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Employee Engagement: An Exploration in Engagement of Research Administration—

Grant and Contract Officers—The Gamut Runners

A Dissertation Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree
Doctor of Public Administration

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Division of Online and Professional Studies

Department of Public Administration

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Employee Engagement: An Exploration in Engagement of Research Administration—

Grant and Contract Officers—The Gamut Runners

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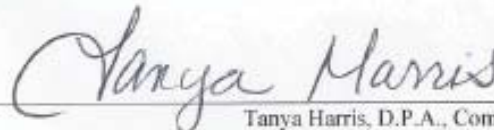in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree Doctor of Public Administration

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ABSTRACT

Research administration is a fairly new profession that is growing at a rapid speed.

Research administration is a process that includes tasks that take place during the entire

lifecycle of a research project (Spencer & Scott, 2017). The office of research

administration (ORA) is an important component of research administration because it

provides operational infrastructure, regulatory compliance oversight and guidance,

financial management and reporting, and administrative services in support of research

programs, faculty, staff, and students who are part of the campus research community

(UCLA, 2017a). The field of research administration has undergone many changes and

has continued to implement new processes since its inception in the 1940s. Research

administration is initiated with the pre-award process, which includes finding funding;

developing budgets; and preparing, reviewing, and submitting grant proposals. Grant

proposal applications were once submitted via paper forms and required wet signatures;

now, grant proposal applications are submitted electronically and can be signed digitally

with the click of a button. Grant and contract officers are the personnel who work in the

ORA and provide institutional administrative grant support to faculty, staff, and

departments. It is evident that the grant and contract officer role is experiencing a growth

in its scope of work in terms of quantity and complexity. In the years following WWII,

grant and contract officers were responsible for proposal formats that were flexible,

deadlines that were fluid, and terms and conditions that were negotiable. Today, grant

and contract officers are responsible for proposal review and submission; contract

negotiation; grant and contract management; the establishment of subaward agreements

with collaborating sites; assistance with closeout processes; and administrative oversight

of grants that involve the use of hazardous materials, human subjects, animal subjects, biosafety, recombinant DNA, debarment and suspension, misconduct in science procurement integrity, and conflict of interest. Existing literature illustrates that research administrators feel overworked, stressed, and underappreciated. This research study explores the topic of engagement in grant and contract officers by conducting a qualitative exploratory study using phenomenology to understand how grant and contract officers define employee engagement and how they feel about engagement in the workplace; it also explores the factors that affect their engagement.

Keywords: Research administration, research administrator, department research administrator, grant and contract officer, principal investigator, employee engagement, organizational culture, positive organizational behavior, aesthetics

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"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

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"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" Philippians 4:13

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSMC   Cedars-Sinai Medical Center

DRA   Department research administrator

EE   Employee engagement

GCO   Grant and contract officer

PI   Principal investigator

POB   Positive organizational behavior

NIH   National Institutes of Health

NRDC   National Research and Defense Council

NSF   National Science Foundation

ORA   Office of research administration

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Research administration is the profession dedicated to the successful administration of professional and academic research endeavors (iDoGrants, 2018). Research administration requires research administrators, who are the individuals who work closely with principal investigators before, during, and after research has begun and are tasked with ensuring the verification of compliance (Spencer & Scott, 2017). Kaplan (1959) described the role of the research administrator as a "man in the middle" (p. 31) caught between the frequently conflicting goals of the research scientist and the research organization. Research administrators must assume many roles, perform both complex and mundane functions, and act as a liaison with both internal and external parties. According to Shambrook and Roberts (2011), it takes a multitalented and mission-dedicated individual to thrive or succeed in the profession.

Research administration is made up of two phases: pre-award and post-award. Pre-award tasks include: finding funding, writing proposals, budget development, institutional review and approval processes, and proposal submission and post submission activities (Society of Research Administrators International [SRA], n.d.). Post-award tasks include: award negotiation, account/fund establishment, progress report submission, financial management, rebudgeting, and subrecipient monitoring (SRA, 2019). The two types of research administrators who are heavily involved and responsible for handling pre- and posttasks are department research administrators (DRAs) and grant and contract officers (GCOs). DRAs are unit-level administrators who work at the department and college levels and may face unique challenges and a wide range of responsibilities and functions while managing research portfolios (National

Council of University Research Administrators [NCURA], n.d.). DRAs are distinguished

from other research support functions because they are intimately involved with all facets

of the research administration process, including daily interactions with faculty, while

concurrently managing other department-specific responsibilities (NCURA, n.d.). GCOs

are research administrators who work in the office of research administration, also known

as the "central office of research administration," and provide administrative oversight of

ongoing grants and contracts at the institutional level as opposed to providing

administrative oversight at the department level. GCOs are assigned a research portfolio

with specific departments who handle ongoing studies, projects, agreements, contracts,

and grants. GCOs work closely with DRAs to ensure their respective ongoing research

adheres to institutional and sponsor guidelines, regulations, and policies.

