

## ABSTRACT

### EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

ALQAHTANI, HADI S.

B.A. KING ABDULAZIZ UNIVERSITY, 2009

M.A. MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY, 2014

### FACTORS AFFECTING HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY

### EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Committee Chair: Barbra Hill, Ed.D.

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Employee engagement in the mission of the organization is a critical component of success. In fact, it strongly contributes to the workers' satisfaction levels and motivation. Moreover, it forms the atmosphere in the organizations. Therefore, employee engagement is a critical concept met not only in management but also in sociology and psychology. Focusing on the human factor, the current research is aimed at examining the factors affecting historically black colleges and universities' (HBCU) staff engagement. The research question for the study is, are employees who have favorable views of their career development opportunities more likely to be engaged than other employees?

Three research hypotheses were defined accordingly to answer the research question. The quantitative approach was helpful in determining the areas that were interrelated. The interviews with 20 members of an HBCU staff were conducted online.

With the chosen methods and statistical analysis, the evidence proved that career development opportunities increased the level of employee engagement at HBCUs. The results did not show any significant correlation between the employees' engagement and communications. The perception of the organizational change was not an essential contribution to employees' devotion. Thus, it is evident that the improvements in career management and planning could become effective to increase the satisfaction of employees with their work organization. The study was limited, as it relied on the results from only one university. It did not reveal the meaningful correlation between engagement and communications. However, the answers of the participants showed that the process of information distribution, planning, explaining, and executing organizational changes at HBCU are important. Therefore, it is highly recommended to investigate the same variables in different contexts and expand the research to be able to generalize the data. Paying attention to different positions and experience of the workers can also influence the results relying on the interviews conducted with more people.

FACTORS AFFECTING HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY  
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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HADI SAAD ALQAHTANI  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Until recently, the very concept of personnel administration was not used in the management application methodology, although there was a subsystem of personnel administration and social development of the staff in the management system of each organization. However, the main part of the work on personnel management was performed by the line managers of organizations' divisions. Personnel managers are an independent group of qualified managers whose main goals are to increase the productive, creative output and activity of the personnel, as well as to create and implement a development program for the personnel. The main task of human resource management is the most effective use of the capabilities of employees in accordance with the objectives of the enterprise and the society. At the same time, the system should ensure the preservation of the health conditions of each person and the establishment of the relations of a constructive cooperation between the members of a team and various social groups.

According to Marchington, Wilkinson, Donnelly, and Kynighou (2016), the management of the human resources in an organization includes a set of interrelated actions, which is the determination of the employee's needs based on the company's business scenario, the labor market analysis and employment management, as well as the selection and adaptation of personnel. These actions also include career planning for

employees, their professional and administrative growth, a guarantee of good working conditions, including a favorable socio-psychological atmosphere for each person, the organization of production processes, and the analysis of labor costs and results, as well as the establishment of optimal relationships between the number of equipment units and the number of personnel of different groups. These are also labor productivity management, the development of motivation systems for effective actions, the justification of the structure of income, the assessment of their specialty, and the design of compensation plans. The range of work for each of these duties depends on the size of the organization, the characteristics of the produced products or offered goods or services, the situation of the labor market, the qualifications of the personnel, the computer-aided ratio of proceedings, and the socio-psychological climate at the organization and beyond. The aim of this research study was to examine the factors affecting historically black college/university (HBCU) employee engagement from the perspective of career development, communications, and organizational change.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Low employee engagement is a problem of paramount importance for human resources management; therefore, the human factor emerges as the main force in organizations today. The most important issues that human resource management is facing nowadays is the recognition of the economic usefulness and the social value of human resources, the development of which requires continuous investments. While human resources may be similar to other capital investments, leaders must be careful not to view humans as inanimate objects like other capital investments. Such treatment opens

the door for manipulation and oppressive leadership practices that have emerged and are still linked to slavery, peonage and underpaid labor (Marchington et al., 2016). The advanced approaches to the management of human resources should be aimed at the rational use of human capabilities in the process of its activities. Therefore, there is a need to study the factors affecting historically black college/ University employees' engagement and examine how it could be improved.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors affecting HBCU employee engagement. According to Sallis (2002), various elements of the process of human resource management, which is the formation and development of human resources in the framework of educational processes, training of highly qualified personnel, and scientific research, are implemented in isolation from each other, while their planning and control are assigned to different units. Such management functions as the organization of the units, the movement and retirement of personnel, the accounting of human resources, the current planning and organization of financing investments in human capital are carried out by the personnel management, financial and economic management, accounting and financial control department, as well as academic management, and the legal department, respectively.

The functions of monitoring the satisfaction of personnel can be assigned to the department of quality management of educational activities while the organization of the development of human capital in the process of research activities can be the responsibility of the department of scientific research and management of innovation. At

the same time, the organization of processes for training highly qualified personnel can be the responsibility of the programs offering postgraduate education, while the administration of the processes of professional development for department staff or faculty can be carried out within the framework of the general system of continuing education.

Finally, the administration of the processes of international integration and mobility of employees and students can be conducted by the management of international relations, while the social support of the personnel of the educational institutions can be provided by the department of labor protection and the department of social development. All these managerial areas are important as they affect employee engagement.

### **Research Questions**

Since the purpose of the research study was to examine the factors affecting Historically Black College/University employee engagement, the study addressed the following research questions:

- RQ1: Are employees who have favorable views of their career development opportunities more likely to be engaged than other employees?
- RQ2: Are employees who have favorable views of communications across their organization more likely to be engaged than other employees?
- RQ3: Are employees who have favorable views of recent organizational changes more likely to be engaged than other employees?

Following the research questions of the study, it was decided to consider several interrelated areas to conduct a comprehensive investigation and present the findings of the study. Therefore, the study involved concepts related to management, sociological and psychological areas that allowed answering the research questions and presenting the findings. The researcher included three key independent variables: career development, communications, and organizational change.

### **Significance of the Study**

The problem of an effective management of human resources in an educational organization has always been acute for the leaders at all levels in the organization, regardless of the size, form of ownership and state system regulation of the economy, because human resources contributes to the selection of the highly professional employees who will become mentors for new employees (Marchington et al., 2016). This problem poses a special challenge nowadays, especially in the United States, because the country is rapidly developing using innovations, which require educating talented specialists with a high level of qualification and work skills.

The system of personnel management is now experiencing a kind of transformation in many countries because the personnel management systems differ in each of them. This is probably connected with the fact that the system of personnel management as an important direction of the economy has begun to be organized relatively recently (Sallis, 2002). Nowadays, a stable orientation towards humanistic values has been established. It ensures involvement of employees in the affairs of the organization promoting the activation of the workers' creative potential in many

advanced economies. However, the assimilation of all different forms and technologies in the personnel management system adapted to the market conditions has still remained questionable and requires further investigation.

Modern technologies, methods, and exercises that have been introduced in the system of personnel management these days can be subdivided in three subgroups, which are the ways of forming the workforce, strengthening of the work capacity of the personnel, and the ways of the organization of the staff opportunity and reorganization.

It should be noted that an employee should be engaged in all the above-mentioned methods. A comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of human resource management within the discussed organization constitutes one of the goals of the current study. The researcher is aware of the important role that human resource management can have in improving the employees' job performance at HBCUs. However, there is a concern of whether methods for assessing the effectiveness of human resource management in the context of the innovative development are valuable for the organization and useful for its employees.

No less important is the task of developing methods for assessing the effectiveness of human resource management in the educational arena and to what extent these methods contribute to the employees' performance (Al dakeel & Almannie, 2015). All of the foregoing ideas justify the relevance of the proposed topic of the research, as well as the need to study theoretical and practical issues related to the effective management of human resources in the educational arena.

According to Sallis (2002), human resource management in a modern university, as a leading organization functioning in a competitive environment, should be a system that allows for the active creation, effective application and dissemination of knowledge based on the development of key competencies among its employees. That system should aim at increasing their productivity, ensuring the rational distribution of their efforts among different activities and ensuring their loyalty to the university. The system of formation and development of the staff's potential in educational institutions should be oriented not only to improving the scientific and pedagogical qualifications of the faculty members but also to developing the key market competencies of all staff and other employees who are engaged in the educational field. Allui and Sahni (2016) noted that the educational system should also take into account that the strategies of modern educational institutions built on the entrepreneurial type are based on the intensification of the use of already available human resources with their corresponding material encouragement rather than on extensive growth. Consequently, the problems of personnel management in higher education institutions can be solved only on the basis of their strategic and systematic vision through the development of the special personnel capacity development programs that integrate various directions in the personnel, innovation, social strategy, and policy of the educational institution supported by an appropriate financial support along with the organizational and management mechanisms.

The practical significance of the study lies with its concrete proposals for the effective management of the personnel in the human resources management (HRM) field in HBCUs. The provisions and recommendations that have been included in the study

could be used for the improvement of the personnel management function at HBCUs. At the same time, the study has a theoretical significance since it contributes to the research on factors affecting employee engagement.

### **Summary**

As the United States emerges in the global economy, there is increased competitiveness to human resources, individuals' professional and personal properties, their labor morality and eagerness to achieve established goals, their knowledge, as well as creative and innovative capabilities.

Personnel are considered one of the important resources of the organization that is necessary for the achievement of all its goals and objectives. Employees are the main asset of the organization, which should be protected, improved and helped to succeed in a competitive environment. Personnel management in an organization is the purposeful activity of its managerial staff, professionals of the personnel management units, including the study of the concept and strategies of the activity of the personnel, the fundamentals and methods of human resource management. Human resources are the basis of any economy. Therefore, its management is considered to be a mixed share; effective human resource management requires a number of factors in the training of professionals in any area of proficiency. Consequently, the educational base is an indispensable compiler of the training course that should be strong enough to educate professionals, which is the task of historically black colleges and universities.

This introductory chapter has discussed the general trends that the advanced economies are currently facing in the educational system, which has allowed realizing the

problems that the system has, as well as modern trends that contribute to the development of human personnel management in this area. The discussed information has helped to determine and discuss the significance of the study. At the same time, the introductory chapter has stated the problem that should be discussed in terms of the employees' performance at HBCUs, outlined the purpose of the study along with the research questions that will allow investigating the issue and introducing the findings, as well as recommendations for the improvement of the personnel management within the organization.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The need for employee engagement has emerged as a significant approach in personnel administration. More specifically, explorations, demonstrations, and presentations by researchers from different backgrounds and expertise have shown that employee engagement can foster personnel productivity, creativity, and effectiveness across different aspects. In this regard, the literature review in this study was based upon gaining a deeper understanding of the different aspects in human resource management that foster employee engagement. Therefore, the literature review was organized across four theoretical frameworks to identify the connection between (a) employee engagement and the employee's rational and emotional connection to the organization, (b) employee engagement and career development, (c) employee engagement and communications in an organization, and (d) the connection between employee engagement and organizational changes. An analysis of the literature review assisted the researcher in identifying the factors affecting historically black college/university employee engagement.

#### **The Relationship between Employees' Engagement and both the Rational and Emotional Connection they have to an Organization**

With regards to identifying the connection between employee engagement and their rational and emotional wellbeing, the researcher noted that there is a significant

connection between a person's mental strength and his/her creativity, innovation, job engagement. In a study conducted by Alvi (2017) on the effect of psychological wellbeing on employee job performance, it was observed that there is a distinct relation between the two variables. Alvi demonstrated that relationship using a linear regression that was run on data collected from different employees working in varying organizational cultures and environments. Findings from the research outlined that employees are routinely subjected to hectic working conditions in order to meet organization deadlines and accomplish organizational goals and objectives. However, most employees felt they were overworked and stressed which often led to an unbalanced life-work relation. In accordance with Alvi, this lowers the employees' job satisfaction and willingness to exert discretionary effort in their duties, making them disengaged at the workplace.

Findings from the study also revealed that employee engagement is affected by the degree of employees' perception of their work as meaningful and important to the organization. This is attributed to the point that an interpretation of a work environment by an employee serves as the catalyst for their involvement in different organizational activities. According to Alvi (2017), employees from different organization structures often experience poor working conditions where there are no resources necessary to complete their job responsibilities. As a result, employees develop a spiral of negative emotions which not only lowers their engagement in the workplace but also their overall job performance. More specifically, it lowers their willingness to exert discretionary effort.

The findings from Alvi's (2017) research were consistent with a study conducted by Jena, Pradhan, and Panigrahy (2018) on the roles of employee engagement, psychological well-being, and transformational leadership. According to the findings of the study, employee engagement is directly influenced by an employee's investment in his/her personal resources, such as trust and pride in their organization. This is ascribed to the point that trust and pride in an organization foster positive emotions which in turn drive employee engagement and commitment in their duties. As per Jena et al., this also tends to broaden the employee's logical and creative thinking in executing their daily activities and duties, thereby enhancing performance. To be more precise, the researchers found out that a positive rational and emotional connection of an employee to an organization influences vigor and a gratifying state of mind. Thus, employees develop a willingness to exert discretionary effort in their duties and activities.

Consequently, the study on the roles of employee engagement, psychological well-being, and transformational leadership also pointed out that an individual's emotions serve as the basis of character and behavioral formulation. This was due to the fact that employee's behaviors are often a physical manifestation of their emotions and cognitive requirements (Jena et al., 2018). Findings from the study showed that employees who were satisfied with their work and roles at the organization were more likely to display a more positive behavior and work engagement at the workplace. Jena et al. explained this finding using the concept that an individual's mood and emotion have the ability to influence the occurrence of some events and the effort invested by the employees.

### **Career Development**

Career development refers to the path set forth by employers to help employees advance in their careers. A variety of studies have outlined a connection between employee engagement and career development. In accordance with Semwal (2017), in the study of the impact of employees training and career development on engagement, career development practices influence employee engagement in a variety of ways. The first and most significant is the career development through training. Findings from Semwal's study showed that the significance of employee training is to enhance their competencies in their work-related tasks. As a result, this promotes employee confidence and self-actualization in the workplace as they execute their roles and responsibilities. The employees learn to trust in their abilities which in turn influence job satisfaction and engagement in the organization's activities. In accordance with Semwal (2017), employee training also creates a sense of purpose amongst the employees which, in turn, drives their commitment and engagement to organizational goals.

Career development practices such as career planning were also found to drive employee engagement. According to Semwal's study, employees are briefed on the paths available for advancing their careers during the training processes (Semwal, 2017). This includes all the organizational policies relating to promotions, skills augmentation, advancement in education and the incentive rewards available. This promotes employee engagement as it raises awareness among the employees. More specifically, employee training and career planning drive commitment and engagement as the employees are

able to develop and set their own personal goals as they execute their roles and responsibilities.

