the goal of my study to understand the role of employee engagement and its relationship to an employee's intention to turnover in higher education.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to detail the research design that I used to analyze the perceived levels of psychological engagement, employee engagement, and turnover intention of professional staff in higher education at a public research university. This chapter includes a review of the study's purpose and research questions, describes the setting, population and sampling technique, variables, survey instrument and measures, and data analysis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between university professional staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement (meaningfulness, safety, and availability), employee engagement (cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement), intention to turnover, and the COVID-19 global pandemic impact.

Research Questions

The research questions explored in this study are:

R1. What are the demographic characteristics (age, gender, race, highest degree, years in current position) of the professional higher education staff at Midwestern University?

R2. What is the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement (and each element of meaningfulness, safety, and availability), and employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement)?

H2: There are positive relationships between staff members' self-reported levels of

psychological engagement (and each element of meaningfulness, safety, and availability) and employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement).

R3. What is the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of employee engagement (and each subcomponent cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement) and intention to turnover?

H3: There are negative relationships between staff members' self-reported levels of employee engagement (and each subcomponent cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement) and intention to turnover.

R4. Does employee engagement predict intention to turnover?

H4: Employee engagement predicts intention to turnover.

R5. What is the relationship between the perceived impact of COVID-19 and psychological engagement (and each element of meaningfulness, safety, and availability), employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement), and intention to turnover?

H5: There are significant relationships between the impact of COVID-19 and psychological engagement (and each element of meaningfulness, safety, and availability), employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement), and intention to turnover.

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative, nonexperimental, cross-sectional survey research design to examine the relationship between psychological engagement, employee engagement, intention to turnover, and impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The investigation was

nonexperimental in that there was no manipulation of the independent variables. It is cross-sectional as it reflects one point in time. This design was the best fit for this research as quantitative research can determine the relationship between variables (independent and dependent) within a population.

Research Setting

This study was conducted at an accredited, public, state supported, liberal arts research university in the Midwestern United States. Founded in the late 1800s, the Carnegie Classified High Activity Research University enrolls more than 12,000 students in a variety of disciplines including: aerospace, law, medicine, engineering, business, education, art, humanities, and nursing (University*, n.d.). The university employs 2,400 staff, including an estimated 800 full-time professional staff, which is the focus of this study.

The Midwestern university is a part of a state university system, the body that sets policies and procedures for the state's public colleges and universities, including many related to human resource matters. The state university system uses job broadbanding classification system based on the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the position and the job market. With each individual position description determining the job band.

The survey participants are a part of the 3,000-job band called "Professional", which notes:

> ...positions with the primary purpose is performing academic support, student service and institutional support activities, whose assignments would require either college graduation or experience of such kind and amount as to provide a comparable background. This includes employees such as librarians, accountants, systems analysts, and computer programmers (*University System, n.d.).

Participants and Procedures

Study participants are full-time professional staff members at Midwestern University. In the fall of 2020, there were 807 full-time professional staff employed at this university. In the fall of 2021, there were 858 full-time professional staff members with all being invited to participate in a Qualtrics-based survey via email. The approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at this university was sought in advance of this study. Following the approval of the IRB, email addresses of all professional staff were obtained from the university's human resources department. For the purposes of this study professional staff were defined by the state university system (*University System, n.d.) as those serving in:

> positions with the primary purpose is performing academic support, student service and institutional support activities, whose assignments would require either college graduation or experience of such kind and amount as to provide a comparable background. This includes employees such as librarians, accountants, systems analysts, and computer programmers (para. 1).

Recruitment began with an email invitation introducing the study. Each participant confirmed their willingness to participate by completing the informed consent document. The survey was not limited in terms of completion time. Participants took an average of nine minutes to complete the survey.

The survey was open for 14 days. Following the initial survey link distribution email, another reminder email was sent 7 days later. The reminder email was sent to all of those initially invited to participate in the survey as differentiating those who had and had not completed the survey might have challenged the confidentiality of responses. A gift card drawing for one of ten $25 Amazon gift cards was offered as a participation incentive.

An anticipated response rate was around 30% or approximately 240 participants. To detect a medium correlation (Cohen, 1988) with .80 statistical power at the 5% level of significance, Collins, Onwuegbuzie, and Jiao (2007) noted that a minimum of 82 participants were needed. Of the 858 professional staff, 238 responses were included in this study, for a response rate of 27.7%.

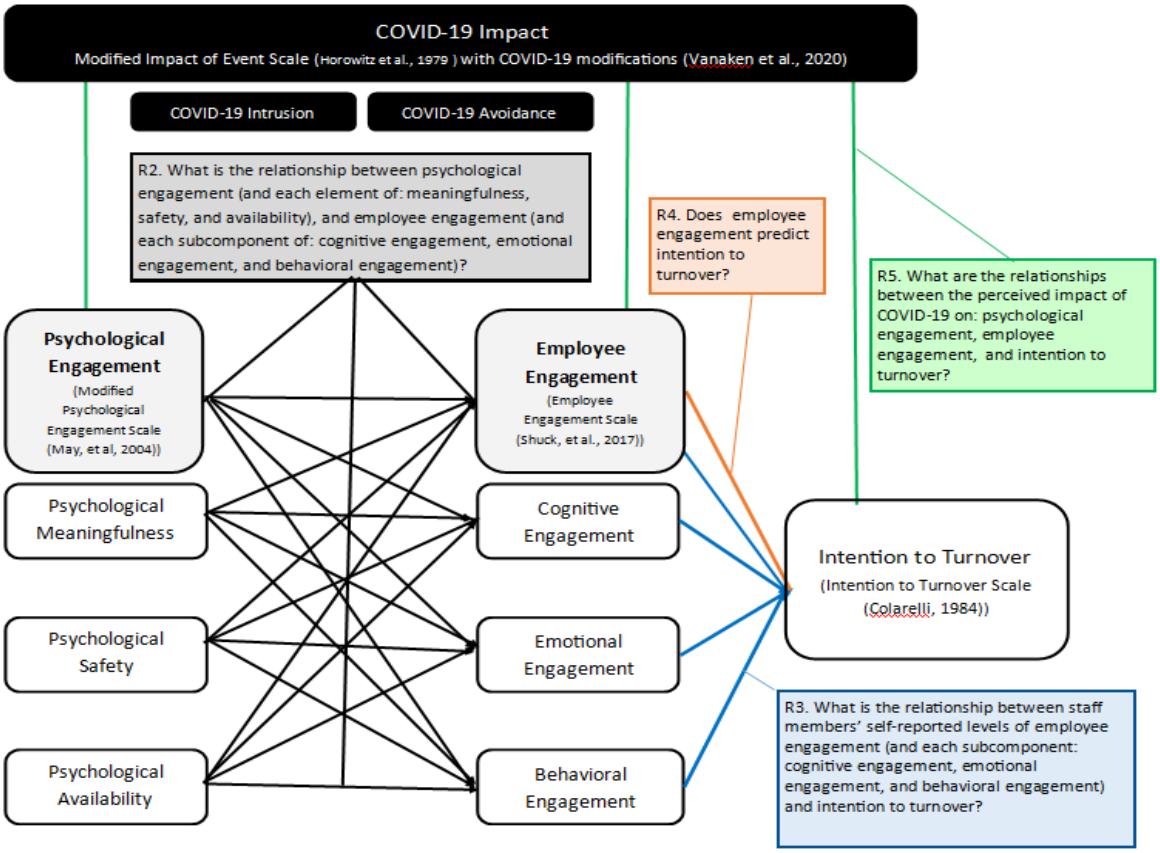
A total of 256 people accessed the survey; of those, 4 did not respond to any questions beyond the informed consent, 11 only entered responses to the initial demographic questions, and 3 people only responded to the psychological engagement items (with no responses to any of the employee engagement, intention to turnover, or COVID-19 impact items). Those 18 records were excluded from study calculations; the remaining 238 participant records were included in the analysis.

Measures

The theoretical and conceptual frameworks for this study, previously noted in Chapter I, provided guidance on the selection of measures and structure of the survey. The four measurement scales incorporated into the survey instrument include a modified version of the Psychological Engagement Scale (May et al, 2004), Employee Engagement Scale (EES; Shuck et al., 2017), Intention to Turnover Scale (ITS; Colarelli, 1984), and a modified Impact of Event Scale (Vanaken, 2020). The survey instrument (see Appendix A) contains select demographic items including age, sex, gender, and race. Figure 4 shows an illustration of the relationships between the measures and research questions that were explored in this study.

Figure 4.

Representation of Research Questions in the Study Framework.



Variable Descriptions

The following section provides descriptions of the scales and items that align with the framework used in this study. Additional information on the reliability noted in previous research is also presented.

Demographic Items

Table 2 conveys the demographic items collected in the survey including age, sex, gender, and race.

Table 2.

Demographics of Research Setting Professional Staff.

Variable Name	Variable Description	Data Type	Values
Age	Age of staff at time of survey participation	Ratio	18+
Gender	Gender of participant	Nominal	1-Male (including transgender men); 2-Female (including transgender women); 3-Non-binary/non-conforming; Not Listed
Race	Race of participant	Nominal	1- Amer. Indian or Alaska Native; 2- Asian; 3- Black or African American; 4- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; 5-Hispanic; 6-White
Educ	Highest degree of level of school completed	Nominal	1-Less than a high school diploma; 2-High school degree or equivalent; 3-Some college, no degree; 4-Associate degree; 5-Bachelor's degree; 6-Master's degree; 7-Professional degree; 8-Doctorate
YrsCurr	Years in current position at time of survey	Ratio	1+

Psychological Engagement

To measure psychological engagement Shuck's (2010) modified version of May et al.'s (2004) Psychological Engagement Scale was used. This scale measures each component of psychological engagement (meaningfulness, safety, and availability) as identified by Kahn (1990). This 17-item overall scale (six items for meaningfulness, six for safety, and five for availability) uses a five-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*, as displayed in Table 3. This scale has been shown to have strong internal consistency. Shuck, (2010) reported the following: meaningfulness, $\alpha = .93$; safety, $\alpha = .74$; availability, $\alpha = .75$; and, an overall scale was $\alpha = .89$. May et al. (2004) reported: meaningfulness $\alpha = .90$; safety $\alpha = .71$; availability $\alpha = .85$; and, an overall $\alpha = .77$). Given the

greater strength noted in Shuck's research (2010) ,his modified version of the scale was used in this study.

Table 3.

Psychological Engagement Variables for Research Setting Professional Staff.