The findings from the study were correlated to the outcomes of Bai and Liu's (2018) research on the influence of career growth on work engagement among new generation employees. Based on this research, career development transforms employees from being dependent on others to be independent. Thus, employees are presented with opportunities for career growth in an organization which, in turn, encourages them to undertake more challenging roles and responsibilities. They become more engaged in work-related activities in an attempt to advance their careers. According to Bai and Liu, employee engagement is attained only when the employee's needs are realized and satisfied. Therefore, it is evidently clear that career growth and development drives employee engagement since it fulfills the employees' need for career growth and gives them the opportunity and the resources necessary to attain them. This ensures that employees with favorable views of their career development opportunities become more engaged than other employees.

The empirical research by Bai and Liu (2018) also showed that career growth drives employees' identification with the organization, which in turn drives employee engagement and career development. This is ascribed to the fact that career development offers employees the willingness to learn, the willingness to concentrate fully in their responsibilities, and the willingness to put on some extra effort to improve the organization's performance. According to Bai and Liu, employees are bound to be fully engaged as they recognize their emotional affiliation and value of working within the

organization. They tend to be practically involved in different organization activities, events, and the decision-making process to maximize the organization's performance.

### **Communication**

Communication has been defined as the degree of openness, honesty, and interaction between employees and their employers Krishnan and Wesley (2013). Over the years, a variety of studies has shown that the communication process in an organization has the ability to influence employee engagement and overall performance. In a recent study by Krishnan and Wesley on the impact of employee communication on engagement level, it was observed that the two are connected in a variety of ways. Boosting employee communication is among the main initiatives of different human resource management offices in organizations (Krishnan & Wesley, 2013). This is ascribed to the fact that communication is one of the simplest ways to drive employee engagement and boost organizational performance. Findings from the study showed that employees are more likely to be engaged as they execute their roles and responsibilities when the employers clearly define their job description. This is because it gives them the chance to be accountable for their actions and behaviors within the organization.

As per Krishnan and Wesley (2013), communication was also observed to be the facilitator of employees' emotional and psychological well-being. This is based on the finding that the manner in which managers communicate to the employees can influence the workplace morale. For instance, a manager or boss who is a screamer is bound to make employees uneasy by instilling fear which deters them from being fully engaged in the workplace. They fail to respect their managers and often do not take part in the

company's decision making and development strategies. On the other hand, managers who adopt favorable communication styles promote a positive working environment, which in turn fosters commitment among the employees (Krishnan & Wesley, 2013).

The relationship between communication and employee engagement was also observed by Karanges, Johnston, Beatson, and Lings (2015) in a study on the influence of internal communication on employee engagement. The study delineated a variety of aspects in which the two are interconnected. First, the study viewed communication as a recipe for enhancing organizational performance. Karanges et al. identified three aspects of communication that drive employees' engagement. They include communication of clear and consistent messages to the employees, facilitation of openness and honesty during communication, and using an authentic tone while communicating organization goals, purpose and direction. Through the three aspects, organization managers are able to keep employees engaged by creating a positive working environment where all the employees' needs and concerns are observed. The employees become satisfied with their work which makes them focus on the business side of things.

The study on the influence of internal communication on employee engagement also showed that effective communication allows organization managers to facilitate employee engagement at the personal level (Karanges et al., 2015). This is explained by the fact that each employee has unique and personal needs within an organization; however, effective communication allows managers to identify and meet all the employees' needs to drive job satisfaction and improve organizational performance. Communication was also observed to keep employees in the loop on varying organization

activities (Karanges et al., 2015). To be more precise, communication fosters employees' engagement by giving them the chance to know the organization goals and how their contribution helps the company to accomplish the set goals.

### **Organizational Change**

Different studies have also pointed out a relationship between employee engagement and organizational change. This is in relation to the assessment of how organizational changes were planned, explained and executed. An empirical study conducted by Swarnalatha and Prasanna (2013) on the relationship between employee engagement and change management demonstrated that changes in an organization can positively or negatively influence employee engagement across a variety of fields. For instance, changes in an organization need to conform to employees' short-term and long-term goals during their implementation. This is significant for employee engagement as employees tend to become committed towards the realization of both their short-term and long-term strategies. On the other hand, lack of aligning organizational changes with the employees' goals is bound to reduce employees' engagement, which ultimately reduces the organization's performance.

Findings from the study also showed that the manner in which organizational changes are explained to the employees influences their engagement (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013). This was ascribed to the fact that changes can improve or lower the speed and accuracy of executing varying organization roles and responsibilities. Findings from the study demonstrated that employees are bound to be more engaged in effecting the changes when they fully understand what the changes entail so that they can

consistently adapt. More specifically, proper communication and explanation of organizational change fosters engagement by offering the employees a chance to share in the organization's vision and goals.

The relationship between employee engagement and organizational change was also observed in Rubin, Oehler, and Adair (2013), in a study on how to manage employee engagement during times of organizational change. Based on the research findings, there are multiple drivers of engagement during times of change. For instance, employees need to be involved in all the steps of the decision-making process during the planning and execution of organization changes. According to Rubin et al., this facilitates the comprehension of their career path, which in turn fosters engagement in the organization activities. Specifically, it drives employees to develop a positive attitude towards the changes and in the process influence employee engagement.

The study also pointed to a dialogue between employees and the managers as another key driver of engagement during change integration in an organization. This is based on the observation that it is critical for employers to consider employees' needs and concerns about the proposed changes to avoid conflicts of interest. This enhances employees' engagement as it builds a positive connection and relationship between the leaders and the employees (Rubin et al., 2013). That connection prompts productive employee behavior and attitude towards the roles and responsibilities in the organization. Besides, involving dialogue during execution of an organization's changes empowers an employee, which is reflected in a positive attitude that drives commitment and self-efficacy.

### **Summary**

From the above-reviewed literature, it is evident that employee engagement is highly affected by an employee's rational and emotional connection to an organization, his/her career development, the organization's communication, and the manner in which organizational change is managed. Employee engagement was found to be connected to the employees' rational and emotional wellbeing through the working conditions presented at the workplace. Employees were found to be more engaged if they were satisfied and happy with their work environment. In addition, the relationship between employee engagement and career development was explained through the ability of employees understanding their career paths and being able to advance their careers. The reviewed pieces of literature outlined that employees who understood their career paths and undertook career development practices such as training were more likely to be engaged than other employees. Consequently, the relationship between the employees' engagement and communication was found to be quite significant within an organization. This was attributed to the fact that an organization's openness, honesty, and interactions with employees serve as the basis for developing trust and creating a conducive working environment. Thus, employees are likely to be more engaged when there is proper communication within an organization. Lastly but not least, a connection between employee engagement and organizational change was presented through the focus on how the changes are planned, explained, and executed. It was noted that involving employees in the change integration process was more likely to foster employee engagement within an organization.

## CHAPTER III

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### **Introduction**

The theoretical framework selected to inform the current study refers to the application of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) to the major needs and concerns expressed by employees from an HBCU located in Southeastern United States (referred to as "the HBCU" from this point forward). Maslow's theory points to the underlying factors that may have a positive impact on employee engagement. In this way, a specific system of multistage interventions can be developed. As the potential value generated by investments in human resources is generally recognized in the modern world, it is necessary to determine the most reliable and scientifically supported decisions for maximizing employees' effectiveness in addressing a variety of potential professional challenges (Millar, Chen, & Waller, 2017). It is also critical to separate them from the external conditions to ensure their significance and the ability to produce the supposed effects in different environments and under various conditions.

The HBCU recognizes the strategic role of human resources in the development of a university that functions in a globally competitive world. HR management presupposes initiating a scope of activities oriented towards investigating all relevant aspects of employees' performance in the broader organizational contexts (Gubbins, & Garavan, 2016). Moreover, human systems are more complex compared to material ones

as they do not always demonstrate the same responses and reaction to identical events. This explains the dynamic nature of human behavior and human needs that should be closely investigated in order to formulate a realistic strategy for HR interventions.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is applicable to analyzing a variety of human needs depending on their intensity and relative significance (Amani & Shabahang, 2017). Therefore, it can be successfully applied to investigating the impact of career development, communications, and organizational change on employee engagement. On this basis, well-supported recommendations to human resource management at the HBCU can be formulated. Moreover, the theory is also helpful for evaluating the progress achieved by each individual employee over time as well as determining the need for initiating any adjustments or additional interventions. Although the theory contains a number of different stages, it enables formulating beneficial practical implications.

Maslow's theory can also be applicable to the evaluation of the dependent variable as employees' engagement depends on the combination of needs of different orders. In the process of research elaboration, it may also be reasonable to apply it to all selected independent variables. Thus, it effectively identifies what needs are responsible for the major career development. It also contributes to the more effective communications during the transition from the lower level of needs satisfaction to the higher one. Finally, it also outlines the ability of organizational change to satisfy the basic needs and contribute to employees' performance.

## Definition of Variables and Terms

### Dependent Variable

**Employee engagement** is both the rational and the emotional connection an employee has to the organization, combined with his or her willingness to exert discretionary effort.

### Independent Variables

For the purposes of this research, the following definitions apply to this research:

**Career development** refers to the views of employees regarding the opportunities for career development offered by their employer. In general, employees who have favorable views of their career development opportunities tend to be more engaged than other employees.

**Communications** refer to the degree of perceived openness and honesty in the communications from the university to the employee and from the employee to his/her supervisor. Engaged employees produce better returns for their organizations.

**Organizational change** refers to the employees' assessment of how well recent organizational changes were planned, explained, and executed.

### Other Terms:

**Human needs** are mental, emotional or physical necessities or requirements to be able to function basically or optimally.

**Hierarchy** is a strictly determined system where the relationships between the higher and lower elements are closely regulated.

**Self-actualization** is the devotion to revealing one's creative potential to the maximum degree and reaching the highest level of one's needs satisfaction.

### **Relationship among the Variables**

The researcher hypothesized that there is a direct and strong relationship between the above independent variables and employee engagement at the HBCU. As the selected variables address different aspects related to employees' productivity and quality of work performed, it is expected that such a model can be highly effective in both explaining the existing situation and formulating clear implications for potential adjustments needed for achieving the desired improvements (Gubbins, & Garavan, 2016). One of the most significant lessons from Maslow's theory is understanding the dynamic nature of modern organizations and the potential of human needs to change under the influence of various internal and external factors.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a reliable theoretical model that can be applied to such conditions. The model consists of five interrelated stages, and the orientation to the higher ones is possible only when the lower needs are met. The first four stages of the model can be described as deficiency needs as people are motivated to act when these needs are unmet. They refer to physiological, safety, belonging, and esteem needs (Amani & Shabahang, 2017). In addition, there are also growth needs that are not associated with the lack of any material or immaterial goods. They refer to the individual's desire to achieve the maximum possible self-development and self-actualization. According to Maslow (1943), all people have the potential to reach the highest degree of their self-actualization. However, different factors can prevent them

from realizing their full potential. Therefore, it is reasonable to specify such obstacles in advance to provide the required support to such individuals. The proper organization of internal practices may contribute to reaching improvements in the short run. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is presented in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

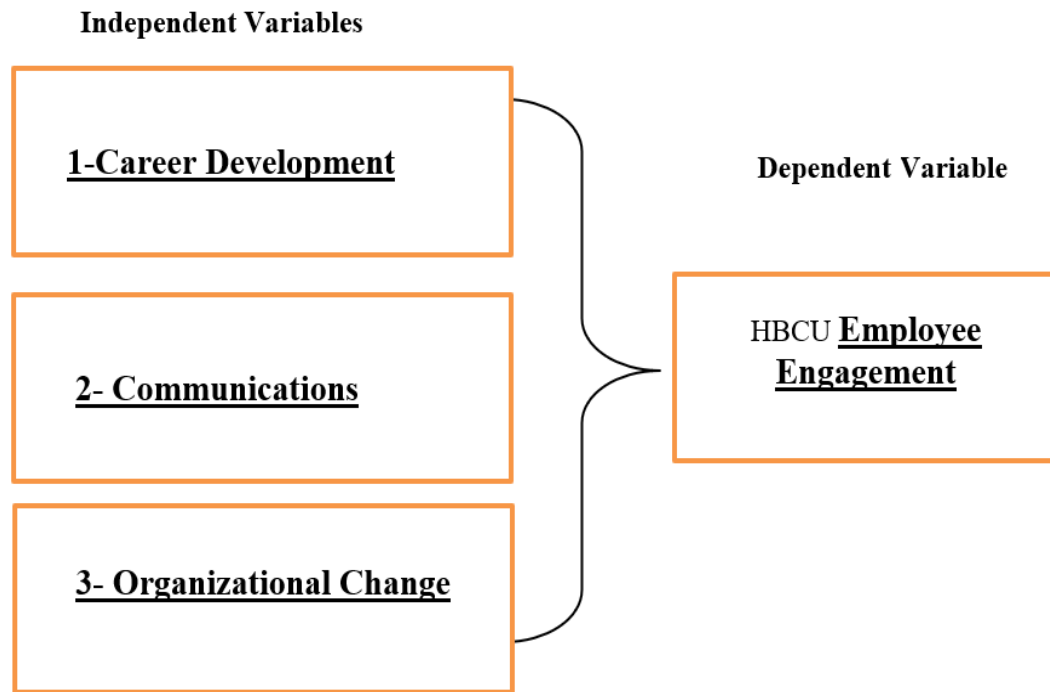
Correspondingly, any responsible organization tries to enable its employees to reach the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy. However, in order for this strategy to be successful, it is also highly important to comprehend all relevant factors and minimize the potential obstacles that may occur at different stages of the plan's implementation (Amani & Shabahang, 2017). There are several general implications for the HBCU that can be formulated in this context. Firstly, the working conditions should be safe and consistent with the highest industry standards. Moreover, competitive financial compensation should be offered to employees to enable them to satisfy their physiological and safety needs as well as create the foundation for the subsequent

addressing of belonging and esteem needs. As there are considerable interpersonal differences among different employees, the HBCU should demonstrate the maximum flexibility in considering them and adjusting its internal policies.

The effective realization of self-actualization needs is more complex as people tend to develop new self-development needs on a regular basis. However, they should perceive their work at the HBCU as being beneficial for their creative development including the possibility of career and professional growth. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs outlines the general pattern for satisfying individuals' needs although some adjustments may be required in different cases (Amani & Shabahang, 2017). Moreover, external observers may experience difficulties in identifying the current stage of the above hierarchy being reached by another person. The reason is that the degree of needs satisfaction depends not only on the objective availability of resources or conditions but also a person's subjective perception of his/her satisfaction.

Although Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is applicable to the analyzed research problem, the most relevant theoretical framework involves the evaluation of the relationships between the selected independent variables and employees' professional performance. The theoretical framework that guided the current study is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2 demonstrates that there are close relationships between independent variables on the one hand and the dependent variable on the other hand. The diagram suggests that career development, communications, and organizational change have some specific and clearly distinguishable impact on employee engagement.



*Figure 2.* Relationship among the variables.