Variable Name	Variable Descriptions	Data Type
PEM	Psychological Meaningfulness	Calculated Interval
PEM1Imp	The work I do on this job is very important to me	Interval
PEM2PMful	My job activities are personally meaningful to me	Interval
PEM3Worth	The work I do on this job is worthwhile.	Interval
PEM4SigMe	My job activities are significant to me.	Interval
PEM5JMful	The work I do on this job is meaningful to me	Interval
PEM6Val	I feel that the work I do on my job is valuable	Interval
PES	Safety	Calculated Interval
PE1SMyself	I can be myself at work	Interval
PES2BringU	At work I can bring up problems and tough issues without fear of being teased or made fun of.	Interval
PES3SaWrk	I feel physically safe at work	Interval
PES4Expect	At work, I know what is expected of me everyday	Interval
PES5Consist	Each day my work demands are consistent	Interval
PES6Boss	At work I can bring up problems and tough issues without fear of formal of formal retribution by my supervisor, such as on an annual evaluation or review	Interval
PEA	Availability	Calculated Interval
PEA1Support	At work, I have the support I need to complete my job.	Interval
PEA2Res	At work, I have the resources I need to complete my job.	Interval
PEA3Absorb	I am mentally and emotionally absorbed in my job when I am working.	Interval
PEA4Train	I have the skills and training I need to complete my work at the level that is expected of me	Interval
PEA5ResProvide	If I do not have the resources to complete my work, I am confident that my organization would help me get them	Interval
PE	Psychological engagement	Calculated Interval

Employee Engagement

As shown in Table 4, employee engagement was measured using the Employee Engagement Scale (EES) developed by Shuck et al. (2017). A research team comprised of two human resource professionals and researchers developed this scale through a series of four

studies. They arrived at an instrument reporting internal consistency of: cognitive engagement α = .94; emotional engagement α = .88; and behavioral engagement: α = .91. This 12-item scale uses a five-point Likert scale with response options ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree.*

Table 4.

Employee Engagement Variables for Research Setting Professional Staff.

Variable Name	Variable Description	Data Type
EECE	Cognitive Engagement	Calculated Interval
EECE1FocWork	I am really focused when I am working.	Interval
EECE2Concen	I concentrate on my job when I am at work.	Interval
EECE3Attn	I give my job responsibility a lot of attention.	Interval
EECEFocJob	At work, I am focused on my job.	Interval
EEEE	Emotional Engagement	Calculated Interval
EEEE1Mean	Working at Midwestern University has a great deal of personal meaning to me.	Interval
EEEE2Belong	I feel a strong sense of belonging to my job.	Interval
EEEE3Mission	I believe in the mission and purpose of Midwestern University.	Interval
EEEE4Future	I care about the future of Midwestern University.	Interval
EEBE	Behavioral Engagement	Calculated Interval
EEBE1Push	I really push myself to work beyond what is expected of me.	Interval
EEBE2Effort	I am willing to put in extra effort without being asked.	Interval
EEBE3Above	I often go above what is expected of me to help my team be successful.	Interval
EEBE4HExpect	I work harder that expected to help Midwestern University be successful.	Interval
EE	Employee engagement	Calculated Interval

Intention to Turnover

Intention to turnover and leave the organization was measured using the Intention to Turnover Scale (ITS) (Colarelli, 1984), as shown in Table 5. The ITS is a three-item scale using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*. Colarelli (1984) reported a coefficient alpha of .75. Internal consistency of other studies using this measure reported alphas of .81 (Shuck et al 2011) and .86 (Saks & Ashforth, 1997).

Table 5.

Intention to Turnover Variables for Research Setting Professional Staff.

Variable Name	Variable Definition	Data Type
ITS1TQuit	I frequently think of quitting my job.	Interval
ITS2Search	I am planning to search for a new job during the next 12 months	Interval
ITS3Where	If I have my own way, I will be working for this organization one year from now. [reverse scored]	Interval
ITS	Intention to turnover	Calculated Interval

COVID-19 Impact

To measure the impact of COVID-19, a modified version (Vanaken, 2020) of the Impact of Event Scale (Horowitz et al., 1979) was used. As shown in Table 6, the IES is a 15-item scale based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1= *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 5 = *Often*. Vanaken (2020) reported a coefficient alpha of .75; Horowitz et al. (1979) noted Cronbach's alpha for the subscales; intrusion at 0.78 and avoidance at 0.82.

Table 6.

COVID-19 Impact for Research Setting Professional Staff.

Variable Name	Variable Definition	Data Type
CoIntThought	I thought about COVID-19 when I didn't mean to.	Interval
CoIntSleep	I had trouble falling or staying asleep because of pictures and thought about COVID-19 that came into my mind.	Interval
CoIntFeel	I had waves of strong feelings about COVID-19.	Interval
CoIntDream	I had dreams about COVID-19.	Interval
CoIntPics	Pictures about COVID-19 popped into my mind.	Interval
CoIntThink	Other things kept making me think about COVID-19.	Interval
CoIntRemind	Any reminder about COVID-19 brought back the feelings about it.	Interval
COIntrusion	COVID-19 Intrusion	Calculated Interval
CoAvUpset	I avoided letting myself get upset when I thought about COVID-19 or was reminded of it.	Interval
CoAvThoughts	I tried to remove COVID-19 from my thoughts.	Interval
CoAvAway	I stayed away from things that made me think about COVID-19	Interval
CoAvReal	I felt as if COVID-19 hadn't happened or wasn't real.	Interval
CoAvTalk	I tried not to talk about COVID-19.	Interval

CoAvFeelings	I was aware that I had a lot of feelings about COVID-19, but I didn't deal with them.	Interval
CoAvThink	I tried not to think about COVID-19.	Interval
CoAVNumb	My feelings about COVID-19 were kind of numb	Interval
CoAvoidance	COVID-19 Avoidance	Calculated Interval
CoImpact	COVID-19 Impact	Calculated Interval

Preliminary Data Analysis

Once the survey responses were collected via Qualtrics, the data were downloaded into IBM SPSS 28 to analyze. Data were cleaned and examined for non-responses and missing values. A total of 256 people accessed the survey; of those, 4 did not respond to any questions beyond the informed consent, 11 only entered responses to the initial demographic questions, and 3 people only responded to the psychological engagement items (with no responses to any of the employee engagement, intention to turnover, or COVID-19 impact items). Those 18 records were excluded from study calculations; the remaining 238 participant records were included in the analysis. Descriptive statistics and tests for normality were run on individual items. Once individual items were examined, subscales were created from the individual items via composite scores, with scale validity being tested using exploratory factor analysis. Validity, normality, and reliability of the subscales were examined.

Normality

According to Lei and Lomax (2005) absolute values of less than 1 for skewness show minimal nonnormality, whereas absolute values between 1 and 2.3 show moderate nonnormality, with values outside of 2.3 as severely non-normal. One item on the survey, "I feel physically safe at work", came back as severely non-normal (skewness -2.31). Several items showed moderate levels of nonnormality, including all individual items under psychological meaningfulness, psychological availability, cognitive engagement, and behavioral engagement. According to

West, Finch, and Curran (1995), kurtosis is not of concern until the amount exceeds an absolute value of 7. The item with the highest noted kurtosis (5.96) was, “I feel physically safe at work”. Given moderate levels of non-normality all items were retained for the analysis.

Survey Items

The survey consisted of 47 items across 4 measurement scales established in the literature. In the following section I describe each of the items within those scales. The lowest scored individual item was, “Each day my work demands are consistent” (*M*=3.48. *SD*=1.20), and the highest item was, “I feel physically safe at work” (*M*=4.58, *SD*=.78).

Psychological Engagement

Psychological engagement consisted of 17 items across three elements: psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability. This 17-item overall scale (six items for meaningfulness, six for safety, and five for availability) used a 5-point Likert scale with response options ranging from 1 = S*trongly Disagree* to 5 = S*trongly Agree.* Table 7 shows the mean and standard deviation for each psychological engagement survey item.

Under psychological meaningfulness, the items with the highest mean scores among participants were, “The work I do on this job is worthwhile" (*M*=4.46, *SD*=.89) and “I feel that the work I do on my job is valuable” (*M*=4.46, *SD*= .81). The lowest mean score under psychological meaningfulness was, “My job activities are personally meaningful to me” (*M*=4.28, *SD*=.94). All items were closest to “Somewhat Agree”.

Psychological safety included the highest and lowest individual items in the survey, with the lowest being, “Each day my work demands are consistent” (*M*=3.48. *SD*=1.20), closely aligned with “Neither Agree nor Disagree” and the highest being, “I feel physically safe at work” (*M*=4.58, *SD*=.78), closest to “Somewhat Agree”.

Within psychological availability participants noted two items with the lowest scores, "I am mentally and emotionally absorbed in my job when I am working" (*M*=3.93, *SD*=1.02) and "If I do not have the resources to complete my work, I am confident that my organization would help me get them" (*M*=3.93, *SD*=1.19). The psychological availability item with the highest score was, "I have the skills and training I need to complete my work at the level that is expected of me" (*M*=4.36, *SD*=.82). All items were closest to "Somewhat Agree".

Table 7.

Psychological Engagement Variables for Research Setting Professional Staff.

Variable Name	Variable Descriptions	*M* (SD)
PEM	Meaningfulness	4.40 (.80)
PEM1Imp	The work I do on this job is very important to me	4.44 (.90)
PEM2PMful	My job activities are personally meaningful to me	4.28 (.94)
PEM3Worth	The work I do on this job is worthwhile.	4.46 (.89)
PEM4SigMe	My job activities are significant to me.	4.32 (.93)
PEM5JMful	The work I do on this job is meaningful to me	4.35 (.95)
PEM6Val	I feel that the work I do on my job is valuable	4.46 (.81)
PES	Safety	4.08 (.79)
PE1SMyself	I can be myself at work	4.00 (1.09)
PES2BringU	At work I can bring up problems and tough issues without fear of being teased or made fun of.	4.13 (1.02)
PES3SaWrk	I feel physically safe at work	4.58 (.78)
PES4Expect	At work, I know what is expected of me everyday	4.20 (.95)
PES5Consist	Each day my work demands are consistent	3.48 (1.20)
PES6Boss	At work I can bring up problems and tough issues without fear of formal of formal retribution by my supervisor, such as on an annual evaluation or review	4.09 (1.16)
PEA	Availability	4.05 (.84)
PEA1Support	At work, I have the support I need to complete my job.	4.00 (1.12)
PEA2Res	At work, I have the resources I need to complete my job.	4.05 (1.06)
PEA3Absorb	I am mentally and emotionally absorbed in my job when I am working.	3.93 (1.02)
PEA4Train	I have the skills and training I need to complete my work at the level that is expected of me	4.36 (.82)
PEA5ResProvide	If I do not have the resources to complete my work, I am confident that my organization would help me get them	3.93 (1.19)
PE	Psychological engagement	4.18 (.72)

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement consisted of 12 items across three subcomponents: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement. These items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree.* Table 8 shows the mean and standard deviation for each employee engagement survey item.

Under cognitive engagement, participants highest scoring item was, "I give my job responsibility a lot of attention" (*M*=4.51, *SD*=.72), close to "Strongly Agree", and the lowest scoring item was, "I am really focused when I am working" (*M*=4.10, *SD*=.93), close to "Somewhat Agree".

In terms of emotional engagement, the two lowest scoring items, close to "Somewhat Agree", were, "I feel a strong sense of belonging to my job" (*M*=3.87, *SD*=1.16) and "Working at Midwestern University has a great deal of personal meaning to me" (*M*=3.87, *SD*=1.12). Those were also the two lowest scoring items under employee engagement. The highest scored item under emotional engagement was, "I care about the future of Midwestern University" (*M*=4.35, *SD*=.91), also closest to "Somewhat Agree".