In addition, all of them act simultaneously producing some synergistic effect if they are properly combined. Therefore, the investigation of the problem presupposes both the close investigation of changes in employee engagement and deeper analysis of effects produced by independent variables (Millar, Chen, & Waller, 2017). Therefore, the investigation of internal organizational practices may be needed for identifying the changing impact at different levels. Moreover, Figure 2 indicates that all of the independent variables are interrelated with one another not only through their impact on employee engagement but also through other organizational networks. This makes the analysis more complicated and requires an examination of the structure of these hidden relationships. However, it should be noted that the inter-correlations between the independent variables were outside the scope of the current study.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Despite selecting the reliable methodology and scientific theories, the study has some limitations. Firstly, it presupposes some degree of generalization regarding engagement demonstrated by all employees at the HBCU. In fact, it is clear that all such generalizations include some simplifications due to the fact that all individuals are different and demonstrate different engagement and responses to external stimuli (Gubbins, & Garavan, 2016). However, some degree of abstraction is needed for research purposes and formulation of relevant recommendations.

Secondly, the existing interrelationships among the independent variables may lead to biased results. Therefore, a qualitative analysis of the interdependencies between independent variables and their impact on the dependent one should have been included in the study. Finally, the survey was targeted exclusively to staff and faculty at the selected organization (HBCU located in the Southeastern U.S.). Therefore, findings cannot be directly generalized to other organizations or institutions without making the required adjustments.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

RQ1: Are employees who have favorable views of their career development opportunities more likely to be engaged than other employees?

RQ2: Are employees who have favorable views of communications across their organization more likely to be engaged than other employees?

RQ3: Are employees who have favorable views of recent organizational changes more likely to be engaged than other employees?

### **Summary**

The HBCU employees' engagement is affected by several important factors. For the purpose of this study, these factors were captured by the following independent variables: career development, communications, and organizational change. All of them have a significant and distinguishable impact on employees' performance. Extensive definitions of variables and terms were provided to achieve precision in the subsequent scientific elaboration. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) serves as an optimal theoretical framework for examining the transition between the lower and higher individual needs. Although all stages are highly important, the maximum satisfaction of people's needs is possible only at the stage of self-actualization. Numerous difficulties associated with the identification of the current stage experienced by a particular person refers to the subjective element of needs satisfaction evaluation. The selected model has appeared to be applicable to the HBCU and its HR policies.

There are close relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. All of the selected independent variables have a direct impact on employees' performance while at the same time they are also interdependent with one another under the influence of various organizational processes. This makes the analysis more complicated. There are several limitations related to overgeneralizations, inapplicability of traditional quantitative methods, and need for further adjustments while extending

implications to other organizations. At the same time, the provided analysis demonstrates considerable practical significance for HBCU and independent experts.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### **Research Design**

A quantitative research design was employed in this study. A random selection of participants was used due to its flexibility to carefully examine employee engagement, career development, communications, and organizational change.

#### **Description of the Setting**

The study was carried out at a historically black college/university. The university enrolls approximately 4000 students, the large majority of them being African-American students. The university offers 38 areas of study across four schools: Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Education, and Social Work. The university employs more than 170 full-time faculty and the student-faculty ratio is 15:1. Students can earn the following degrees: Bachelor's, Master's, Specialist, and Doctorate.

#### **Sampling Procedures**

The researcher used a random sample of faculty and staff from each of the HBCU schools: School of Arts and Sciences, School of Business, School of Education, and School of Social work. A web-based survey was sent to HBCU employees online via e-mail. For this study, the final sample consisted of 20 employees from the four schools: school of arts and sciences, 2 members; school of business, 2 members; school of

education, 13 members; and school of social work, 3 members. This sample study consisted of 10 faculty members, 6 staff members, and 4 administrative members. This sample study consisted of 14 female members and 6 male members.

### **Instruments**

The researcher prepared a questionnaire entitled “Factors Affecting University Employee Engagement at a Historically Black College/University.” In this case study, the researcher followed the following steps to develop the survey:

1. The researcher reviewed the previous studies related to the subject of the study and which is relevant to the subject of the study.
2. The researcher consulted the supervisor in determining the dimensions of the questionnaire and its items.
3. The items on the questionnaire (22) were formulated and numbered.

All 22 questions were rated on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly agree/approve the statement and apply it fully to the university; 2 = agree/which is less than the degree of strongly agree; 3 = neutral/I have no clear knowledge or opinion; 4 = disagree/disagree and not at the university; 5 = strongly disagree/absolute rejection.

The survey consists of five parts:

Part 1. Demographic Information. Contains 4 questions

Part 2: Career Development. Contains 5 questions

Part 3: Communications. Contains 2 questions

Part 4. Engagement. Contains 8 questions

Part 5. Organizational Change. Contains 3 questions

Specifically, career development was measured through employees' perceptions in the following areas:

1. Opportunities to receive training to improve skills.
2. Opportunities for personal development and growth within HBCU.
3. How well the university is planning for management succession.
4. The level of employee confidence in achieving personal career objectives at an HBCU.
5. The extent to which the university provides employees with the necessary information and resources to manage their careers effectively.

Communications was measured by assessing employees' perceptions in two areas:

1. The extent to which the university keeps the employees informed about important organizational matters.
2. The extent to which employees are able to openly and honestly communicate their views to the leadership.

Organizational changes were assessed by focusing on employees' perceptions as to how well recent major organizational changes at the HBCU have been (a) planned, (b) explained, and (c) executed.

Finally, employee engagement was measured via the employee's level of satisfaction with

1. Level of staffing that allows handling the workload.
2. Involvement in decisions that affect the respondent's work.
3. Level of flexibility to meet personal and family needs.

4. Motivation to go beyond formal job responsibilities to get the job done.
5. Tools and resources needed to perform in the job effectively.

In addition, employee engagement was also measured by asking the employees if working for the HBCU inspires them to do their best work, whether they would recommend the HBCU as a good place to work, and whether they intend to plan to continue to work at the HBCU.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

- As a first step, the researcher obtained approval from the Educational Leadership Chair at the HBCU to conduct the survey.
- Next, the Chair of the Educational Leadership Department sent an email invitation to faculty and staff at HBCU. The letter explained the purpose of the research and ensured the anonymity of responses.
- Lastly, the Chair contacted directly faculty in the School of Education and the Dean of Social Work to encourage participation in survey.

### **Statistical Applications (Quantitative)**

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) analysis software was employed in the data analysis. Descriptive analyses, such as means and percentages, were used to determine the extent to which employees are satisfied with their career development, communication, and organizational change.

### **Society and Study Sample**

The study community includes some faculty members and administrative staff at the HBCU from department heads, teachers, and staff.

### **Study Tool**

The researcher prepared the questionnaire tool entitled: Factors Affecting University Employee Engagement at an HBCU. In this case study, the researcher employed the following data collection procedures:

1. The researcher reviewed the previous studies and researches related to the subject of the study and which is relevant to the subject of the study.
2. The researcher consulted the supervisor in determining the dimensions of the questionnaire and its paragraphs.
3. The paragraphs of the questionnaire were formulated and numbered. The researcher used the five-dimensional Likert scale.

### **Summary**

Prior to data collection for the research, the approval from the university administration and staff consent were received. The quantitative design with the randomly selected sample was chosen to evaluate the attitudes of the HBCU staff towards the organization and their work. The final sample consisted of 20 workers from the HBCU schools. The workers of all departments, lower staff members, and representative of the administrative positions were included. Emails were used to distribute and respond to the questionnaires.

The variables investigation relied on a questionnaire entitled: Factors affecting university employee engagement. It consisted of 22 questions further rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The questions' choice was predetermined by the results from the previous studies, the supervisor's feedback and appropriate topical division. The Likert scale dimensions were paraphrased to sound more appropriate for the university context and reflect the attitudes of the staff more clearly.

To identify the impact of the separate variables, the questions were divided into five parts: demographic information, career development, communications, engagement, and organizational change. Specifically, career development was measured through employees' opportunities to improve skills, experience personal growth within the HBCU, achieve personal career objectives, receive the necessary information and resources. Communication was measured by assessing the employees' possibility to stay informed about organizational matters and honestly communicate their views to the leaders. Organizational change was assessed relying on the employees' perception of the change planning, explanation and execution. Finally, employee engagement was measured via satisfaction with handling the workload, involvement in decisions, flexibility of the conditions, motivation to do more tasks and tools and resources availability.

The SPSS software was applied to analyze the data and prove the findings of the research statistically. Descriptive analyses such as means and percentages characterized the dependent variable the level of employees' satisfaction and the independent one including the career development, communication, and organizational changes.

## CHAPTER V

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

#### Presentation of the Data

To test the research hypotheses, a web-based survey comprising of 22 questions was conducted among employees at the HBCU. Among survey questions, four were demographic questions, and the rest were study questions grouped in four sections: Employee Engagement, Career Development, Communications, and Organizational Change. Employee Engagement was considered as the dependent variable, while Career Development, Communications, and Organizational Change were regarded as independent variables. The results of the survey are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

#### *The Distribution of Answers to the Study Questions*

Question	N (%) of answers				
Number	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Career Development					
5	<b>0 (0)</b>	<b>3 (15)</b>	<b>5 (25)</b>	<b>9 (45)</b>	<b>3 (15)</b>
6	0 (0)	3 (15)	3 (15)	12 (60)	2 (10)
7	1 (5)	6 (30)	8 (40)	5 (25)	0 (0)
8	0 (0)	3 (15)	3 (15)	13 (65)	1 (5)
9	0 (0)	6 (30)	8 (40)	6 (30)	0 (0)

(continued)

Question Number	N (%) of answers				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Communications					
10	0 (0)	7 (35)	6 (30)	6 (30)	1 (5)
11	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (15)	13 (65)	4 (20)
Employee Engagement					
12	4 (20)	10 (50)	2 (10)	3 (15)	1 (5)
13	1 (5)	5 (25)	3 (15)	11 (55)	0 (0)
14	0 (0)	4 (20)	1 (5)	10 (50)	5 (25)
15	0 (0)	2 (10)	3 (15)	11 (55)	4 (20)
16	1 (5)	5 (25)	0 (0)	14 (70)	0 (0)
17	0 (0)	3 (15)	2 (10)	14 (70)	1 (5)
18	1 (5)	0 (0)	4 (20)	12 (60)	3 (15)
19	4 (20)	8 (40)	5 (25)	2 (10)	1 (5)
Organizational Change					
20	2 (10)	7 (35)	8 (40)	3 (15)	0 (0)
21	3 (15)	8 (40)	8 (40)	1 (5)	0 (0)
22	3 (15)	4 (20)	10 (50)	2 (10)	1 (5)

For the Career Development section questions, most of the employees were either neutral or agreed with the statements. In particular, the highest percentage of respondents (45%) agreed that they received sufficient training opportunities, 60% of them agreed that they had opportunities for personal development and growth, and 65% of respondents agreed that they could achieve their career goals at the university. Also, the highest percentage of the employees was neutral regarding the university's efforts to plan for management succession and providing the information on how to manage their career. Thus, most of the respondents agreed that the university was an appropriate place for career development.

Regarding communications, 35% of the employees disagreed that the university informed them about important organizational matters, while 65% of them agreed that they felt that they could honestly communicate with supervisors and other leaders. Thus, most of the respondents were not satisfied with the information provided on the one hand, but they were satisfied with the possibility to express their opinions on the other hand.

Regarding the employee engagement questions, half of respondents disagreed that there was the sufficient number of employees in the department to handle the workload. In addition, 40% of the respondents disagreed that they considered quitting the University. The most significant percentage of the respondents agreed with the statements provided in other questions. This means that most employees had from a neutral to high level of engagement.

Finally, most employees were neutral about the questions provided in the Organizational Change section. In particular, 40% of them were neutral about the statement that recent changes in the organization were planned and explained well. At the same time, 35% of the respondents disagreed that recent changes at the HBCU were planned well, and 40% of them disagreed that they were explained well. Additionally, half of respondents were neutral about the statement that recent changes at the HBCU were executed well. That means that the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements about the success of the organizational changes, and their answers to each of the statements from this section were different.

Respondents evaluated questions from four sections using a 5-item Likert scale. Importantly, the answers to question #19 ("At the present time, are you seriously

considering leaving HBCU?") were inversed for further analysis, because a higher score for this question meant lower employee's engagement. This variable negatively correlates with the organizational turnover rate (Shuck, Twyford, Reio, & Shuck, 2014).

Consequently, participants with a high level of engagement would not consider quitting their workplace. For other questions in this section, a higher score for the question meant higher engagement of the employees. Thus, the inversion of answers addressed this issue. For this question, the answer "strongly disagree" was ranked as "5," the answer "disagree" was ranked as "4," the answer "neutral" remained "3," the answer "agree" was ranked as "2," and the answer "strongly agree" was ranked as "1." The results of the evaluation are presented in Table 2. The average of all questions within each section was calculated for each respondent and for all respondents.

Table 2

*Average of the Respondents' Answers*

Respondent	Career		Employee	Organizational
	Development	Communications	Engagement	Change
1	2.80	3.00	3.38	3.00
2	3.40	2.50	3.38	2.00
3	3.40	3.00	4.00	2.00
4	2.80	3.00	2.13	1.67
5	3.20	3.50	3.13	3.00
6	3.60	4.00	3.38	2.33
7	3.80	3.50	4.63	3.00
8	2.60	4.00	2.50	1.00

(continued)

Respondent	Career	Communications	Employee	Organizational
	Development		Engagement	Change
9	2.80	3.00	2.25	1.00
10	4.00	4.50	3.75	3.33
11	2.20	4.00	3.63	3.00
12	2.80	4.00	3.50	1.67
13	4.20	4.50	4.13	3.67
14	3.80	3.00	3.38	3.33
15	3.80	3.50	4.13	2.00
16	2.80	2.50	3.25	3.00
17	3.00	3.50	3.75	3.00
18	3.60	4.00	3.75	3.00
19	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.00
20	4.20	4.50	3.50	3.00
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.34</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>2.55</b>

On average, the ratings of Career Development, Communications, and Employee Engagement sections were between “neutral” and “agree.” Thus, it is possible to state that on average, employees were either neutral or satisfied with their career development opportunities and communications in the organization. Their engagement was also between “neutral” and “agree.” Yet, on average, respondents were between “disagree” and “neutral” concerning the statements from the Organizational Change section. Thus, it is possible to state that overall, respondents were not satisfied with how the university planned, informed, and conducted organizational changes.

### Data Analysis and Findings

To test the research hypotheses, a statistical analysis of the obtained data was conducted. First, the test for the normality of data distribution was applied. The Shapiro-Wilk test and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test were sufficient for testing the normality (Krithikadatta, 2014). The results of the tests are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

#### *Tests of Normality*

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Career Development	.171	20	.129	.938	20	.217
Communications	.164	20	.166	.922	20	.110
Employee Engagement	.203	20	.030*	.928	20	.140
Organizational Change	.318	20	.000**	.864	20	.009**

\* - distribution is different from normal at the 0.05 level  
 \*\* - distribution is different from normal at the 0.01 level

According to both tests, the Career Development and Communications variables are distributed normally. The Employee Engagement variable distribution is different from normal based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, while the Shapiro-Wilk test indicates that its distribution is normal. However, according to Krithikadatta (2014), the Shapiro-Wilk test provided more reliable results. Therefore, the distribution of the Employee Engagement variable can also be regarded as normal. Finally, the Organizational Change variable is not distributed normally. To test the research

hypotheses, Spearman's correlation coefficient was calculated and the correlation analysis was conducted.