Behavioral engagement had a highest scoring and "Strongly Agree" item of, "I am willing to put in extra effort without being asked" (*M*=4.51, *SD*=.82) and a lowest scoring item of, "I work harder that expected to help Midwestern University be successful" (*M*=4.15, *SD*=.98), closest to "Somewhat Agree".

Table 8.

Employee Engagement Variables for Midwestern University Professional Staff.

Variable Name	Variable Description	M (SD)
EECE	Cognitive Engagement	4.28 (.78)
EECE1FocWork	I am really focused when I am working.	4.10 (.93)
EECE2Concen	I concentrate on my job when I am at work.	4.23 (.89)
EECE3Attn	I give my job responsibility a lot of attention.	4.51 (.72)
EECEFocJob	At work, I am focused on my job.	4.27 (.82)
EEEE	Emotional Engagement	4.06 (.92)
EEEE1Mean	Working at Midwestern University has a great deal of personal meaning to me.	3.87 (1.12)
EEEE2Belong	I feel a strong sense of belonging to my job.	3.87 (1.16)
EEEE3Mission	I believe in the mission and purpose of Midwestern University.	4.15 (1.00)
EEEE4Future	I care about the future of Midwestern University.	4.35 (.91)
EEBE	Behavioral Engagement	4.33 (.82)
EEBE1Push	I really push myself to work beyond what is expected of me.	4.24 (.94)
EEBE2Effort	I am willing to put in extra effort without being asked.	4.51 (.82)
EEBE3Above	I often go above what is expected of me to help my team be successful.	4.44 (.86)
EEBE4HExpect	I work harder that expected to help Midwestern University be successful.	4.15 (.98)
EE	Employee engagement	4.22 (.69)

Intention to Turnover

Intention to Turnover was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly* Agree. Intention to Turnover consisted of three items, with the highest scoring item being, "I frequently think of quitting my job" (*M*=2.26, *SD*=1.33) and the lowest scoring item being, "If I have my own way, I will be working for this organization one year from now" (*M*=1.83, *SD*=1.15). Both items are closest to "Somewhat Disagree". Table 9 shows the mean and standard deviation for each Intention to Turnover survey item.

Table 9.

Intention to Turnover Variables for Midwestern University Professional Staff.

Variable Name	Variable Definition	M (SD)
ITS1TQuit	I frequently think of quitting my job.	2.26 (1.33)
ITS2Search	I am planning to search for a new job during the next 12 months	2.08 (1.29)
ITS3Where	If I have my own way, I will be working for this organization one year from now. [reverse scored]	1.83 (1.15)
ITS	Intention to turnover	2.84 (.68)

COVID-19 Impact

COVID-19 impact consisted of 15 items comprising two subscales: COVID intrusion and COVID avoidance. These items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale with response options: 1-Never, 2-Rarely, 3-Sometimes, 4-Often, and 5-Always. The highest scoring COVID-19 intrusion item was, "I thought about COVID-19 when I didn't mean to" (*M*=2.96, *SD*=1.04) and the lowest item was, "I had dreams about COVID-19" (*M*=1.65, *SD*=.95). Both items are closest to "Sometimes". The highest scoring COVID-19 avoidance item was, "I avoided letting myself get upset when I thought about COVID-19 or was reminded of it" (*M*=2.97, *SD*=1.21), closest to "Sometimes" and the lowest item was, "I felt as if COVID-19 hadn't happened or wasn't real" (*M*=1.46, *SD*=.81), closest to "Never". Table 10 shows the mean and standard deviation for each COVID-19 survey item.

Table10.

COVID-19 Impact for Midwestern University Professional Staff.

Variable Name	Variable Definition	M (SD)
CoIntThought	I thought about COVID-19 when I didn't mean to.	2.96 (1.04)
CoIntSleep	I had trouble falling or staying asleep because of pictures and thoughts about COVID-19 that came into my mind.	2.02 (1.07)
CoIntFeel	I had waves of strong feelings about COVID-19.	2.70 (1.21)
CoIntDream	I had dreams about COVID-19.	1.65 (.95)
CoIntPics	Pictures about COVID-19 popped into my mind.	1.91 (1.05)
CoIntThink	Other things kept making me think about COVID-19.	2.58 (1.21)

CoIntRemind	Any reminder about COVID-19 brought back the feelings about it.	2.33 (1.20)
COIntrusion	COVID-19 Intrusion	2.30 (.92)
CoAvUpset	I avoided letting myself get upset when I thought about COVID-19 or was reminded of it.	2.97 (1.21)
CoAvThoughts	I tried to remove COVID-19 from my thoughts.	2.77 (1.12)
CoAvAway	I stayed away from things that made me think about COVID-19	2.59 (1.10)
CoAvReal	I felt as if COVID-19 hadn't happened or wasn't real.	1.46 (.81)
CoAvTalk	I tried not to talk about COVID-19.	2.44 (1.11)
CoAvFeelings	I was aware that I had a lot of feelings about COVID-19, but I didn't deal with them.	1.81 (.94)
CoAvThink	I tried not to think about COVID-19.	2.55 (1.13)
CoAVNumb	My feelings about COVID-19 were kind of numb	2.38 (1.16)
CoAvoidance	COVID-19 Avoidance	2.37 (.70)
CoImpact	COVID-19 Impact	2.33 (.66)

Scales

Scales and subscales were created from these individual items via composite scores. Validity, normality, and reliability were examined.

Validity

In order to test the construct validity and confirm the alignment of the scales to what was found in the literature, exploratory factor analysis using principal axis factoring with direct oblimin rotation, Eigenvalues greater than one, and suppressing small coefficients (< .30) was used. Results are shown in Tables 11 through 13.

Psychological Engagement

This 17-item scale loaded on two instead of the three anticipated factors (meaningfulness, safety, and availability) found in the literature, with items related to safety and availability loading onto one factor (Eigenvalue 14.92; 31.75% variance). As shown in Table 11, when three factors were forced, meaningfulness items loaded onto one subscale, with weak or cross-loadings noted on safety and availability related items, signaling potential challenges with the subscales. Psychological engagement was measured utilizing Shuck's (2010) Engagement Scale, a

modified version of the May, et al. (2004) scale, measuring meaningfulness, safety, and availability. This was based on Kahn's (1990) framework of three psychological conditions. In their initial work, May, et al. (2004) conducted an exploratory principal component factor analysis that did not reveal three subscales. As a result, they choose to use an overall scale that included items from each psychological engagement element. Shuck did not conduct a factor analysis of his modified subscales. The subscales used in this study correspond with the frameworks (Kahn, 1990; Shuck et al, 2011) used in this study.

Shuck's (2010) subscales, used in this study, include modifications to the safety and availability subscales. Safety, in May, et al. (2004) contained three items centered on fears and threats; the scale used in this study also included related items, with the modified scale including items related to knowing expectations and consistent work demands. Integrating the idea that, "unsafe conditions exist when situation are ambiguous, unpredictable and threatening" (May, et al., p. 15). May, et al.'s (2004) availability subscale focused on one's perception of his/her self confidence in abilities to engage; whereas the modified scale focuses on having the support and resources needed to do one's job.

Table 11.

Factor Loadings of Psychological Engagement.

	1	2	3
PEM1Imp		-0.869	
PEM2PMful		-0.972	
PEM3Worth		-0.825	
PEM4SigMe		-0.946	
PEM5JMful		-0.945	
PEM6Val		-0.636	0.348
PE1SMyself	0.556		
PES2BringU	0.814		
PES6Boss	0.829		
PES3SaWrk			

PES4Expect			0.869
PES5Consist			0.483
PEA1Support	0.809		
PEA2Res	0.851		
PEA3Absorb		-0.371	
PEA4Train			0.586
PEA5ResProvide	0.699		
Eigen	9.29	2.06	.89
%Variance	54.60	12.11	5.20

Employee Engagement

Consistent with the literature, employee engagement items loaded onto the three factors aligning with Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral Engagement. The factor loadings are shown in Table 12.

Table 12.

Factor Loadings of Employee Engagement.

	1	2	3
EECE1FocWork	0.927		
EECE2Concen	0.924		
EECE3Attn	0.686		
EECEFocJob	0.941		
EEEE1Mean		0.817	
EEEE2Belong		0.724	
EEEE3Mission		0.919	
EEEE4Future		0.837	
EEBE1Push			0.859
EEBE2Effort			0.778
EEBE3Above			0.937
EEBE4HExpect			0.864
Eigen	6.62	1.72	1.49
% Variance	55.18	14.35	12.49

Intention to Turnover

As found in the literature, the three items comprising the Intention to Turnover Scale came back as one factor. This explains the 73.33% of the variance.

COVID-19 Impact

Initially the factor analysis loaded on three factors for COVID impact with three of the eight items under COVID-19 Avoidance (CoAvUpset, CoAvThoughts, and CoAvAway) comprising their own factor (Eigenvalue 1.28; 2.72% variance). As shown in Table 13, when forced to two factors, as found in the literature, the items closely align with the anticipated scales.

Table 13.

Factor Loadings of COVID-19 Impact.

	1	2
CoIntThought	0.791	
CoIntSleep	0.836	
CoIntFeel	0.837	
CoIntDream	0.720	
CoIntPics	0.840	
CoIntThink	0.761	
CoIntRemind	0.841	
CoAvUpset		
CoAvThoughts		0.578
CoAvAway		0.598
CoAvReal		0.511
CoAvTalk		0.789
CoAvFeelings	0.336	0.382
CoAvThink		0.849
CoAVNumb		0.587
Eigen	5.71	2.88
%Variance	38.06	19.21

Reliability

The scales and subscales were tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha to assure internal consistency. Except for psychological meaningfulness ($\alpha = .96$), all subscales were within the range (0.7 - 0.95) recommended by Warner (2013) with values ranging from .80 to .95. Tables 14 through 17 show the reliability for each scale and subscale used in this study.

Normality

Scale and subscale normality were assessed based on skewness and kurtosis. As previously mentioned, absolute values of less than 1 for skewness show minimal nonnormality, whereas absolute values between 1 and 2.3 show moderate nonnormality, with values outside of 2.3 as severely non-normal (Lei & Lomax, 2005). According to West, Finch, & Curran (1995), kurtosis is not of concern until the amount exceeds an absolute value of 7. Levels of normality are shown in Tables 14 through 17.

Psychological Engagement

As shown in Table 14, psychological engagement and each of its elements, which are meaningfulness, safety, and availability, showed moderate levels of nonnormality (Lei & Lomax, 2005). With ample reliability for the psychological engagement scale and two of the element scales (psychological safety and psychological availability), psychological meaningfulness showed some redundancy at α= .96 (Warner, 2013). The average response for all was closest to "Somewhat Agree".

Table 14.

Psychological Engagement and Elements.

Variable	Number of items	Possible Range	Actual Range	N	α	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Psychological meaningfulness	6	1-5	1-5	236	0.96	4.40	0.80	-2.02	4.97
Psychological safety	6	1-5	1-5	238	0.85	4.08	0.79	-1.30	2.04
Psychological availability	5	1-5	1-5	234	0.86	4.05	0.84	-1.30	1.61
Psychological engagement		1-5	1-5	232	0.95	4.18	0.72	-1.63	3.64

Employee Engagement

Like psychological engagement, employee engagement had responses across all subcomponents closest to "Somewhat Agree". As shown in Table 15, the scales were found to be reliable (Warner, 2013) and expressed moderate nonnormality (Lei & Lomax, 2005).

Table 15.

Employee Engagement and Subcomponents.

Variable	Number of items	Possible Range	Actual Range	N	α	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Cognitive engagement	4	1-5	1-5	238	0.94	4.28	0.78	-1.61	3.27
Emotional engagement	4	1-5	1-5	238	0.90	4.06	0.92	-1.12	1.05
Behavioral engagement	4	1-5	1-5	238	0.93	4.33	0.82	-1.67	3.32
Employee engagement		1-5	1-5	238	0.92	4.22	0.69	-1.48	3.47

Intention to Turnover

The Intention to Turnover Scale showed minimal nonnormality (skewness = -.55; Lei & Lomax, 2005), strong reliability (α = .82; Warner, 2013) and had a mean closest to "Neither Agree nor Disagree" in response to the three items making up scale. Results are shown in Table 16.

Table 16.

Intention to Turnover Scale.

Variable	Number of items	Possible Range	Actual Range	N	α	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Intention to turnover	3	1-5	1-5	236	0.82	2.84	0.68	-0.55	0.32

COVID-19 Impact

The COVID-19 Impact Scale and COVID-19 intrusion and COVID-19 avoidance subscales showed minimal nonnormality (skewness ranging from -.64 to .06), strong reliability (α ranging from .80 to .93; Warner, 2013), and had a mean closest to "Rarely". Results are shown in Table 17.

Table 17.

COVID-19 Impact Scale.

Variable	Number of items	Possible Range	Actual Range	N	α	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Covid-19 intrusion	7	1-5	1-5	226	0.93	2.30	0.92	-0.64	-0.09
Covid-19 avoidance	8	1-5	1-5	225	0.80	2.37	0.70	0.04	0.37
Covid-19 impact	15	1-5	1-4.14	224	0.87	2.33	0.66	0.06	-0.43

Analysis by Research Question Hypothesis

H1: There are relationships between staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement (and each element of meaningfulness, safety, and availability) and employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement).

To test this hypothesis, a series of Pearson's *r* correlation were conducted to determine the linear relationship between continuous variables.

H2: There are relationships between staff members' self-reported levels of employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement) and intention to turnover.

To test this hypothesis, Pearson's *r* correlations were run to determine the relationship

between variables.

H3: Employee engagement will predict intention to turnover.

To test this hypothesis, I ran a simultaneous multiple regression. Multiple regression allows for the assessment of the unique variance of the independent variables on a continuous dependent variable. The simultaneous loading of variables indicates that there is no inherent order. R^2 is an expression of the goodness of fit with the regression model.

H4: Impact of COVID-19 will have significant relationships with psychological engagement (and each element of meaningfulness, safety, and availability). employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement), and intention to turnover.

To test this hypothesis, a series of Pearson's *r* correlation were calculated to determine the linear relationship between continuous variables. Scatterplots show variable values in a diagram with a line denoting best fit relationship between the variables; *r* indicates how far away data points are from this line.

Assumptions

This study includes the following assumptions: (a) only those meeting survey parameters are responding to the survey; (b) that survey participants are being truthful in their responses and that they understand questions being asked; and (c) the response rate will be sufficient to detect moderate effect sizes with .80 statistical power at the 95% level of significance.

Delimitation

This study was limited in scope, focusing on the explanatory variable of employee engagement as an antecedent to the outcome variables of discretionary effort and intent to turnover. By limiting the scope of the explanatory variables and ignoring the role of potential

extraneous variables, this study excluded other variables potentially related to employee engagement such as culture (Wollard & Shuck, 2011).

Limitations

Limitations in this study included the potential for self-selection bias and reliance on self-reported data, which may limit data accuracy given issues related to social desirability response bias. To address these limitations participant confidentiality was assured; no personally identifiable information was collected in the surveys. Survey data and results are reported in the aggregate so that individuals cannot be associated with specific responses.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between university professional staff members' perceived levels of psychological engagement, employee engagement, and turnover intention. This chapter described the research processes used in the study including the research design, sampling, instrument, and data collection, and data analysis procedures. Chapter IV presents the data analysis and results.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between university professional staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement (meaningfulness, safety, and availability), employee engagement (cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement), intention to turnover, and COVID-19 impact. There were six research questions guiding this study:

R1. What are the demographic characteristics (age, gender, race, highest degree, years in current position) of the professional higher education staff at Midwestern University?

R2. What is the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement (and each element of meaningfulness, safety, and availability), and employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement)?

R3. What is the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of employee engagement (and each subcomponent cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement) and intention to turnover?

R4. Does employee engagement predict intention to turnover?

R5. What is the relationship between the perceived impact of COVID-19 to: psychological engagement (and each element of meaningfulness, safety, and availability), employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement), and intention to turnover?

The results presented in this chapter are organized into sections based on those five research questions.

Research Question 1

R1. What are the demographic characteristics (age, gender, race, highest degree, years in current position) of the professional higher education staff at Midwestern University?

Many participants reported being in their 30s (28.2%). More than two-thirds of participants identified as female, including transgender women (71.3%). A vast majority of the participants identified as white (92.4%) compared to other racial groups (7.6%). Most participants reported that they held either a bachelor's or master's degree (40.3% and 42.0%, respectively). Several participants reported having worked in their current position for less than 4 years (48.3%) and a few (16%) said they worked in their position for 20 years or more. Table 18 conveys the demographics of the study participants.

Table 18.

Demographics of Professional Staff Participants.

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Gender			
	Male	67	28.3%
	Female	169	71.3%
	Non-Binary	1	.40%
Race			
	White	219	92.4%
	Non-White	18	7.6%
Education			
	Some College No Degree	6	2.5%
	Associates Degree	10	4.2%
	Bachelor's Degree	96	40.3%
	Master's Degree	100	42%
	Professional Degree	2	8%
	Doctorate	24	10.1%
Age			
	20-29	29	12.2%
	30-39	67	28.2%

40-49	43	18.1%
50-59	38	16%
60+	16	6.7%
Years in Current Position		
Less Than 1	27	11.3%
1	28	11.8%
2	23	9.7%
3	30	12.6%
4	7	2.9%
5-9	43	18.1%
10-19	42	17.6%
20-29	20	8.4%
30+	18	7.6%

Research Question 2

R2. What is the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement (and each element meaningfulness, safety, and availability), and employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement)?

H2. There are positive relationships between staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement (and each element of meaningfulness, safety, and availability) and employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement).

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement and employee engagement. There was a strong, positive correlation between the two variables (r =.70, N = 232) and the relationship was significant (p <.001). Staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement appear to be strongly related to staff members' self-reported levels of employee engagement.

Each of the elements of psychological engagement—meaningfulness, safety, and availability—were significantly correlated with each other as well as the overall concept of psychological engagement. There were strong, positive, significant (p <.001) correlations between psychological engagement and meaningfulness (r=.84, N=232), safety (r=.91, N=232), and availability (r=.92, N=232). Staff members' self-reported levels of meaningfulness, safety, and availability appear to be strongly related to their self-reported levels of psychological engagement.

Each of the subcomponents of employee engagement—cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement—were significantly correlated with each other and the overall concept of employee engagement. There were strong, positive, significant (p <.001) correlations between employee engagement and cognitive engagement (r=.82, N=238), emotional engagement (r=.82, N=238), and behavioral engagement (r=.82, N=238). Staff members' self-reported levels of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement appear to be strongly related to their self-reported levels of psychological engagement.

In examining the relationship across psychological engagement elements and employee engagement subcomponents the largest, positive, and significant (p <.001) correlation was between emotional engagement and availability (r=.63, N=234). In exploring the relationship between psychological engagement and an employee engagement subcomponent, the strongest relationship was with emotional engagement (r=.69, N=232). The strongest relationship between employee engagement and a psychological engagement element was with psychological meaningfulness (r=.63, N=236). Staff members' self-reported levels of emotional engagement appear to be strongly related to staff members' self-reported levels of psychological availability.

Staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement appears to be strongly related to their self-reported levels of emotional engagement. Staff members' self-reported levels of employee engagement appear to be strongly related to staff members' self-reported levels of psychological meaningfulness.

The findings shown in Table 19 are consistent with the hypothesis that there are positive relationships between staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement (and each element of meaningfulness, safety, and availability) and employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement). All correlations were noted to be statistically significant (p <.001) and according to Cohen (1988) are considered medium (r between .3 and .49) or large correlations, (r > .5+).

Table 19.

Correlations Testing the Relationships Between Professional Staff Levels of Psychological Engagement and Employee Engagement.

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Psychological Engagement	-							
2. Psychological Meaningfulness	.84	-						
3. Psychological Safety	.91	.60	-					
4. Psychological Availability	.92	.63	.82	-				
5. employee engagement	.70	.63	.61	.62	-			
6. Cognitive Engagement	.58	.57	.46	.50	.82	-		
7. Emotional Engagement	.69	.60	.62	.63	.82	.49	-	
8. Behavioral Engagement	.45	.37	.41	.40	.82	.56	.49	-

All correlations were significant at p < .001

Research Question 3

R3. What is the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of employee engagement (and each subcomponent cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement) and intention to turnover?

H3. There are negative relationships between staff members' self-reported levels employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional

engagement, and behavioral engagement) and intention to turnover.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of employee engagement and Intention to turnover. There was a medium (Cohen, 1988), negative relationship between the two variables (r =-. 29, N = 236), with the relationship being significant (p <.001). The findings shown in Table 20 are consistent with the hypothesis as statistically significant relationships were noted across variables. The weakest relationship occurred between intention to turnover and cognitive engagement (r=-.15, N=236), while the strongest relationship occurred between intention to turnover and emotional engagement (r=-.38, N=236). Professional staff with higher levels of intention to turnover have lower levels of employee engagement (especially emotional engagement) at work.

Table 20.

Correlations Testing the Relationships Between Professional Staff Levels of Employee Engagement and Intention to Turnover.

Item	1	2	3	4	5
1. employee engagement	-				
2. Cognitive Engagement	.82***	-			
3. Emotional Engagement	.82***	.49***	-		
4. Behavioral Engagement	.82***	.56***	.49***	-	
5. Intention to turnover	-.29***	-.15*	-.38***	-.16**	-

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Research Question 4

R4. Does employee engagement predict intention to leave?

H4: Employee engagement predicts intention to turnover.