The first research hypothesis was formulated based on the first research question. The hypothesis is as follows:

Ho1: The employees who have favorable views of their career development opportunities are more likely to be engaged than other employees are.

According to this hypothesis, the engagement of employees depends on the career development opportunities provided by the organization. As it was determined above, respondents were either neutral or satisfied with their career development opportunities. Therefore, a positive correlation between Employee Engagement and Career Development was expected.

In order to test this research hypothesis, Spearman's correlation coefficient was calculated. Even though both variables were distributed normally, Pearson's correlation cannot be conducted, because the sample size was less than 30 participants, which is the minimum threshold recommended for Pearson's correlation calculations (De Winter, Gosling, & Potter, 2016). The results of the statistical analysis are presented in Table 4.

Based on the results of the test, one can state that the correlation between Career Development and Employee Engagement is significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, these two variables are significantly connected. Spearman's correlation coefficient proves that two variables are related, but it does not indicate causation (De Winter et al., 2016).

Table 4

*Spearman's Correlation Coefficient between the Career Development and Employee Engagement Variables*

		Career Development	Employee Engagement
Career Development	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.553*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.011
	N	20	20
Employee Engagement	Correlation Coefficient	.553*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.
	N	20	20

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

However, in this case, it is possible to state that the Employee Engagement variable was affected by the Career Development variable, because these career development opportunities are determined by the organization (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014). Thus, respondents from the survey estimated the opportunities provided by the HBCU. Consequently, it is possible to conclude that career development opportunities affected the level of the engagement of employees.

Therefore, the influence of perceived opportunities for Career Development on Employee Engagement can be regarded as statistically significant. The correlation coefficient is positive. This means that the dependence is direct: an increase in career development opportunities could result in an increase in employee engagement. The correlation coefficient is 0.553, which indicates a moderate positive correlation in psychological sciences (Akoglu, 2018). Consequently, based on the results of the analysis, it is possible to accept the research hypothesis and to state that the employees

who have favorable views of their career development opportunities are more likely to be engaged than other employees are.

The second research hypothesis was formulated based on the second research question. The hypothesis is the following:

Ho2: The employees who have favorable views of communications across their organization are more likely to be engaged than other employees are.

According to this hypothesis, the engagement of employees depends on the quality of communications within the organization. Based on the results of the survey, it is possible to state that in general, respondents were satisfied with the quality of communications within the organization. Thus, it is expected to find that better communication at the university resulted in a higher level of employee engagement.

To test the research hypothesis, Spearman's correlation coefficient was calculated. The results of the calculations are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

*Spearman's Correlation Coefficient between Communications and Employee Engagement*

		Communications	Employee Engagement
Communications	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.407
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.075
	N	20	20
Employee Engagement	Correlation Coefficient	.407	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.075	.
	N	20	20

Based on the results of the correlation analysis, it is possible to state that no significant correlation between the two variables was identified. The correlation coefficient is 0.407. The correlation coefficient of 0.4 means a moderate positive effect between the variables (Akoglu, 2018). However, the  $p$  value for the test was 0.075, which was higher than 0.05, the threshold for statistical significance accepted in social sciences. Thus, the correlation can be considered as not significant. Based on the test results, it is possible to state that communications at the university did not affect employee engagement. Consequently, it is possible to reject the research hypothesis #2 and to accept the null hypothesis, which states that the employees who have favorable views of communications across their organization are not more likely to be engaged than other employees are.

**Research Hypothesis #3.** The third research hypothesis was formulated based on the third research question. The hypothesis is the following: the employees who have favorable views of how recent organizational changes are planned and executed by the university leadership are more likely to be engaged than other employees are. According to this hypothesis, the quality of organizational changes affects the engagement of workers. Based on the results of the survey, it is possible to state that, in general, employees were either neutral or disagreed that recent organizational changes were planned, explained, and executed well. Thus, the researcher expected to find a positive correlation between the two variables, which means that a higher level of respondent's satisfaction with changes within the organization is associated with a higher level of engagement.

In order to test the research hypothesis, Spearman's correlation coefficient was calculated. The results of the calculations are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

*Spearman's Correlation Coefficient between Organizational Change and Employee Engagement*

		Organizational Change	Employee Engagement
Organizational Change	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.427
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.060
	N	20	20
Employee Engagement	Correlation Coefficient	.427	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.060	.
	N	20	20

The correlation analysis demonstrated that the Organizational Change and Employee Engagement variables were not related significantly, because the  $p$  value was higher than 0.05. Spearman's correlation coefficient was 0.427. For social sciences, this coefficient value indicates a moderate positive correlation (Akoglu, 2018). However, no significant association between the variables was found. Thus, one cannot state that the Employee Engagement and Organizational Change variables are associated moderately. Based on the results of the data analysis, it is possible to reject the research hypothesis #3. The null hypothesis should be accepted. According to this hypothesis, the employees who have favorable views of recent organizational changes are not more likely to be engaged than are other employees.

### **Summary**

The survey was conducted among the employees working at the HBCU.

Respondents were asked to evaluate 18 statements grouped in four sections:

Communications, Employee Engagement, Career Development, and Organizational Change. It was determined that most of the employees were either “neutral” or “agreed” with the statements from the Career Development section. Thus, in general, they can be considered as satisfied with their career development opportunities. Employees demonstrated satisfaction with their ability to communicate with the leaders of the organization. However, most of them disagreed with the statement that the organization did an excellent job of keeping employees informed about important organizational matters. Consequently, the attitudes of employees toward communications were not unequivocal. Regarding Organizational Change; most of the respondents were neutral about the statements from this section. Finally, Employee Engagement was also neutral for most of the respondents.

It should be noted that three research hypotheses were tested in this study.

Spearman’s correlation coefficient was utilized to test the hypotheses. The research hypothesis #1 was accepted, while the research hypotheses #2 and #3 were rejected. It is evident that the level of employee engagement significantly depends on different career development opportunities provided by the organization. The correlation coefficient was positive, which indicates direct dependence: the higher level of career development opportunities predicted, the higher level of employee engagement. At the same time, no association between the communication within the organization and the level of

employee engagement was found. In addition, there was no relation between employees' perceptions of how well organizational changes were planned and executed and the level of employee engagement.

## CHAPTER VI

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Discussion of the Findings**

This study was focused on investigating the employee engagement at a historically black college/university and discovering possible factors that affect this engagement. Higher employee engagement is a desirable outcome for the human resource department, because it is associated with workers' higher efficiency, creativity and productivity (Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey, & Saks, 2015) and a decreased level of employee turnover (Shuck et al., 2014). Thus, the human resources management should be interested in improving employee engagement. In relation to this, the aim of the current study was to determine factors affecting this engagement within an educational organization, precisely, a historically black college/university (HBCU).

Three research hypotheses were tested. The first research hypothesis stated that the employees who have favorable views of their career development opportunities are more likely to be engaged than other employees are. This hypothesis was accepted. The second research hypothesis stated that the employees who have favorable views of communications across their organization are more likely to be engaged than other employees are. This hypothesis was rejected. No significant correlation between the Communications and Employee Engagement variables were detected. The third research hypothesis stated that the employees who have favorable views of recent organizational

changes are more likely to be engaged than other employees are. This hypothesis was also rejected. No significant correlation between the Organizational Change and Employee Engagement variables were found.

RQ1: Are employees who have favorable views of their career development opportunities more likely to be engaged than other employees?

The study provided a positive answer to research question #1. Employee engagement positively correlated with career development opportunities. Numerous studies demonstrated the relation between career development and employee engagement. In particular, Anitha (2014) indicated the dependence of the level of employee engagement with the ability to participate in trainings and the number of opportunities for professional development. Another important factor that increased engagement was career development opportunities (Saks & Gruman, 2014). The questions related to career development opportunities and participation in training for professional growth were included in the survey and applied in the current study. The obtained findings indicated that career development affected the level of employee engagement significantly. Thus, it is possible to state that the obtained results corroborate the results obtained by previous studies.

A positive correlation between the Career Development and Employee Engagement variables provides significant information for the Human Resources Department of the university. The study demonstrated that the workers at the HBCU expressed from neutral to positive attitude towards different career development opportunities provided by the HBCU. Correspondingly, their employee engagement was

also between neutral and positive. One can expect that an increase in career development opportunities, better distribution of information to employees about their career perspectives, and an increase in the number of trainings and professional development events might lead to an increase in employee engagement.

RQ2: Are employees who have favorable views of communications across their organization more likely to be engaged than other employees?

The study provided a negative answer to research question #2. That means that no significant correlation between communications within the organization and employee engagement was found. Such results were not expected, because numerous researchers stated the positive effect of open and clear communication within the organization. For instance, in their study, Krishnan and Wesley (2013) indicated that communication within the organization is one of the most important reasons for employee engagement development. Kang and Sung (2017) and Mishra, Boynton, and Mishra (2014) underscored the significance of internal communication within the organization for employee engagement. However, the results of the current studies did not correspond with the findings obtained by the above-mentioned researchers. This can be explained, firstly, by the small sample size of the current study and, secondly, by the particularities of the educational organizations, precisely, the HBCU.

The rejection of the research hypothesis #2 means that employee engagement at the HBCU did not depend on the communication style at the university. However, the study results demonstrated that a significant number of respondents did not agree that the university did an excellent job of keeping employees informed about important

organizational matters. Consequently, it is possible to state that improvements in the ways the university informs its employees are of great significance. Even though such improvements might not lead directly to improvements in employee engagement, they might increase their well-being and satisfaction with their work. Job satisfaction is directly related to employee engagement (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014). However, this supposition was not confirmed by the correlation analysis conducted within this study. Therefore, the Human Resources Department should focus more on other factors affecting the employee engagement rather than on communications improvements.

RQ3: Are employees who have favorable views of recent organizational changes more likely to be engaged than other employees?

The study provided a negative answer to research question #3. It means that no significant correlation between the Organizational Change and Employee Engagement variables was found. Several researchers indicated the role of organizational change for employee engagement. In particular, in their study, Swarnalatha and Prasanna (2013) demonstrated that organizational changes could have both positive and negative impacts on employee engagement depending on how these changes affect employees. According to Rubin et al. (2013), there is a positive impact of sufficient communication about the organizational changes on employee engagement. Thus, it is possible to state that the results of the current study were unexpected.

The survey demonstrated that, in general, respondents were not satisfied with organizational changes within the organization. Most of them were either neutral or disagreed that the organizational changes at the HBCU were planned, executed, and

explained well. Consequently, it was possible to assume that such dissatisfaction might negatively affect employee engagement. However, the statistical analysis did not demonstrate such an effect. Therefore, one can conclude that employee's dissatisfaction related to the organizational communication did not affect their engagement. Another possible explanation is that the sample size was very small. As a result, a significant effect of organizational changes on planning, explanation, and execution was not revealed through the statistical analysis. The rejection of the research hypothesis means that the Human Resource Department should focus more on other aspects that affect employee engagement except for organizational changes.

### **Research Findings and the Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework applied to this research was Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow's theory can be applied in order to improve the job performance of employees and to increase their engagement within the organization (Lazaroiu, 2015). Based on this theoretical framework, it is possible to determine the basic needs of the employees, to create the hierarchy of these needs, and to develop the complex interventions focused on addressing the most urgent requirements in order to increase employee engagement (Millar, Chen, & Waller, 2017). Before developing the interventions, one needs to determine the factors that affect the employee engagement and to rank these factors based on their importance.

Maslow's (1943) theory can be applied to both dependent and independent variables of the current study. The dependent variable is Employee Engagement. This variable was defined as a connection of an employee to the organization. Employee

Engagement could be considered as located at the third stage of Maslow's hierarchy -- love and belonging. Importantly, an engaged employee might start satisfying other needs, which are located higher in the pyramid, and finally, reach self-actualization. Amani and Shabahang (2017) indicated that self-actualization is highly important for employees to be creative and efficient workers. Thus, increasing employee engagement might lead to improving self-actualization.

The first independent variable was career development. This variable might be considered as part of safety needs as well as esteem needs at the second and the forth stages of the pyramid correspondingly. Then, the communications variable and the employee engagement variable can be considered as part of love and belonging needs (the third stage). Finally, the organizational change variable represented the need that the management of the organization should explain each organizational change to its employees and that each worker should be satisfied with it. These needs are part of love and belonging needs (the third stage) and esteem needs. Hence, both dependent and independent variables were located at the second, third, and forth stages of Maslow's pyramid. One can assume that these variables affected one another.

Consequently, this study focused on investigating three groups of the factors affecting Employee Engagement: Career Development, Communications, and Organizational Change. According to the literature review, all these factors affect employee engagement within different organizations. However, it was important to determine the effects of these factors at the HBCU. Among the tested factors, only Career Development variables correlated positively with Employee Engagement. This means

that the need for the career development opportunities was located lower in the pyramid of the hierarchy of needs than the need for honest and open communications and the need for efficient planning, explanation, and execution of the organizational changes. This finding also implies that this need was more important to employees than the other two tested needs. The reason for this finding is that the career development variable was located at the second stage of Maslow's (1943) pyramid, meaning that the satisfaction of this need is required for the satisfaction of other needs located higher in the pyramid, including employee engagement increased as a part of love and belonging stage needs.

### **Implications**

The current study aimed to determine the factors affecting historically black college/university employee engagement. In particular, the study was focused on three independent variables: career development, communications, and organizational change. Based on the study results, it is possible to provide recommendations for the human resources department at the HBCU. The research indicated that career development opportunities positively correlate with employee engagement. Consequently, to improve the level of engagement, the human resources department at the HBCU should provide better career opportunities for each employee.

No significant correlation between the communications and employee engagement variables and the organizational change and employee engagement variables were detected. Thus, one cannot suggest particular improvements in these areas with the purpose to increase employee engagement. Therefore, several important implications can be considered based on the results of the study, which could affect the effectiveness of

the HBCU human resources department. The results also indicated the need for further investigations of the topic.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Despite selecting a relevant theoretical framework, developing the model, and applying valid methods of the research, the study has several limitations listed below.

1. The research was conducted within only one organization, precisely—one HBCU. Consequently, the results cannot be generalized to other educational organizations or other types of the organizations.
2. The study sample was limited to the employees from only four departments at the university. Therefore, it is possible that in other departments employee perceptions are different because employees can face different problems.
3. The survey was anonymous. Yet, there is a possibility that employees were not forthcoming due to the consideration that their supervisors might recognize their responses.
4. The small sample size could be considered a limitation, as it might have affected the results of the statistical analysis.
5. The survey was the only method for data collection that was utilized. No follow-up interviews were conducted. Consequently, employees' reasons for answering the survey questions the way they answered are not known.

Despite the above-stated limitations, the study provided reliable and valid findings as confirmed by the results of the statistical analysis of the data.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendations for Administrators**

Based on the study results, particular recommendations can be made. First, it is possible to recommend increasing the number of trainings for professional development, because 15% of the employees are not satisfied with the provided opportunities (see Table 1). Moreover, it is important to improve planning for management succession and to provide people with necessary resources and information on how to manage their own careers effectively, because 35% and 30% of the employees correspondingly are not satisfied with these organizational activities (see Table 1). In general, the study suggests that the university should improve the career development opportunities of workers, as well as the process of planning and informing them about these opportunities. These measures might result in an increase in employee engagement at the HBCU.

The survey indicated several particular problems related to these sections. First, it is imperative to improve the procedure of informing employees about different organizational matters, which affect them, because 35% of the respondents were dissatisfied with this issue (see Table 1). It is possible to develop the system of announcements devoted to the organizational matters via corporate e-mails or during organizational meetings. Second, a significant number of participants are dissatisfied with how the university plans, explains, and executes different organizational changes (see Table 1). Consequently, it is imperative to develop complex interventions in order to improve this situation. In particular, the leadership could organize town hall meetings and to discuss planned changes before implementing them into practice.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Finally, recommendations for further research can be as follows. Further studies should address the limitations of this study. Thus, it is possible to involve several educational establishments in the future study. This might increase the generalizability of the research results. Moreover, it might be useful to increase the sample size and to involve participants from different university departments. The methods of data collection might also include follow-up interviews to determine the motivation of employees, as well as their needs. Finally, aside from the four factors examined in this study other key factors influencing employee engagement (i.e., compensation, collegiality, leadership style) should be included in future studies.

### **Conclusions**

This study examined the effect of career development, communications, and organizational change on employee engagement at a historically black college/university. Three research questions were tested within the study. Research question #1 was accepted, which proved that career development opportunities significantly affect employee engagement. Research questions #2 and #3 were rejected. No significant association between employee engagement and communications and employee engagement and organizational change were found.

Based on the results of the investigation, it is possible to formulate several conclusions. First, it is evident that among the tested independent variables, only career development affected employee engagement significantly. Thus, one can conclude that career development opportunities are more significant to employees than either

communications within the organization or the management of organizational change.

Consequently, improvements in the career development opportunities, in particular, better planning career management and informing workers about opportunities they have, might increase the satisfaction of workers with their career development and contribute to their engagement within the organization.

The study found no significant correlation between the Employee Engagement and Communications variables. Yet, employees expressed their dissatisfaction with the university process of informing them about significant organizational issues.

Consequently, improvements in employer-employee communications are required.

However, these improvements might not increase employee engagement, because the correlation between these variables was not significant.

Finally, no significant correlation between the Organizational Change and Employee Engagement variables was discovered. A significant number of employees expressed their dissatisfaction with the processes of planning, explaining, and executing organizational changes at the HBCU. Therefore, the HBCU should implement complex interventions focused on the improvements of organizational change politics. Therefore, these interventions might improve the well-being and satisfaction of employees but not increase employee engagement, because the correlation between these two variables was not significant.

## APPENDIX A

### Survey Questions

My name is Hadi Alqahtani. I am a doctoral student in the Education Leadership program at Clark Atlanta university. My advisor is Dr. Chike Akua. To fulfill the dissertation requirements for my program, I am conducting a study on factors affecting Historically Black College/University employee engagement. You are being invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as an employee at HBCU. The purpose of this survey is to learn HBCU employees' attitudes toward career development, communications, engagement, and recent organizational changes.

Please read and answer each question carefully. Remember, all of your responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Your name will not be associated with any of your answers. The survey should not take about 3 minutes to complete. If you have any questions or comments about this study, you can contact me, Hadi Alqahtani, at [hadi.alqahtani@students.cau.edu](mailto:hadi.alqahtani@students.cau.edu). My phone number is (206) 849-3326 or you may contact Dr. Chike Akua, my committee chair, at [cakua@cau.edu](mailto:cakua@cau.edu). The following questions will give you the opportunity to decide whether or not you wish to participate in this survey. I thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Using following scale from 1-5, “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” show your opinion regarding the statements below.

**1 = strongly disagree**

**2 = disagree**

**3 = neither agree nor disagree**

**4 = agree**

**5 = strongly agree**

1. What is your gender?
  - ☐ Male
  - ☐ Female
2. What is your highest education level?
  - ☐ High School Diploma
  - ☐ Bachelor’s degree
  - ☐ Master’s degree
  - ☐ Doctorate
3. What is your primary role at University?
  - ☐ Administrator
  - ☐ Faculty
  - ☐ Staff
4. Where are you located?
  - ☐ School of Arts and Sciences
  - ☐ School of Business
  - ☐ School of Education
  - ☐ School of Social Work
  - ☐ Other

### Part 2: Career Development

5. There are sufficient opportunities for me to receive training to improve my skills in my current job. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I believe I have the opportunity for personal development and growth within HBCU. 1 2 3 4 5
7. My university is doing a good job of planning for management succession. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I am confident I can achieve my personal career objectives at the University. 1 2 3 4 5
9. My university provides people with the necessary information and resources to manage their own careers effectively. 1 2 3 4 5

### Part 3: Communications

10. My university does an excellent job of keeping employees informed about important organizational matters affecting us. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I feel able to openly and honestly communicate my views to my supervisor and other leaders. 1 2 3 4 5

#### Part 4. Engagement

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. There is usually sufficient staff in my department to handle the workload.        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I am satisfied with my involvement in decisions that affect my work.              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. My work schedule allows sufficient flexibility to meet my personal/family needs.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. I feel motivated to go beyond my formal job responsibilities to get the job done. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I have the equipment/tools/resources I need to do my job effectively.             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I would recommend the HBCU as a good place to work.                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Working for the HBCU inspires me to do my best work.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. At the present time, are you seriously considering leaving the HBCU?              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

#### Part 5. Organizational Change

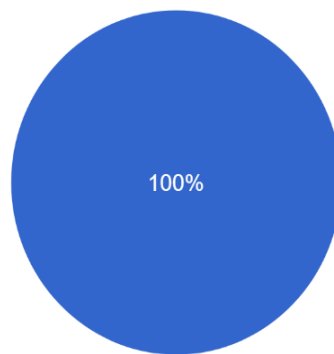
- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20. Generally, recent major organizational changes at the HBCU have been: Planned well | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Generally, recent major organizational changes at HBCU have been: Explained well   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. Generally, recent major organizational changes at HBCU have been: Executed well**  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Note all 22 questions were rated on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 = strongly agree/ approve the statement and apply it fully to the university, 2 = agree/which is less than the degree of strongly agree, 3 = neutral/I have no clear knowledge or opinion, 4 = disagree/ disagree and not at the university, and 5 = strongly disagree/absolute rejection.

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Results

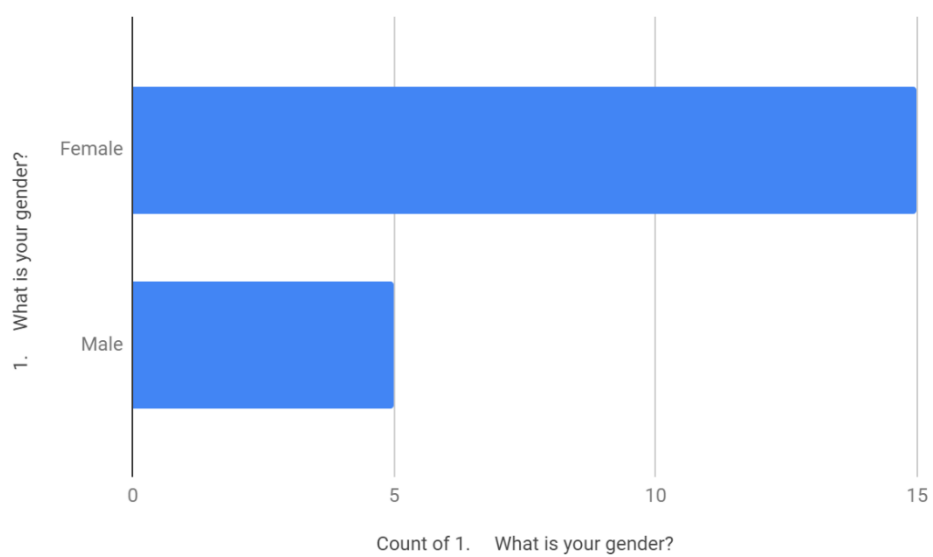
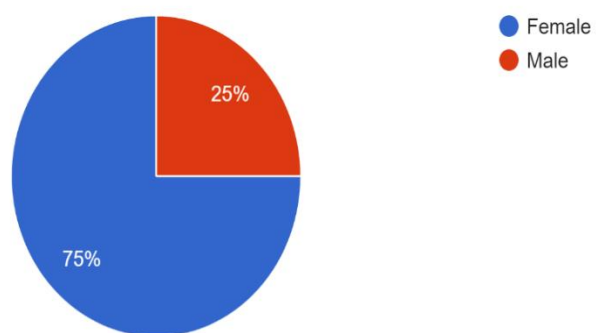
20 responses



● Continuation

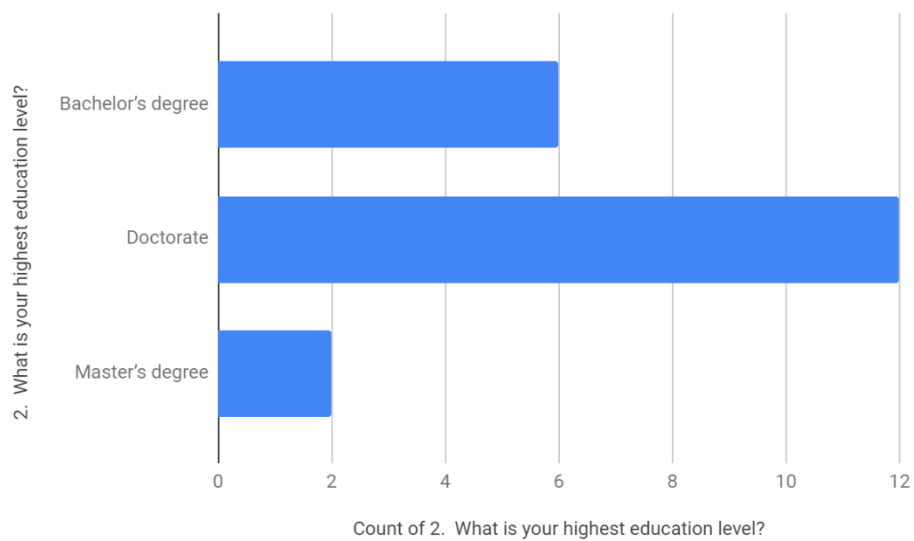
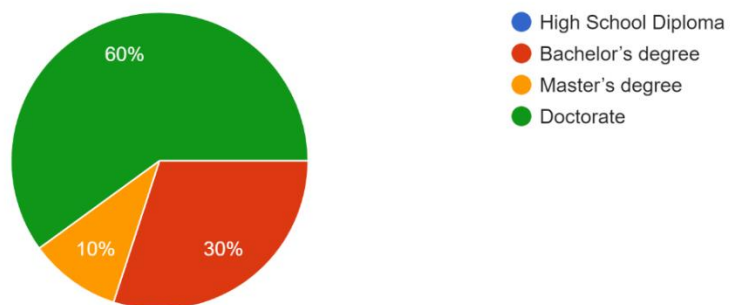
# 1. What is your gender?

20 responses



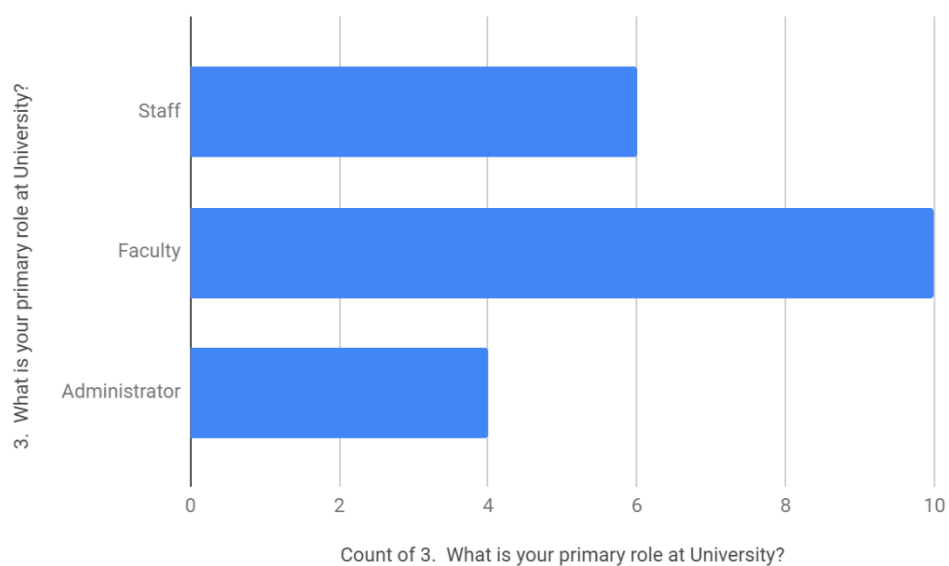
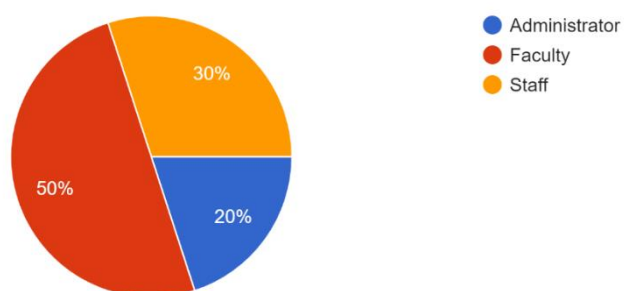
## 2. What is your highest education level?