I used hierarchical multiple regression to respond to this research question. In Step 1, I entered age, gender, highest degree, and years in position into SPSS. In Step 2, I added psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability. There was a

significant negative relationship between psychological availability and intention to turnover. In Step 3, I added cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement. In this step there was a statistically significant negative relationship between emotional engagement and intention to turnover, with psychological availability no longer having a statistically significant relationship to intention to turnover. See Table 21 for results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis.

Each step in the regression increased the amount of variance explained, from the initial inclusion of demographic variables (3.7%) to step 2, the addition of psychological engagement elements (20.4%) and step 3, adding employee engagement subcomponents (26.9%). This highlights that each step impacted the intention to turnover.

Table 21.

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Intention to Turnover.

	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3		
Predictors	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Age	0.00	0.01	-0.09	0.00	0.01	-0.04	0.00	0.00	-0.02
Gender	0.08	0.11	0.06	0.09	0.10	0.06	0.15	0.10	0.11
Highest degree	-0.04	0.05	-0.07	-0.01	0.01	-0.06	0.06	0.04	-0.10
Years in position	-0.01	0.01	-.11	-0.01	0.01	-.09	0.00	0.01	-0.07
Psychological meaningfulness				-0.07	0.07	-0.09	-0.01	0.07	-0.22
Psychological safety				-0.09	0.10	-0.11	-0.01	0.10	-0.01
Psychological availability				-0.19	0.09	-.25*	-0.13	0.09	-0.17
Cognitive engagement							0.04	0.07	0.05
Emotional engagement							-0.25	0.07	-.37***
Behavioral engagement							-0.02	0.07	-0.03
R^2	.04			.20***			.27***		

***p<.001, *p<.05

Research Question 5

R5. What is the relationship between the perceived impact of COVID-19 and psychological engagement (and each element of meaningfulness, safety, and availability), employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement), and intention to turnover?

H5: There are significant relationships between the impact of COVID-19 and psychological engagement (and each element of meaningfulness, safety, and availability), employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement), and intention to turnover.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to examine the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of COVID-19 impact and psychological engagement. There was a strong, negative correlation between the two variables (r =-.21, N = 218) and the relationship was significant (p <.01). Staff members' self-reported levels of COVID-19 impact appear to be strongly related to staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to assess the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of COVID-19 impact and employee engagement. There was a strong, negative correlation between the two variables (r =-.20, N = 224) and the relationship was significant (p <.01). Staff members' self-reported levels of COVID-19 impact appear to be strongly related to staff members' self-reported levels of employee engagement.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of COVID-19 impact and intention to turnover. There was a positive correlation between the two variables (r =.15, N = 222) and the relationship was

significant (p <.05). Staff members' self-reported levels of COVID-19 impact appear to be related to staff members' self-reported intention to turnover.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of COVID-19 intrusion and intention to turnover. There was a positive correlation between the two variables (r=.23, N =224) and the relationship was significant (p <.001). Staff members' self-reported levels of COVID-19 intrusion appear to be related to staff members' self-reported intention to turnover.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of COVID-19 avoidance and intention to turnover. There was a negative correlation between the two variables (r=--.04, N=223). Staff members' self-reported COVID-19 avoidance does not appear to be related to staff members' self-reported intention to turnover.

Table 22 shows the correlations that were run to examine the relationships between professional staff levels of COVID-19 impact, psychological engagement, employee engagement, and intention to turnover. Staff members' self-reported levels of COVID-19 impact appear to be strongly related to staff members' self-reported levels of intention to turnover.

Table 22.

Correlations Testing the Relationships Between Professional Staff Levels of Psychological Engagement, Employee Engagement, Intention to Turnover, and COVID-19 Impact.

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Psychological engagement	-											
2. Psychological meaningfulness	.84***	-										
3. Psychological safety	.91***	.60***	-									
4. Psychological availability	.92***	.63***	.82***	-								
5. Employee engagement	.70***	.63***	.61***	.62***	-							
6. Cognitive engagement	.58***	.57***	.46***	.50***	.82***	-						
7. Emotional engagement	.69***	.60***	.62***	.63***	.82***	.49***	-					
8. Behavioral engagement	.45***	.37***	.41***	.40***	.82***	.56***	.49***	-				
9. Intention to turnover	-.37***	-.25***	.33***	.39***	-.29***	-.15*	.38***	.16**	-			
10. COVID-19 impact	-21**	-.19**	-.21**	-.13*	-.20**	-.21**	-.18**	-.10	.15*	-		
11. COVID-19 intrusion	-.10	-.09	-.13*	-.04*	-.16*	-.12*	-.14*	-.13*	.23***	.86***	-	
12. COVID-19 avoidance	-.25***	-.23***	.22***	-.19**	-.17**	.24***	-.16*	-.03	-.04	.75***	.31***	-

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

There are statistically significant correlations between the perceived COVID-19 impact and psychological engagement, employee engagement, and intention to turnover. Therefore, I believe it important to consider if COVID-19 impact predicts intention to turnover.

Additional Analysis

Does COVID-19 Impact (Intrusion and Avoidance) predict Intent to Turnover?

H6. COVID-19 impact predicts intention to turnover.

In Step 1, demographic variables (age, gender, highest degree, and years in position) were entered with none having a significant predictive relationship to intention to turnover. In Step 2, COVID-19 impact (intrusion and avoidance) were added. In Step 3, psychological engagement elements (psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability) were added and followed by Step 4, where the employee engagement subcomponents (cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement) were added.

As shown in Table 23, COVID-19 intrusion was statistically significant across the steps in the model, as was emotional engagement in predicting intention to turnover. Psychological availability was significantly predictive in the step it was added, but not in the final step. COVID-19 intrusion involves having interfering thoughts around COVID-19, difficulty sleeping, dreams about COVID-19, strong COVID-19 related feelings, and other things making you think about COVID-19.

Table 23.

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Intention to Turnover.

	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3			Step 4		
Predictors	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	B
Age	0.00	0.01	-0.09	-0.01	0.01	-0.10	0.00	0.01	-0.06	0.00	0.00	-0.03
Gender	0.10	0.11	0.07	0.05	0.11	0.03	0.08	0.10	0.06	0.15	0.10	0.10
Highest degree	-0.04	0.05	-0.07	-0.05	0.05	-0.07	-0.04	0.04	-0.06	-0.06	0.04	-0.10
Years in position	-0.01	0.01	-0.15	-0.01	0.01	-0.12	-0.01	0.01	-0.08	-0.01	0.01	-0.08
COVID intrusion				0.18	0.05	0.26**	0.16	0.05	0.24**	0.15	0.05	0.21**
COVID avoidance				-0.05	0.08	-0.05	-0.12	0.07	-0.12	-0.09	0.07	-0.09
Psychological meaningfulness							-0.07	0.07	-0.09	-0.01	0.07	-0.02
Psychological safety							-0.03	0.10	-0.04	0.04	0.10	0.06
Psychological availability							-0.22	0.09	-.30*	-0.15	0.09	-0.21
Cognitive engagement										0.03	0.07	0.04
Emotional engagement										-0.24	0.07	-0.36***
Behavioral ngagement										-0.02	0.07	-0.02
R^2	0.05			0.11**			0.26***			0.32***		

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Each step in the regression increased the amount of variance explained, from the initial inclusion of demographic variables (5.0%) to step 2, COVID-19 impact types (11.0%), step 3, the addition of psychological engagement elements (25.7%), and step 4, adding employee engagement subcomponents (31.9%). Each step impacted intention to turnover.

Summary

In this chapter I reported on the results of the research. My study research questions and related hypotheses were followed by information on the data analysis and results. Results of correlations amongst psychological engagement (and each element of meaningfulness, safety, and availability), employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement), intention to turnover, and COVID-19 impact (intrusion and avoidance) were presented. Results predicting intention to turnover via hierarchical multiple regression were also given. In the next chapter I provide discussion about these research findings, recommendations for future research, and potential implications for the higher education environment.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between university professional staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement (Meaningfulness, Safety, and Availability), employee engagement (Cognitive Engagement, Emotional Engagement, and Behavioral Engagement), intention to turnover, and COVID-19 Impact. In this chapter I begin with a discussion and interpretation of the findings based on the research questions. I then provide an overview or implications, and suggestions for future research.

Research Question 1

What are the demographic characteristics (age, gender, race, highest degree, years in current position) of the professional higher education staff at Midwestern University?

Professional staff members at the Midwestern university who participated in the study expressed limited diversity across the demographic characteristics measured in this study. More than 90% of the participants reported being white, 70% being women, and more than 60% holding advanced degrees. Interestingly, 23% of the participants had served in their current positions for one year or less at the time of the survey (December 2021/January 2022). This means they began working at their current position after the start of COVID-19 in March 2020. It is unknown if the participants held positions prior to this one or if they had previously worked at this Midwestern university. Given that this study was limited to full-time professional staff members based on the university's job broadbanding classification system, there is no comparable demographic information beyond what is presented in this study. Data and general information on higher

education staff is limited, even in reference to the national Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Making staff related data readily available to institutional administrators could help the university to make more data informed human resource decisions.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement (and each element meaningfulness, safety, and availability), and employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement)?

In this study there were statistically significant, strong, and positive relationships between staff members' self-reported levels of psychological engagement (and each element of meaningfulness, safety, and availability) and employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement). This finding was expected based on the Kahn's (1990) engagement theory, where one's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement are grounded in their need for meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Professional staff who had a high degree of psychological engagement were more likely to be engaged. All psychological and employee engagement items had responses closest to "Somewhat Agree", except for the psychological safety item related to the consistency of work demands, which was closest to "Neither Agree nor Disagree". This highlights an area that may be of concern.

The strongest correlation between psychological engagement and an employee engagement subcomponent was with emotional engagement, which had a strong significant correlation to each element of psychological engagement. Given this strong significant relationship, increasing professional staff's perceived level of consistency of work demands has

the potential to increase their perceived level of emotional engagement or, “when employees share, identify, and take on a common purpose with the organization’s vision and mission, they give of their knowledge, skills, and abilities” (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015, p. 24).

The strongest relationship between employee engagement and a psychological engagement element was with and psychological meaningfulness. Psychological meaningfulness is the sense of return on investment of “self in role performance” (Kahn, 1990, p. 705) and is influenced by task characteristics, role identity, and work interactions (Kahn, 1990). Employees who receive feedback, feel appreciated, and feel that their work is valuable and worthwhile are more engaged (Harter et al., 2012). Psychological meaningfulness was strongly correlated to emotional engagement, meaning that one’s sense of personal meaning, importance, significance, and value of their work is related to their belief in the mission, purpose, goals, and future of the university.

In this study, lower levels of psychological engagement items such as: personal meaningfulness of job activities (psychological meaningfulness), consistency of work demands (psychological safety), and confidence in the university to get needed job resources (psychological availability) related to lower levels of employee engagement and items. Those items include: working for the university having personal meaning to the staff member and feeling a strong sense of belonging to their job (emotional engagement), level of focus when working (cognitive engagement), and the drive to work harder than expected (behavioral engagement).