20 responses



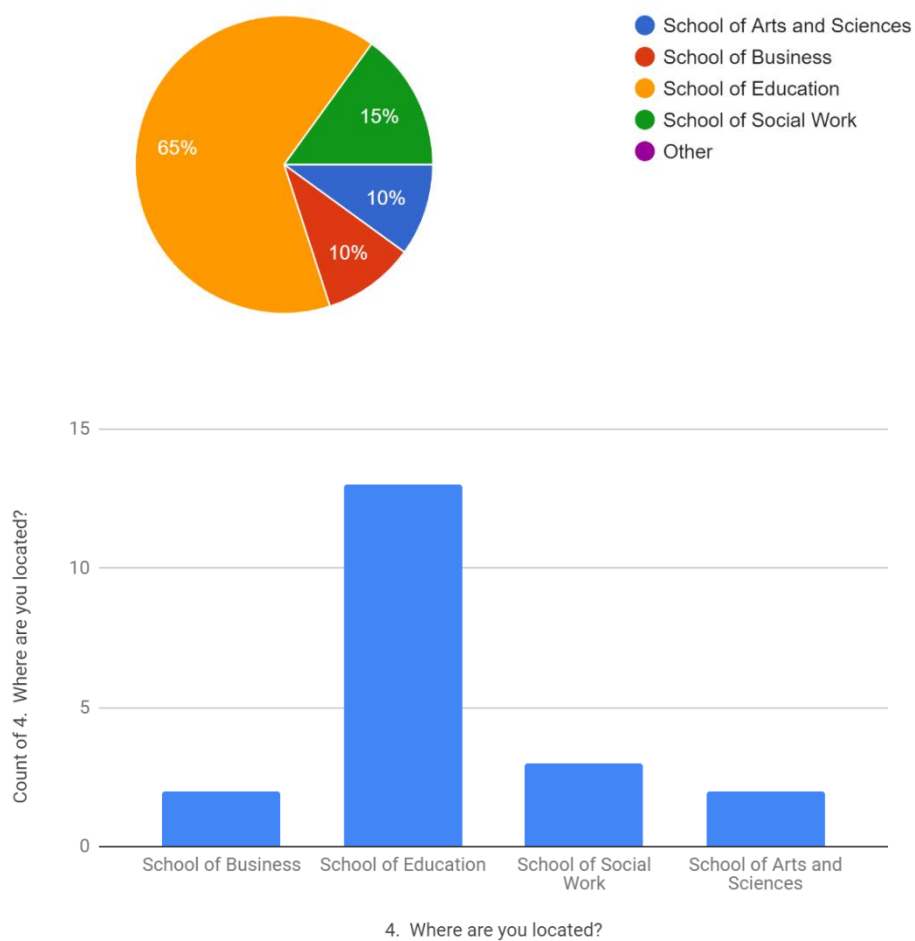
### 3. What is your primary role at University?

20 responses



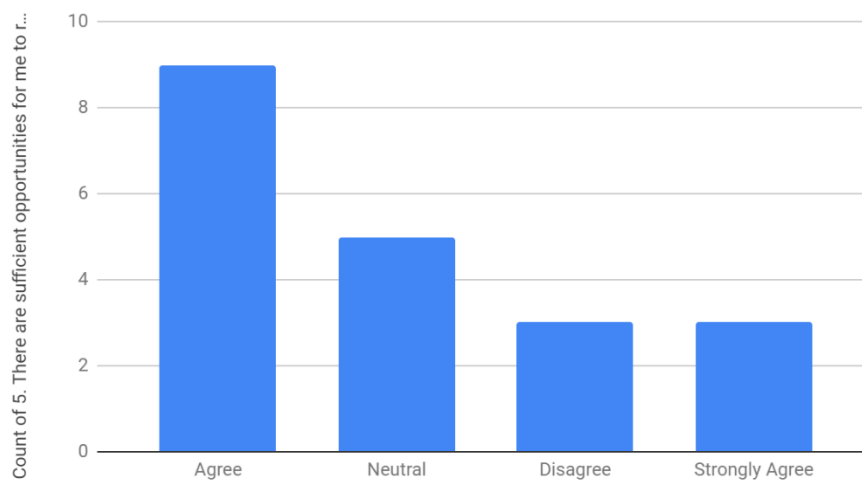
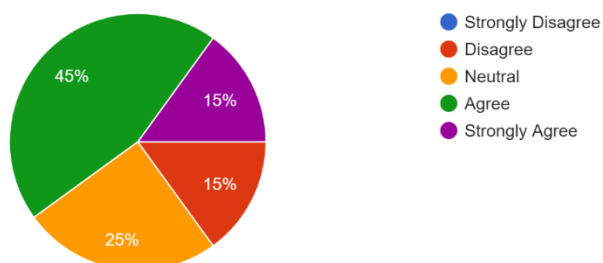
#### 4. Where are you located?

20 responses



5. There are sufficient opportunities for me to receive training to improve my skills in my current job.

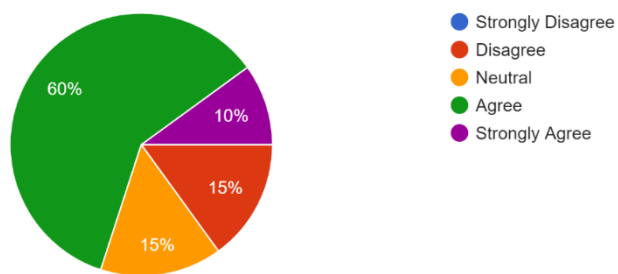
20 responses



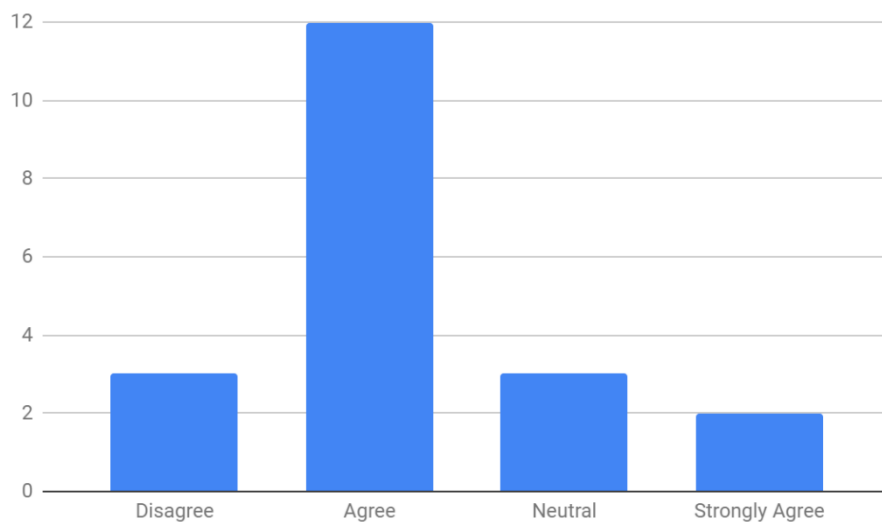
5. There are sufficient opportunities for me to receive training to improve my skills in my current job.

6. I believe I have the opportunity for personal development and growth within University.

20 responses



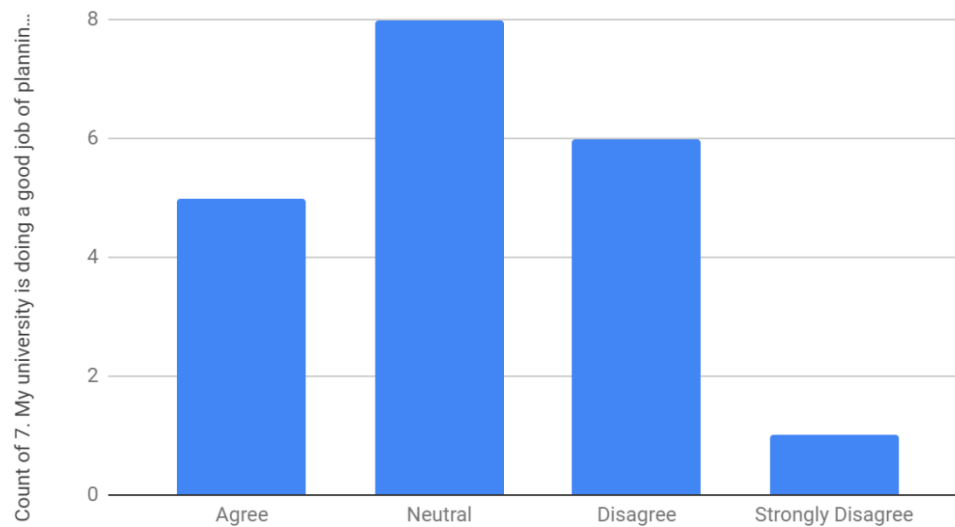
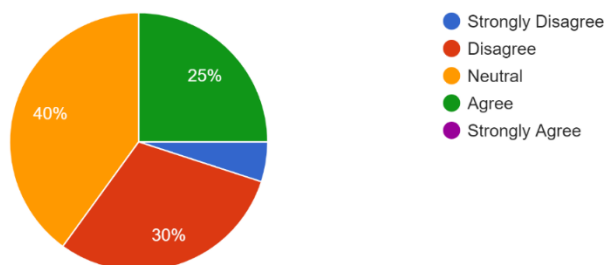
Count of 6. I believe I have the opportunity for personal...



6. I believe I have the opportunity for personal development and growth within University.

7. My university is doing a good job of planning for management succession.

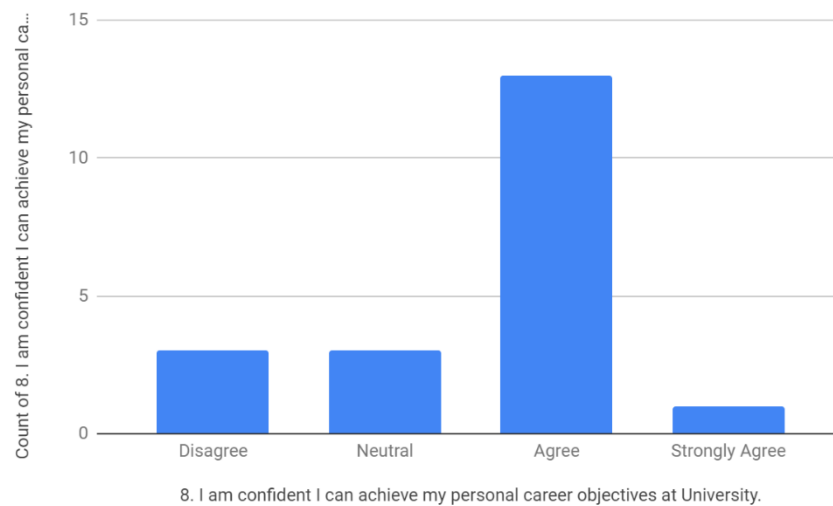
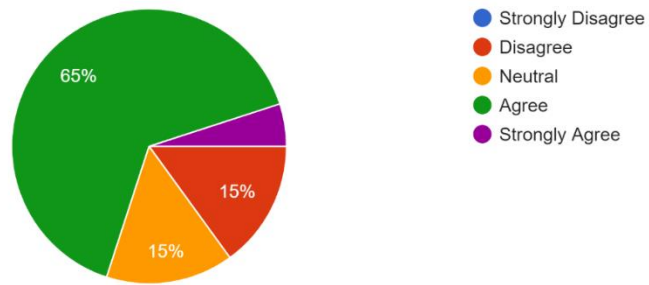
20 responses



7. My university is doing a good job of planning for management succession.

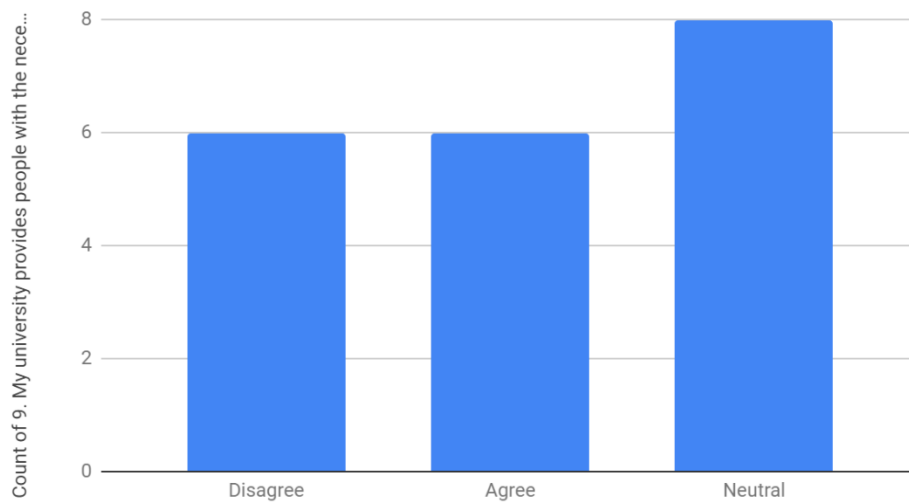
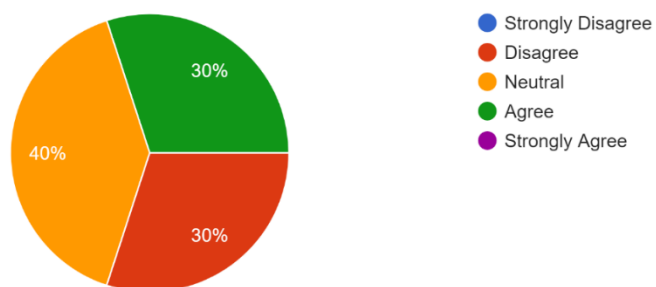
### 8. I am confident I can achieve my personal career objectives at University.

20 responses



9. My university provides people with the necessary information and resources to manage their own careers effectively.

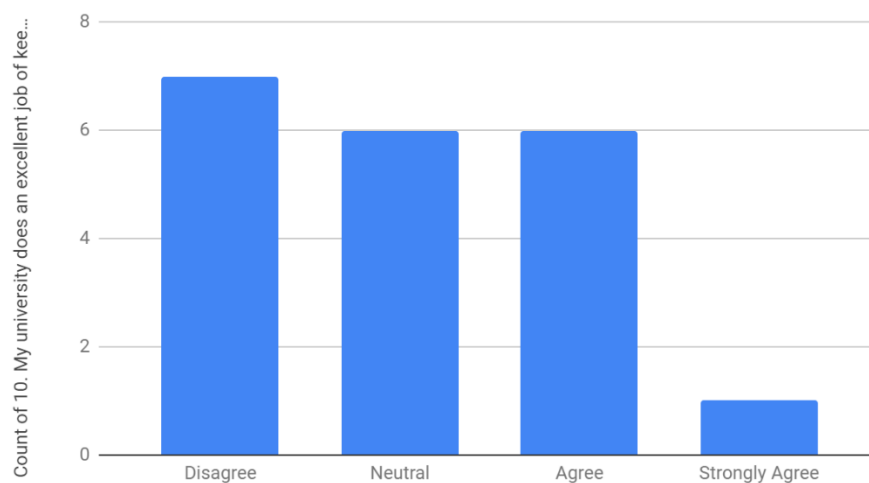
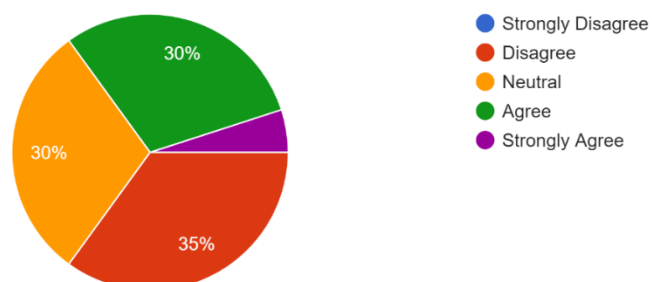
20 responses



9. My university provides people with the necessary information and resources to manage the...

10. My university does an excellent job of keeping employees informed about important organizational matters affecting us.