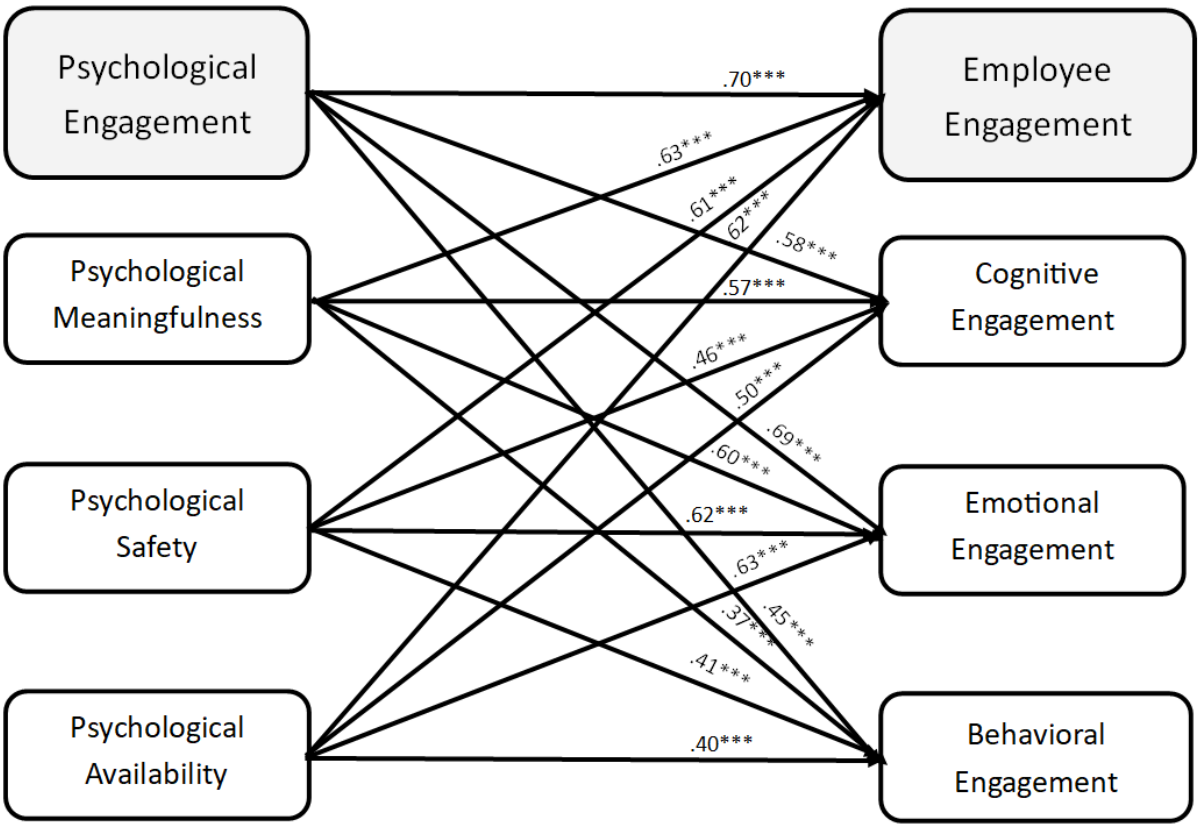
The professional staff had higher levels of feeling that the job they do is valuable and worthwhile (psychological meaningfulness), feel physically safe at work (psychological safety), and have the skills and training necessary to do their job (psychological availability). This relates

to other high scoring employee engagement items, including giving their jobs a lot of attention (cognitive engagement), caring about the future of the university (emotional engagement), and having a willingness to put in extra effort (behavioral engagement).

Figure 5 shows the foundation of the framework used in this study and related strength of the correlation between variables. The findings are in alignment with the theoretical and conceptual frameworks showing a positive relationship between psychological engagement (and each element meaningfulness, safety, and availability) and employee engagement (and each subcomponent of: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement).

Figure 5.

Correlations between Psychological and Employee Engagement.



Research Question 3

What is the relationship between staff members' self-reported levels of employee engagement (and each subcomponent cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement) and intention to turnover?

There was a small and significant negative relationship between staff members' self-reported level employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement) and intention to turnover. Employees who noted having higher levels of employee engagement were less likely to intend to turnover. Figure 6 shows the framework used in this study and related strength of the correlations between employee engagement subcomponents and intention to turnover.

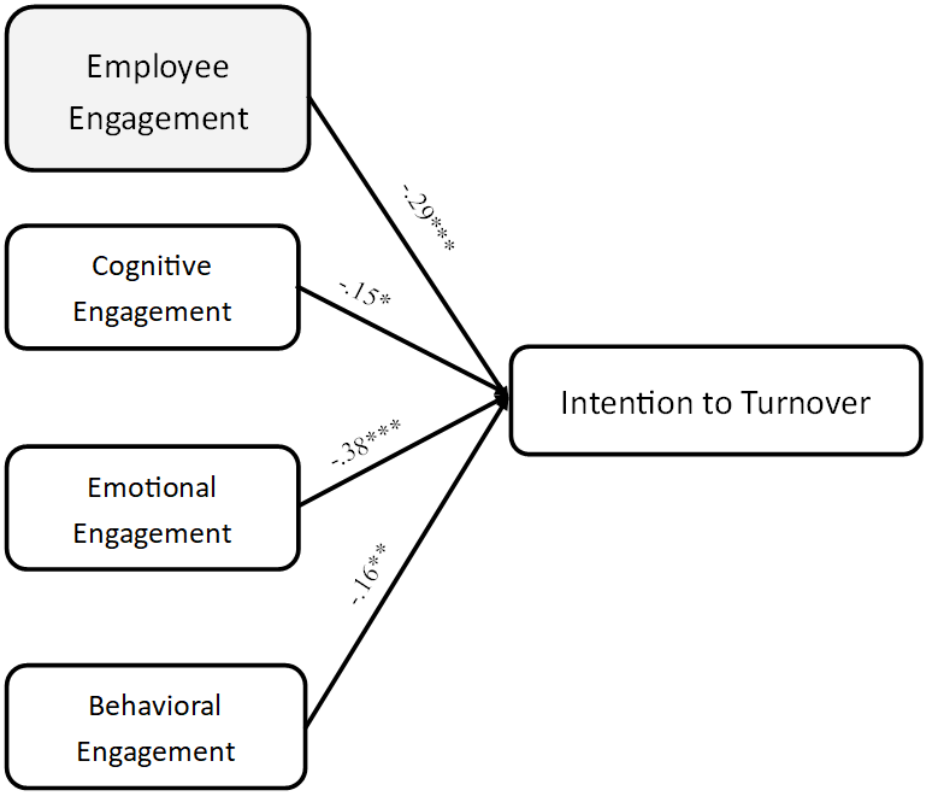
The largest relationship between intention to turnover and an employee engagement subcomponent was emotional engagement, which refers to, "an employee's intensity and willingness to invest emotionality toward positive organizational outcome" (Shuck et al, 2016; p. 956). Emotional engagement is related to an employee feeling a sense of belonging, that working at the university has personal meaning to them, and that they believe in the institutional mission and its future. One's sense of emotional engagement could be enhanced through greater alignment of an organization's goals and values with those of the employee (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015) who are more emotionally engaged feeling more attached and connected to an organization (Macey & Schneider, 2008). In this study, staff cared about the future of the university, but working there had less personal meaning to them and they had less of a sense of belonging to their jobs. When employees do not emotionally engage, they become negative about their work (Kahn, 1992).

Cognitive engagement and behavioral engagement had statistically significant

relationships with intention to turnover, although they were weaker than the relationship between emotional engagement and intention to turnover. This highlights the importance of a sense of belonging, belief in the mission, purpose, and caring future of the institution in intention to turnover when compared to a professional staff member's focus, concentration, and attention at work (cognitive engagement) or pushing oneself, putting in extra effort, or going above and beyond expectations (behavioral engagement).

Figure 6.

Correlations between Employee Engagement and Intention to Turnover.



Research Question 4

Does employee engagement predict intention to turnover?

When psychological engagement elements (psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability) were added to the hierarchical regression, psychological

availability was found to have a statistically significant negative relationship with intention to turnover. Psychological availability is the, "sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary for investing self in role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 705) and involves coping with demands despite distractions. In this study, staff believed that they had the skills and training needed, but were less confident that the university would help them obtain the resources needed to complete their work and "somewhat agree" that they are mentally and emotionally absorbed in their work. Knowing resources are available if needed allows employees to focus on their work. Such resources may include job related resources or involving skill variety, autonomy, and feedback. Social resources include supervisor and team support or organizational resources such as recognition, development opportunities, and an organizational climate and culture. Providing staff with the reassurance that the institution would work to provide needed resources has the potential to decrease turnover intent (Lee et al, 2020).

When the employee engagement subcomponents (cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement) were added to the hierarchical regression, there was a statistically significant negative relationship between emotional engagement and intention to turnover, with psychological availability no longer having statistically significant relationships to intention to turnover. Showing the continued importance of emotional engagement in potentially decreasing staff Intention to turnover.

After professional staff members make a cognitive assessment that their job is meaningful and safe, they are more available to emotionally engage in their work and willing to be more available to put in extra effort at work, and are less likely to intend to leave. When you think about a staff member who is excited, confident, and takes pride in their work, they are

more open to pushing themselves to go above and beyond at work and are less likely to consider leaving.

Research Question 5

What are the relationships between the perceived impact of COVID-19 with psychological engagement (and each element of meaningfulness, safety, and availability), employee engagement (and each subcomponent of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement), and intention to turnover?

As shown in Figure 7, there were statistically significant medium correlations between COVID-19 impact and psychological engagement, employee engagement, and intention to turnover. COVID-19 avoidance, when compared to COVID-19 intrusion, was statistically significant and strongly correlated to psychological and employee engagement. COVID-19 impact and COVID-19 avoidance were not significantly correlated with the "proactive behavior" (Macey & Schneider, 2008, p. 19) of behavioral engagement. This lack of a significant relationship means professional staff may be willing to invest their discretionary effort (Macey & Schneider, 2008) and push themselves to go above and beyond at work in light of trying to avoid thinking about COVID-19. The avoidance of COVID-19 related thoughts was not significantly related to intention to turnover.

COVID-19 impact had significant negative relationships with psychological engagement (especially psychological safety) and employee engagement (especially cognitive engagement). This means that the impact of COVID-19 is negatively related to a staff member's sense that they can be themselves at work without fear of being teased or formal retribution by their supervisor. COVID-19 impact is also related to staff perceptions of consistent work demands and

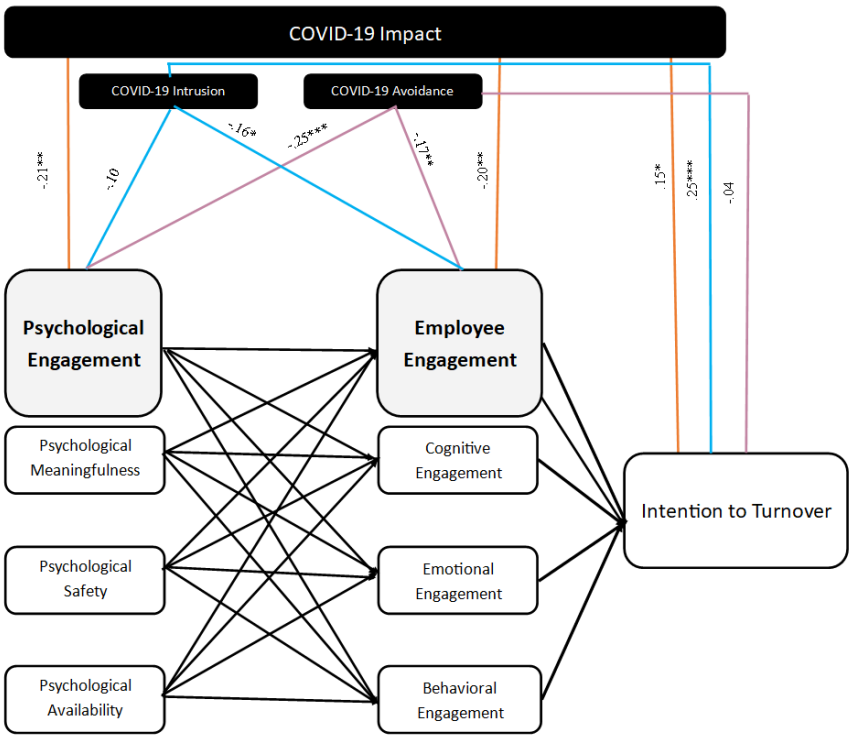
everyday work expectations. The COVID-19 impact is also negatively related to staff member's focus, concentration, and attention at work.

COVID-19 avoidance was significantly negatively correlated with each of the psychological engagement elements (especially psychological meaningfulness) and the employee engagement subconcepts of cognitive and emotional engagement. COVID-19 avoidance refers to dodging upset, removing it from thoughts, not wanting to talk about it or dealing with COVID-19 related feelings. This avoidance is related to staff member's perceptions that their work is not personally important, meaningful, significant, worthwhile, or valuable to them. However, COVID-19 avoidance was not related to intention to turnover.

COVID-19 intrusion had a significant negative relationship with intention to turnover. COVID-19 intrusion refers to having COVID-19 related thoughts such as thinking about COVID when one does not mean to, difficulty sleeping, and waves of and strong feelings about COVID-19. Unlike perceived avoidance of COVID-19, the intrusion of COVID-19 was not related to how staff think about the personal importance and value of their work. COVID-19 intrusion was also not related to the overall concept of psychological engagement.

Figure 7.

Correlations between COVID-19 impact, Psychological Engagement, Employee Engagement, and Intention to Turnover.



Additional Analysis

Does COVID-19 impact (intrusion and avoidance) predict intention to turnover?

In the additional analysis, COVID-19 intrusion was found to predict intention to turnover. This finding is consistent with recent research showing a relationship between COVID-19 related fear and turnover intentions (Labrague, 2020). When psychological engagement elements were added to the model, COVID-19 intrusion and psychological availability were shown to predict intention to turnover. Along with dealing with COVID-19 intrusion, staff may feel that they do not have the bandwidth to be psychologically available at work.

When employee engagement subcomponents were added to the next step in the regression, COVID-19 intrusion and emotional engagement continued to have a significant

relationship with intention to turnover, while psychological availability was no longer statistically significant. Professional staff who are more emotionally engaged feel more attached and connected to an organization (Macey & Schneider, 2008), believe in an organization's mission that has personal meaning to them (Shuck et al., 2016), and exhibit the willingness in investing emotionality towards positive organizational outcomes (Shuck et al., 2017). Emotional engagement significantly predicted intention to turnover with and without (see Research Question 4) consideration for COVID-19 impact, emphasizing the importance of a staff members connection to the institutional mission and goals in reducing their intent to turnover. It has been argued that such engagement challenges were present before the COVID-19 global pandemic, but that such problems were amplified and brought to the forefront as a result of the pandemic (McClure, 2021).

Implications

Administrators need to think strategically in the development, delivery, and evaluation of employee engagement efforts to have a significant impact on professional staff engagement and turnover intention. The implications of this research center on how university administrators approach professional staff engagement in a more comprehensive fashion and reshape how they think about employee engagement and staff turnover intention, as well as the potential impact of major events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this study suggest that in order to reduce professional staff turnover intention, administrators should consider examining it through a lens that considers staff psychological availability and emotional engagement with consideration of event intrusion.

Higher education staff often feel undervalued, belittled, and have low levels of job satisfaction (Kezar et al, 2019; Young, et al., 2015). Employees who perceive their work is

valued and perceive that work is contributing to the institutional mission, goals, and success are more engaged and less likely to turnover (Harter et al., 2002). In this study emotional engagement and COVID-19 intrusion had statistically significant predictability in professional staff turnover intentions. These findings are in alignment with recent research showing COVID-related intrusive thoughts are related to anxiety (Lee, 2020) and that there is a significant relationship between COVID-19 related fear and turnover intentions (Labrague, 2020). Psychological availability was a significant predictor of Intention to turnover in the steps it entered the regression model and should be a point of reflection by administrators. Given the results of this study, emotional engagement should be a priority area of consideration in professional staff retention efforts, while recognizing the role of psychological availability and COVID-19 intrusion.

Psychological Availability

In this study, psychological availability referred to staff feeling that they have the skills, training, support, and resources necessary to do the work that is expected of them and if they do not have those resources the institution would help get them. In addressing psychological availability administrators should acknowledge the emotional, psychological, and physical sacrifices professional staff members have and continue to make both personally and professionally. Results from this study are consistent with previous research (Kahn, 1990; May et al, 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) suggesting that employees who perceive that they have the resources needed to do their work are less likely to turnover. Cognitive, emotional, and physical resource availability is positively related to psychological availability, whereas outside activities were negatively related to psychological availability (May et al., 2004). One such outside activity, an individual's home/personal life, can significantly influence employee

engagement as both work and home life require substantial amounts of time and effort (Halbesleben, 2010; Rothmann & Bauman, 2014).

To account for time and resource needs of professional staff, administrators could show additional respect and appreciation of professional staff time through some professional flexibility and autonomy. Examples include: hybrid work arrangements (variable schedules or remote work), consideration of staff workloads (prioritize projects or reduction of busy work), and evaluation of professional meetings (are there alternative communication routes? When holding meetings have clearly articulated meeting goals and objectives).

Emotional Engagement

"Engagement is emotional, not rational, and right now, it is so much about capacity and just being available to even engage" (Shuck, personal communication, February 15, 2022). In order to address professional staff emotional engagement, institutional administrators need to give staff a sense of purpose and belonging, reinforce that their work makes a difference to the university, and reassure them that the institution can provide the resources they need to do their work. One way to address professional staff emotional engagement is through professional staff job descriptions and performance evaluations that are directly tied to the institution's mission and goals. Employee engagement has been shown to positively relate to human resource policies and practices (Lee, et al 2020). "When employees share, identify, and take on a common purpose with the organization's vision and mission, they give of their knowledge, skills, and abilities" (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015, p. 24). Institutional leadership should understand that staff want their skills, knowledge, and expertise to be recognized and a way to do this is through more personalized job-related task connections. By linking staff job duties and responsibilities to institutional goals, professional staff will see that their work is aligned with shared vision and

mission of the institution and will likely improve their level of emotional engagement. This process allows for the alignment of professional staff knowledge, skills, and abilities to fit with their job responsibilities, forming a bond with the institution and increasing employee engagement (Kahn, 1990; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Employees who experience a high degree of job fit and that their work matters are more likely to be engaged (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Shuck et al., 2011).

Culture

One way to address professional staff engagement in a more holistic manner that addresses both psychological and employee engagement is through an intentional institutional focus on a campus culture that values and supports professional staff and makes an investment in staff as talent. The continued challenges with staff engagement and morale, along with this research show us that institutions need to go beyond institutionally branded tokens of appreciation in addressing staff turnover intentions (McClure, 2021). Campus climate and culture play pivotal roles in institutional decision-making and perceived success. In a recent interview regarding employee engagement in higher education, Shuck stated, "I would tell you that right now, culture is probably the most important thing that leaders can be thinking about" (McClure, 2022, para. 19). Organizational culture includes, "an employee's initiative and personality, direction and goals, an employee's integration into the company, management support, varying levels of control, organizational identity, reward systems, conflict tolerance and an organizations communication patterns" (Shuck et al, 2011, p. 316). Working with institutional human resource professionals, administrators can develop a sound culture of employee engagement. This research shows that such a culture should include consideration of psychological engagement elements (meaningfulness, safety, and availability) and the

subcomponents of employee engagement (cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement).

For example, meaningfulness at work is influenced by task characteristics, role identity, work interactions, job enrichment, and work-role fit (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004). Job enrichment can be enhanced through such strategies as task significance, such as linking job tasks with institutional goals and priorities, with work-role fit improved via self/job alignment. Developing office environments where staff feel that they can be themselves, express their opinions without fear of rejection, and feel supported, have a sense of psychological safety and are more likely to be engaged (Carmeli et al, 2009; May et al, 2004; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007). Consistency and predictability in job duties and are also important elements of psychological safety (Kahn, 1990). Psychological availability is influenced by a professional staff's available physical and emotional energies, perception of self-confidence, and their life outside of work (Rich et al., 2010). Staff should be reassured and confident that they can attain or obtain the resources and support needed to be successful at work (May et al, 2004). As an employee's psychological engagement conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability are addressed and hopefully improved, administrators can expect to see improvements in the employee engagement (and its sub-constructs).

Staff members expression of focus, attention, and concentration toward work-related tasks, or cognitive engagement, is the first step in employee engagement (Rich et al., 2010; Shuck et al, 2016). Staff who are emotionally engaged have a strong connection to the institution and are willing to invest their emotional resources, such as pride and knowledge, towards institutional goals (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck et al, 2016). Behavioral engagement is the expression of both cognitive and emotional engagement (Shuck & Reio, 2011) and can be seen

in staff who are proactive go-getters that invest discretionary effort in pursuit of institutional goals (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck et al., 2016). A culture that considers psychological engagement and employee engagement will likely see a decrease in staff intention to turnover.

Whether it is addressing professional staff job descriptions or working to improve an employee engagement culture, it is important for administrators to collect, analyze, and use data to inform decisions about potential interventions, policies, programs, and processes. A data strategy could include various platforms and techniques to collect data on engagement-related topics such as: needed resources, work/life factors that professional staff are dealing with (such as caretaker responsibilities), gap analysis of ideal and perceived current work environment, and ideas or preferences around institutional engagement culture and offerings. Such programs or interventions could include open dialog sessions (administrator office hours or unit-based town halls), peer support networks addressing challenges faced by staff (personally/professionally), to include a mental health professional within the human resource office (more comprehensive understanding of psychological and emotional challenges impacting professional staff). Continual assessment of engagement efforts will help with evaluation of program or intervention (use, perceived value, impact). Open and easily accessible data could help garner trust through transparency.