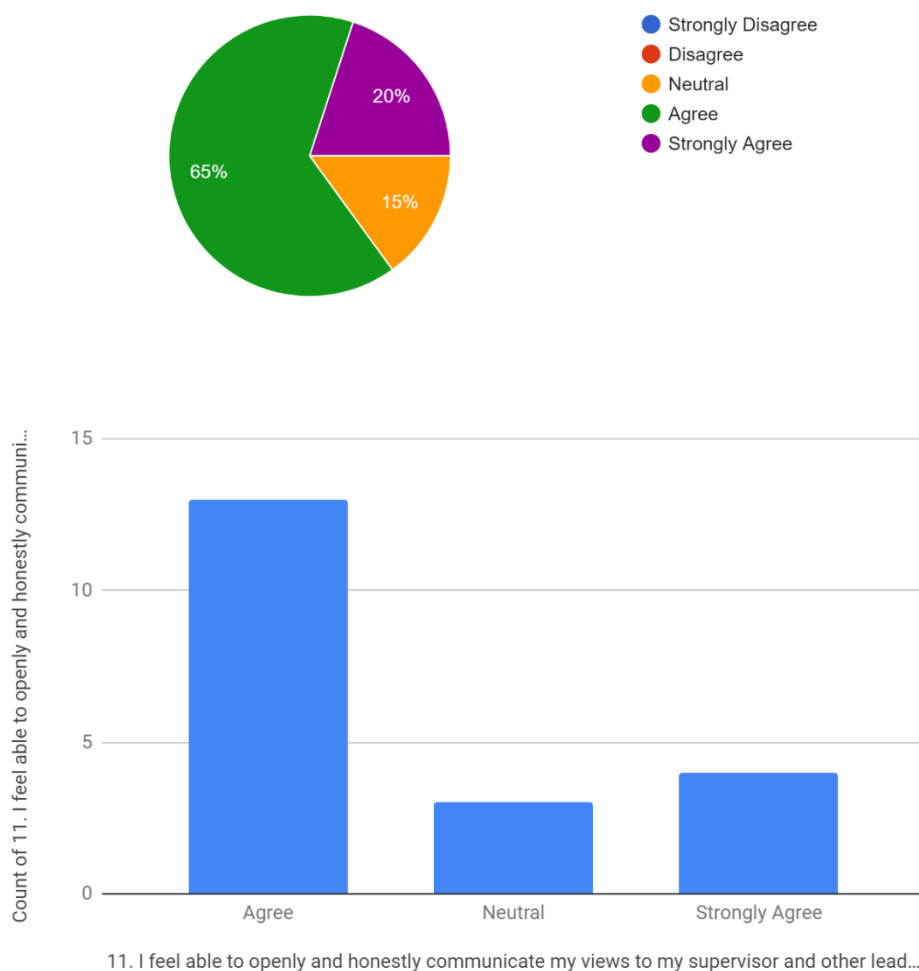
20 responses



10. My university does an excellent job of keeping employees informed about important organ...

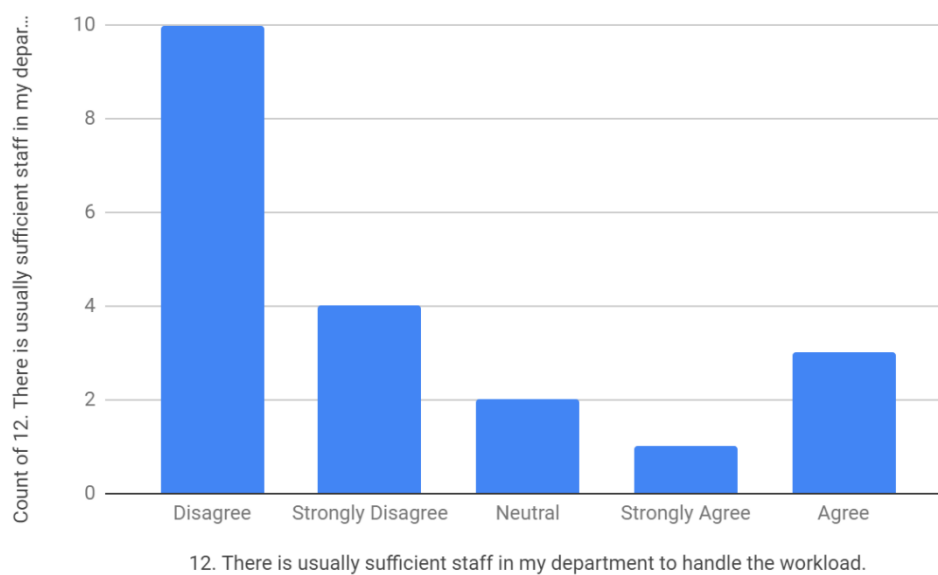
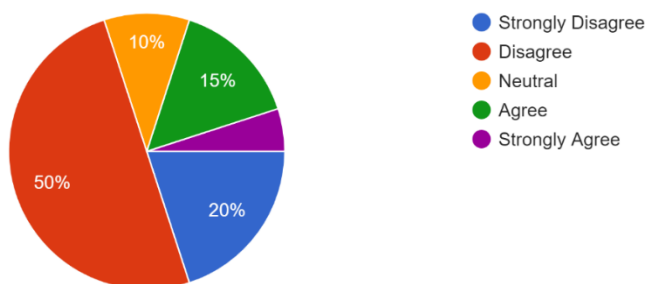
11. I feel able to openly and honestly communicate my views to my supervisor and other leaders.

20 responses



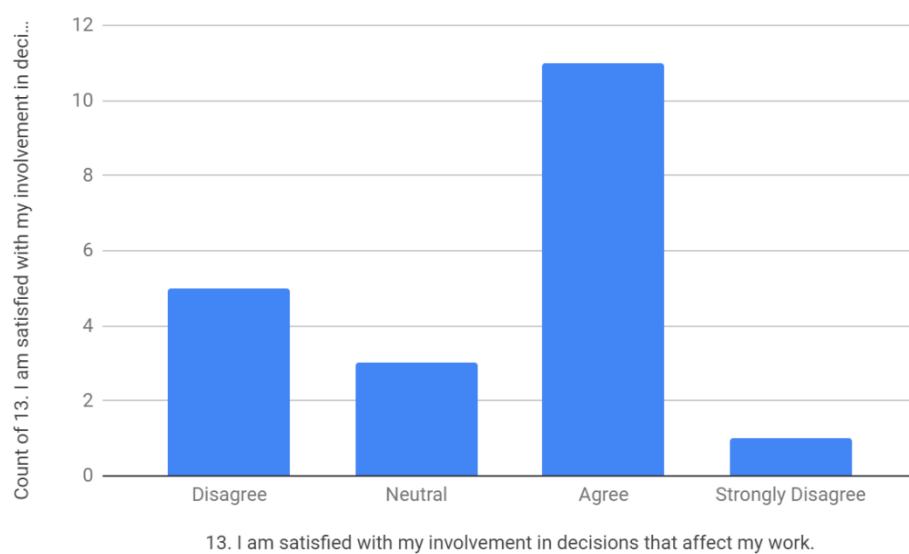
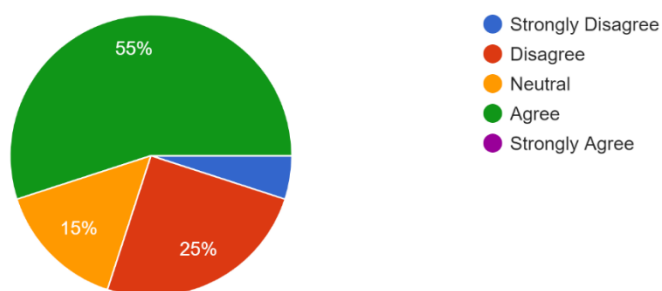
12. There is usually sufficient staff in my department to handle the workload.

20 responses



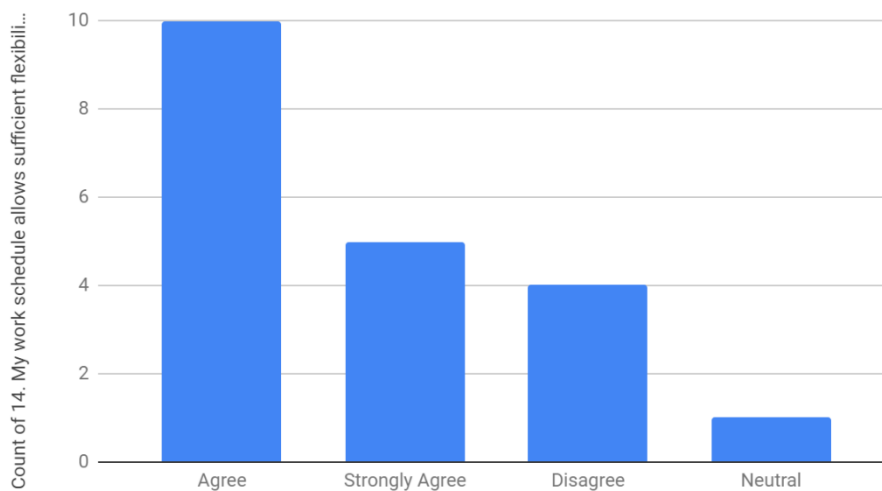
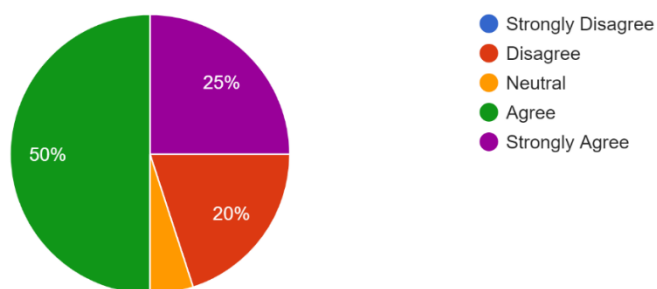
### 13. I am satisfied with my involvement in decisions that affect my work.

20 responses



14. My work schedule allows sufficient flexibility to meet my personal/family needs.

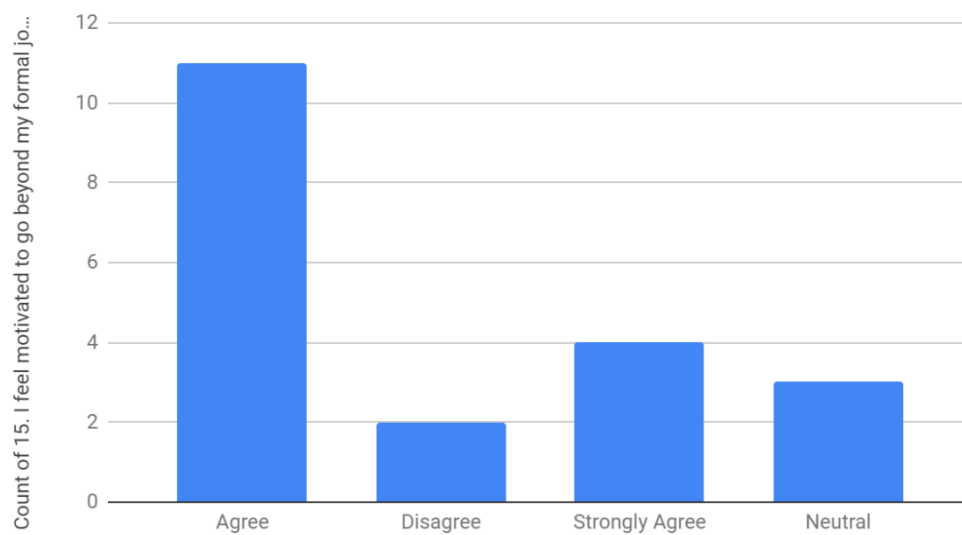
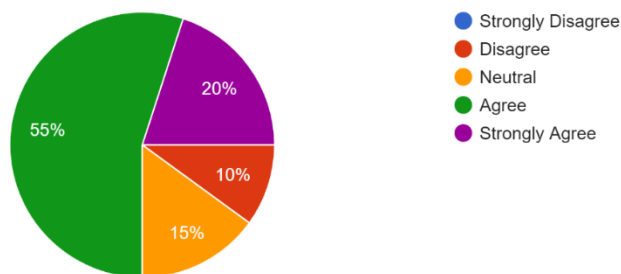
20 responses



14. My work schedule allows sufficient flexibility to meet my personal/family needs.

15. I feel motivated to go beyond my formal job responsibilities to get the job done.

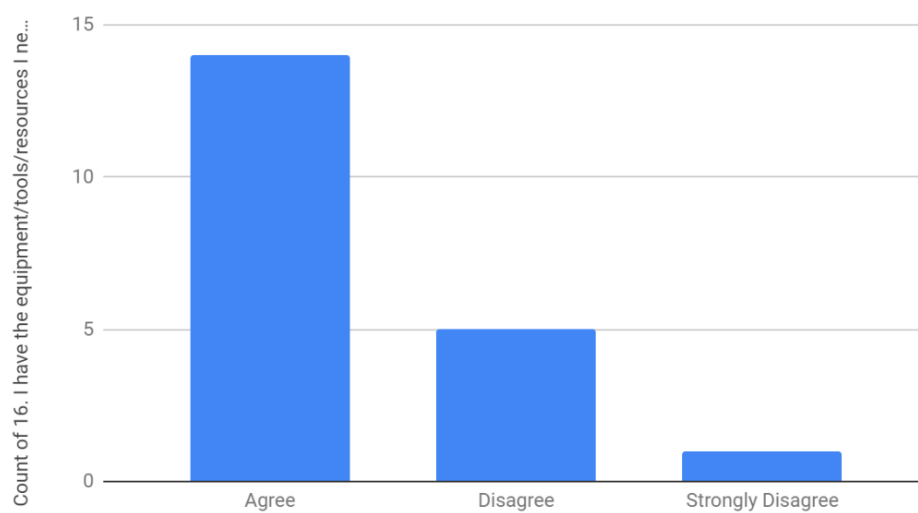
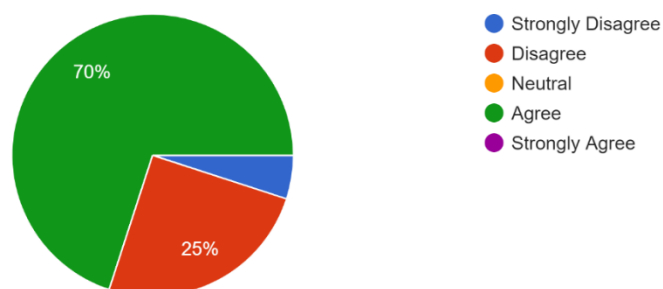
20 responses