Trust

As noted earlier, connecting performance evaluations and job responsibilities to institutional goals has the potential to increase employee engagement. In order to go beyond saying that an institution values a culture of staff engagement, such an idea needs to be enacted, seen, and adopted with the importance clearly articulated and understood by stakeholders. One way to potentially address congruence between espoused and enacted values would be to include

an item related to continual advancement of a culture of staff engagement on the performance evaluations of institutional leaders. Saying, doing, getting buy-in, and following through has the potential to increase a sense of trust between staff and administrators.

Transformational Leadership

It is up to institutional administration to create a culture that values and supports professional staff. In order to do this, leaders need to work to ensure that psychological engagement needs (meaningfulness, safety, and availability) are met and as a result staff levels of employee engagement will increase, decreasing staff intention to turnover (Khan, 1990; Shuck & Herd, 2012; Schaufeli, 2015). Transformational leadership is conceptually tied to Kahn's (1990) work where leaders create the level of engagement on campus (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Leaders who demonstrate the transformational leadership behaviors of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration motivate followers thought-shared sense of purpose in achieving institutional goals, mission, and vision (Bass, 1985).

Shuck & Herd (2012) connect employee engagement subconcepts to each transformational leadership behavior. Cognitive engagement is related to intellectual stimulation and how one looks at job tasks and working towards goals. Emotional engagement is seen in both idealized influence, where a follower sees the leader as a genuine role model working towards goals and inspirational motivation, where leaders encourage follower self-efficacy in working towards shared vision encouraging them to face challenging goals with optimism and confidence. Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement are involved in individual consideration or when the leader gets to know about followers on a personal or mentorship level, encouraging development by building on their strengths.

Trauma-Informed

Times of great social, political, economic, and public health unrest can be traumatic for many individuals. Knowing, understanding, and addressing staff psychological engagement needs during these times can be difficult as trauma impacts everyone differently and not everyone shares their trauma with leaders. Trauma can impact how people think about themselves and their environments, with such thoughts having the potential to impact someone's ability to do their job. While staff want to be successful in their professional lives, the impact of trauma might be seen as excessive absences, difficulty concentrating, lack of distinction between personal and professional responsibilities, or unusual responses to routine work situation brought on by ones fight or flight response to stress. During such a time it is important to take an approach that considers what may have happened to someone, not necessarily going to what they have done wrong. Leaders should have the skills and resources to help navigate through potentially traumatic times. A trauma-informed approach has potential to help institutional leaders build relationships with and support staff.

Leaders, working with their human resource personnel, can help make the connection between effective human resource policies, processes, and procedures and trauma informed practices that "**realizes** the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; **recognizes** the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and **responds** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively **resist re-traumatization**" (SAMHSA, 2012, p. 9, bold in original).

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) outlines six principles that trauma-informed organizations follow: safety; trustworthiness and

transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice, and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender inclusion (2014). Many of these trauma-informed principles align with the elements of psychological and employee engagement. Leadership can show that they buy into trauma-informed practices through allocation of funds for professional development, training, resources, and services.

Theoretical

Theoretically, this study contributes to the employee engagement literature by proving additional evidence in support of Kahn's (1990) and Shuck's (2010) theatrical and conceptual models of employee engagement, demonstrating relationships between psychological engagement, employee engagement, and intention to turnover. This study extends the model by breaking down and examining the relationships amongst psychological engagement elements (meaningfulness, safety, and availability), employee engagement sub-concepts (cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement), and finding these relationships to be statistically significant in the COVID-19 era. This study provides empirical evidence regarding the predictive relation of COVID-19 intrusion and emotional engagement in intention to turnover. Given the changing professional work environment at higher education institutions following COVID-19, the theoretical model may benefit from further modification, especially as it relates to the role of intrusive thoughts. Intrusive thoughts in this study focused on COVID-19 (ex. *I thought about COVID-19 when I didn't mean to)*, and related to other topics or events could also play a role in intention to turnover.

Although further research is needed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of higher education professional staff employee engagement, this research builds on the limited

empirical research. I addressed this issue by contributing information on the role of COVID-19 intrusion and emotional engagement in predicting turnover intent in professional staff.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was participant imbalance with limited differences in many of the variables resulting in a non-representative sample. Race was not included in the regression analysis as the sample was heavily weighted towards white participants (92%). Gender (71% Female), education (42% Master's Degree), and age (28% 30-39) distributions were also notable.

The potential role of Years in Current Position also has potential importance. This study was conducted in Winter 2021 when COVID-19 had been around for approximately 19 months. Twenty-two percent of the study participant sample had one year or less experience in their current positions, meaning that they started a new position during COVID-19.

The analysis done in this study could be improved with latent variable analyses, such as confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling to account for measurement error in representing the constructs and test mediational processes in the model. Caution should be used with generalizing results beyond this study.

Further Research

Despite the important role of higher education professional staff there is limited research on this population (Kezar et al., 2019; Mello, 2013). This study was conducted at Midwestern university; a public research university. Given the diversity of higher education institutions, similar research should be conducted at different institutional types. It is also possible that research variables may need to be adjusted based on institutional department or unit. This study was limited to professional staff, as defined by the state's university system. Other classification categories, such as technical and paraprofessional, office support, crafts/trades, and services

should be studied. While years in position and intention to turnover were researched, the idea of reshuffling and staff taking new professional positions within the same institution could provide more contextual information to further employee engagement research. While beyond the scope of this study, differences between full-time and part-time and permanent and temporary staff could also be explored. An examination of the reason for staff intention to turnover are also warranted. Much of the Great Resignation literature focuses on shifts in personal priorities with limited research on institutional factors. As institutions face uncertain fiscal environments they may offer staff voluntary separation and early retirement opportunities, which has the potential to impact employee engagement and intention to turnover.

Examination of other important institutional outcome variables that could be related to staff employee engagement should be conducted. Such outcomes could include student engagement, graduation rates, to faculty success. Studying employee engagement longitudinally could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the concept develops or changes over time, which could be of interest following COVID-19. Longitudinal analysis would also allow for testing of various institutional strategies and interventions. Qualitative research could provide a more thorough understanding of the model by providing more comprehensive insights as to the why behind the numbers.

COVID-19 has brought about many changes to everyone's daily lives, including those faced in the professional work environment. One such significant change is flexible work arrangements (work from home, operating hours, etc.) that allow for consideration of staff autonomy and work life challenges (such as caregiver needs and personal responsibilities outside of work). As shown in this study, intrusive thoughts predicted intention to turnover—intrusive thoughts can be about various topics or themes. Research on how such workplace shifts and

varying intrusive thought themes impact higher education professional staff, their levels of engagement, and intention to turnover will be needed.

In an environment where staff are expected to work or be connected to work around the clock, there has been a rise in popular higher education media about burnout, which is often connected to employee engagement (Maslach et al, 2001). While this research focused on the positive role of employee engagement, it is also important to recognize that disengagement, or withdrawing cognitively, emotionally, behaviorally from ones work is not necessarily a bad thing and can be beneficial in allowing professional staff to recharge and address psychological engagement elements.

Conclusion

Using Kahn's (1980) and Shuck's (2010) work to drive the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, this study found significant relationships between psychological engagement, employee engagement, COVID-19 impact, and intention to turnover. COVID-19 intrusion and emotional engagement predict staff members intention to turnover. These findings add to literature on employee engagement, intention to turnover, and the impact of COVID-19 and have potential implications to how higher education administrators may address employee engagement initiatives in the era of COVID-19 now and in the future.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Survey

1. **What is your age in years?**
2. **How would you describe your gender?**
   - Male (including transgender men)
   - Female (including transgender women)
   - Non-binary/non-conforming
   - Not Listed
3. **What is your race?**
   - American Indian or Alaska Native
   - Asian
   - Black or African American
   - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   - Hispanic
   - White
4. **What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?**
   - Less than a high school diploma
   - High school degree or equivalent
   - Some college, no degree
   - Associate degree
   - Bachelor's degree
   - Master's degree
   - Professional degree
   - Doctorate
5. **How long have you worked in your current professional position?**

Please select the circle that corresponds with the level of agreement you have with each Psychological engagement item. 1-5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree)

6. The work I do on this job is very important to me.
7. My job activities are personally meaningful to me.
8. The work I do on this job is worthwhile.
9. My job activities are significant to me.
10. The work I do on this job is meaningful to me.
11. I feel that the work I do on my job is valuable.
12. I can be myself at work.
13. At work I can bring up problems and tough issues without fear of being teased or made fun of.
14. At work I can bring up problems and tough issues without fear of formal of formal retribution by my supervisor, such as on an annual evaluation or review
15. I feel physically safe at work.
16. At work, I know what is expected of me every day.

17. Each day my work demands are consistent.
18. At work, I have the support I need to complete my job.
19. At work, I have the resources I need to complete my job.
20. I am mentally and emotionally absorbed in my job when I am working.
21. I have the skills and training I need to complete my work at the level that is expected of me.
22. If I do not have the resources to complete my work, I am confident that my organization would help me get them.

Please select the circle that corresponds with the level of agreement you have with each employee engagement item. 1-5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree)

23. I am really focused when I am working.
24. I concentrate on my job when I am at work.
25. I give my job responsibility a lot of attention.
26. At work, I am focused on my job.
27. Working at Midwestern University has a great deal of personal meaning to me.
28. I feel a strong sense of belonging to my job.
29. I believe in the mission and purpose of Midwestern University.
30. I care about the future of Midwestern University.
31. I really push myself to work beyond what is expected of me.
32. I am willing to put in extra effort without being asked.
33. I often go above what is expected of me to help my team be successful.
34. I work harder that expected to help Midwestern University be successful.

Please select the circle that corresponds with the level of agreement you have with each turnover item. 1-5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree)

35. I frequently think of quitting my job.
36. I am planning to search for a new job during the next 12 months
37. If I have my own way, I will be working for this organization one year from now. [reverse scored]

Please select the circle that corresponds with the level of agreement you have with each COVID-19 impact item. 1-5 (1-Never, 2-Rarely, 3-Sometimes, 4-Often, 5-Always)

38. I thought about COVID-19 when I didn't mean to.
39. I had trouble falling or staying asleep because of pictures and thoughts about COVID-19 that came into my mind.
40. I had waves of strong feelings about COVID-19.
41. I had dreams about COVID-19.
42. Pictures about COVID-19 popped into my mind.
43. Other things kept making me think about COVID-19.
44. Any reminder about COVID-19 brought back the feelings about it.
45. I avoided letting myself get upset when I thought about COVID-19 or was reminded of it.
46. I tried to remove COVID-19 from my thoughts.
47. I stayed away from things that made me think about COVID-19
48. I felt as if COVID-19 hadn't happened or wasn't real.
49. I tried not to talk about COVID-19.

50. I was aware that I had a lot of feelings about COVID-19, but I didn't deal with them.
51. I tried not to think about COVID-19.
52. My feelings about COVID-19 were kind of numb.

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