15. I feel motivated to go beyond my formal job responsibilities to get the job done.

### 16. I have the equipment/tools/resources I need to do my job effectively.

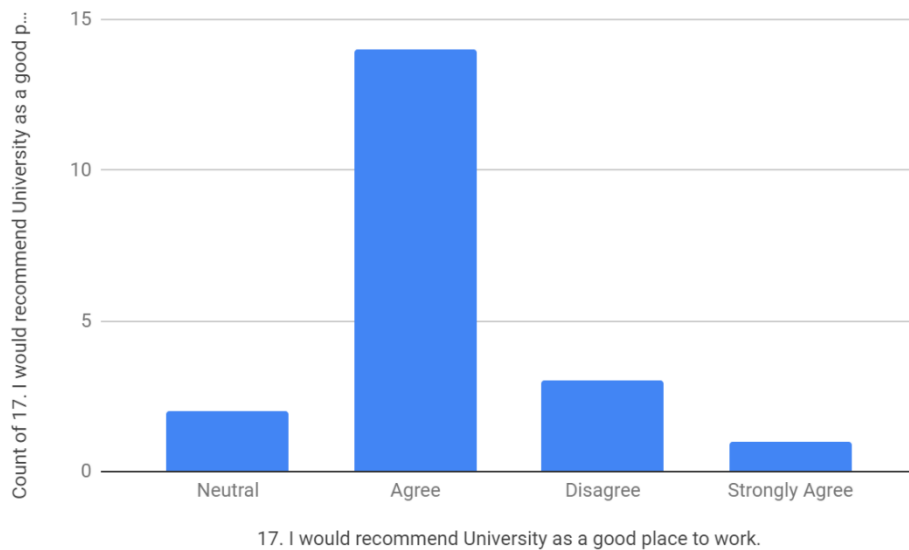
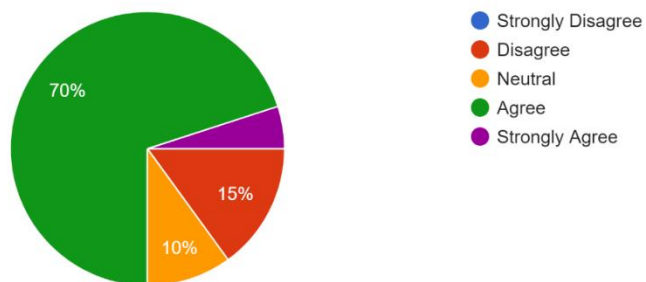
20 responses



16. I have the equipment/tools/resources I need to do my job effectively.

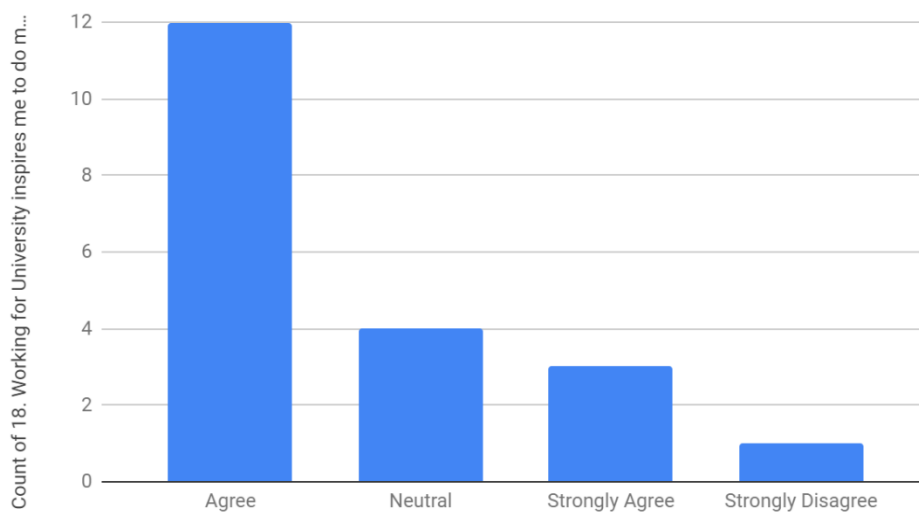
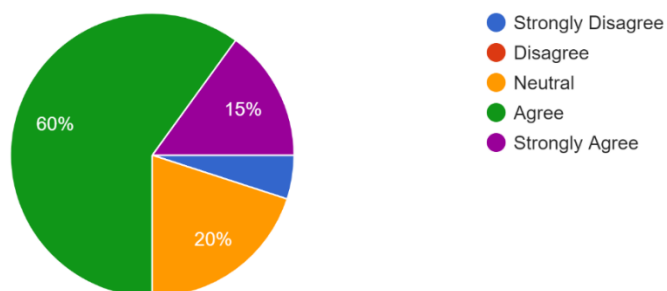
### 17. I would recommend University as a good place to work.

20 responses



### 18. Working for University inspires me to do my best work.

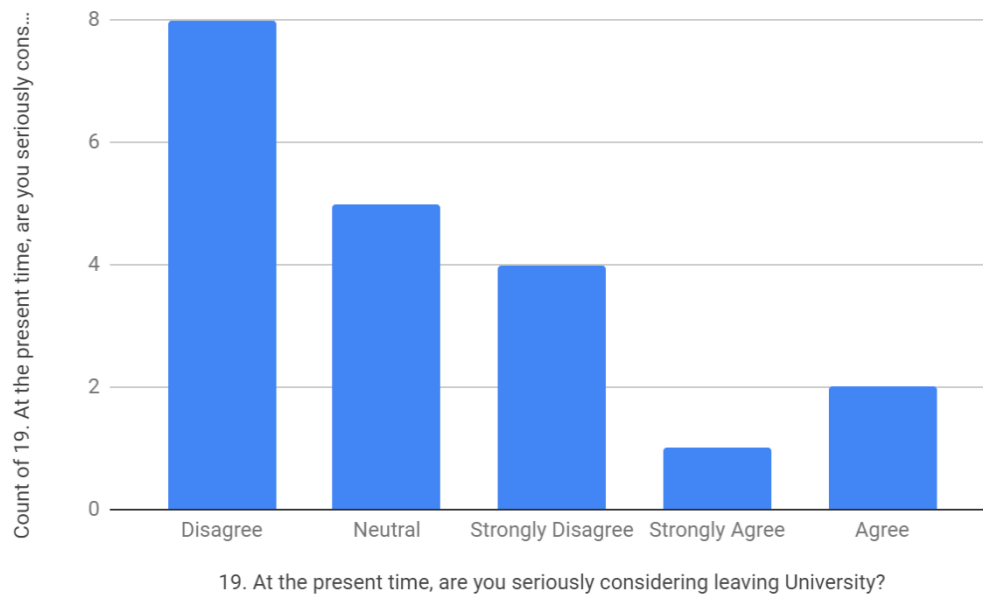
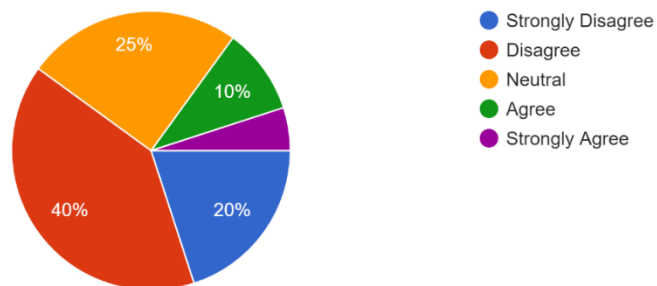
20 responses



18. Working for University inspires me to do my best work.

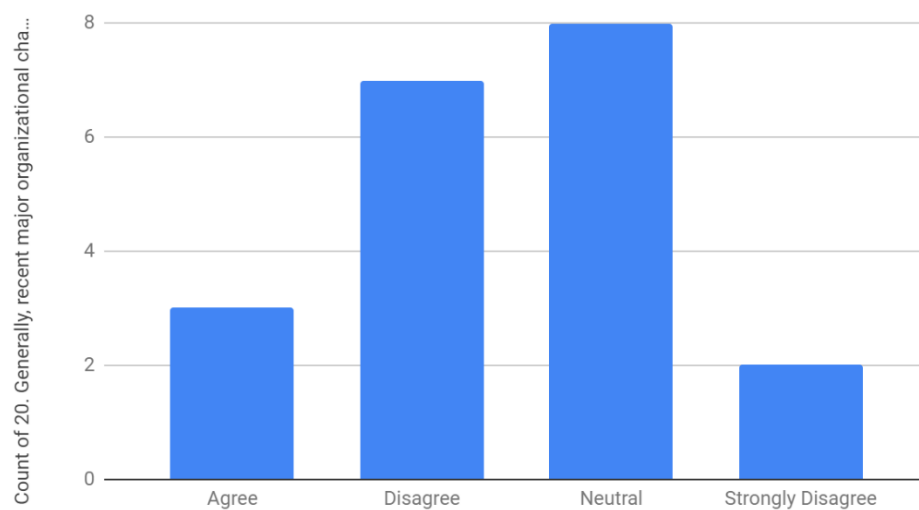
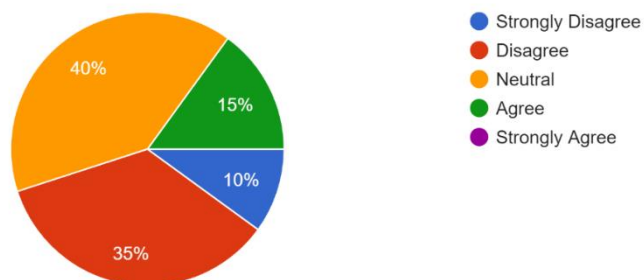
### 19. At the present time, are you seriously considering leaving University?

20 responses



20. Generally, recent major organizational changes at University have been:  
Planned well

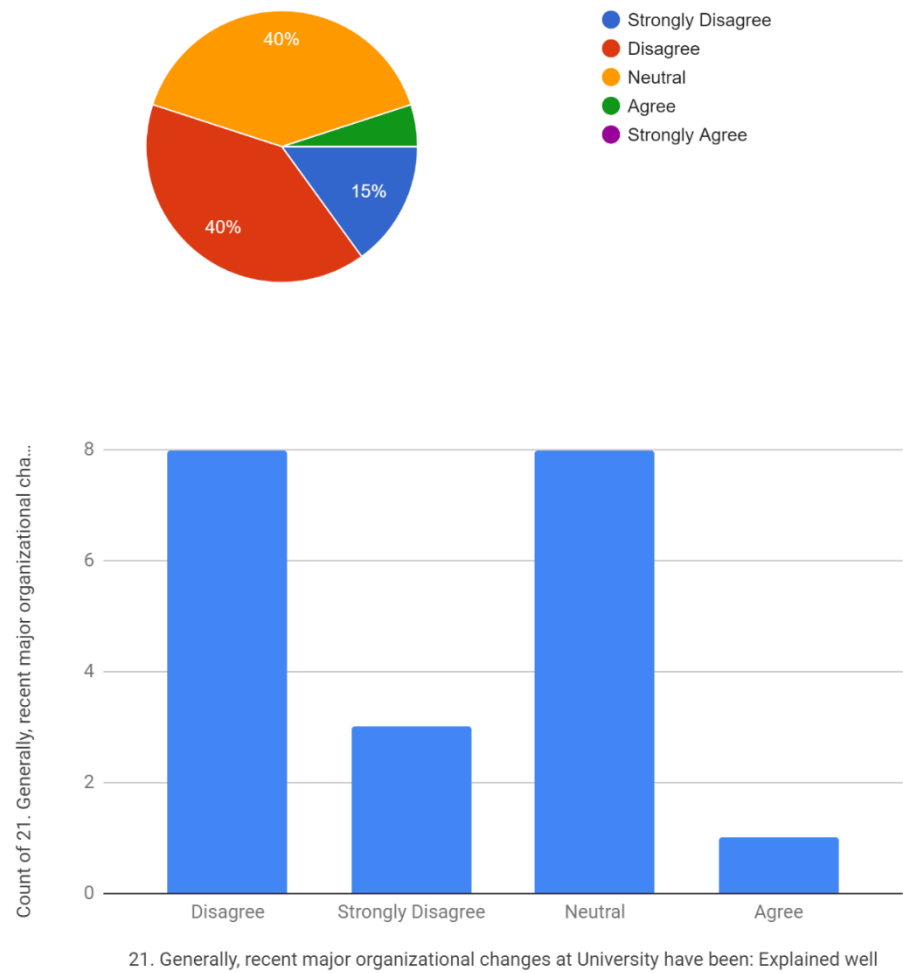
20 responses



20. Generally, recent major organizational changes at University have been: Planned well

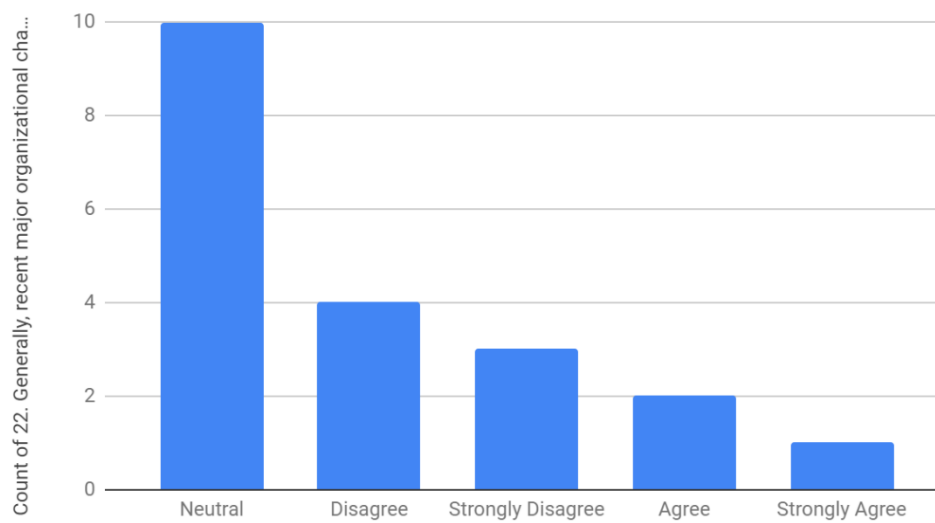
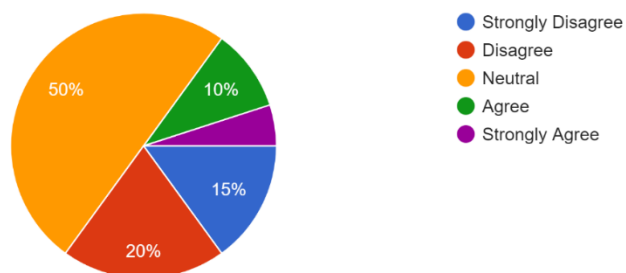
21. Generally, recent major organizational changes at University have been:  
Explained well

20 responses



22. Generally, recent major organizational changes at University have been:  
Executed well

20 responses



22. Generally, recent major organizational changes at University have been: Executed well

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