Research indicates that research administrators struggle with having to justify

their profession as research administrators. Research also indicates there is a lack of

scholarship on research administration (Collinson, 2006). This may be because research

administration is a fairly new profession that emerged in the mid-20th century. Because

of the limited research on research administrators, specifically on the GCO role, these

employees often find themselves explaining their roles and responsibilities to others.

Collinson's (2006) study focused on research administrators in central administration

(office of research administration), research center, and academic departments.

Collinson's (2006) study was conducted on research administrators in the academic

setting—that is, in a university setting. Collinson noted that the complexity and diversity

of tasks and responsibilities associated with the role of a research administrator vary and

cannot be generalized. Collinson noted the problematic, and sometimes contested

occupational identities of research administrators and the complexity of their relationships and interaction with academic colleagues. Collinson argued the research administrator's role is a complex one because one moment the administrator performs routine, boring, and secretarial chores, and the next moment the administrator is responsible for institutional-wide takes (Collinson, 2006).

Collinson (2006) noted that almost all the interviewees in his study made a reference to the invisibility of their role in relation to academic colleagues, especially when the job was performed effectively and efficiently. The academic colleagues Collinson referenced refers to the academic staff of the university, which is made up of personnel whose primary assignment is instruction, research, or public service. Academic staff "includes staff personnel who hold an academic rank with titles such as professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, lecturer, or the equivalent of any of these academic ranks" (Eurostat, n.d., p. 1). Academic staff may also hold other titles such as "dean, director, associate dean, assistant dean, chair, or head of department" (Eurostat, n.d., p. 1). The academic colleagues Collinson (2006) referenced refer to the faculty whom research administrators work with. These faculty members are typically the principal investigators who research administrators they work with to prepare grant proposals applications and manage ongoing research projects. Collinson (2006) noted that research administrators are not held to the same prestige level as academic staff, which is due to the hierarchical nature of academia. Participants expressed frustration in being perceived as "nonacademic" and being defined as administrators who fall into "other" categories (Collinson, 2006). This default or negative definition seems to deny research administrators' specialist skills, subject expertise, and also results in a lack of

respect for their abilities (Collinson, 2006). Further, Collison (2006) noted that most interviewees felt that their work was taken for granted and expressed that although they were heavily involved in research, they felt invisible because they were not an academic member or staff. One of the participants expressed that if he got something right, he never heard about it, but if he got something wrong, he would never hear the end of it (Collinson, 2006).

Two salient themes present throughout Collinson's (2006) study were first, the problematic and sometimes contested occupational identities of research administrators and second, the complexity of their relationships and interaction with academic colleagues. Collinson found that both male and female participants emphasized the lack of acknowledgement by academic colleagues. Their reference to invisibility had nothing to do with gender but was solely based on their role as a research administrator. Both female and male research administrators expressed frustration with the lack of acknowledgement when completing tasks efficiently and effectively and expressed frustration with having their academic colleagues unload their annoyance onto them (Collinson, 2006).

Although the research administrator profession has become more solidified throughout the course of time, there remains a challenge in which research administrators look to define their roles as professionals. Further research indicated that research administrators are underresearched, receive scant research attention, and experience social invisibility (Collinson, 2006; Kaplan, 1959; Roberts, 2005).

Moreover, Brick (2012) indicated employee recognition is critical to the culture and operation within the workplace, which impacts employee engagement. Haines and

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St-Onge's (2012) findings demonstrate that rewards and recognition directly affect employee engagement and performance. These findings indicate employees wish to feel appreciated and valued when performing daily tasks. The need for autonomy, intrinsic rewards, and influence are required to achieve employee engagement (Bolman & Deal, 2014).

This research study was founded upon existing literature on research administration and employee engagement as well as on the lived experiences of GCOs at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center (CSMC). CSMC sends out annual employee engagement surveys to all employees. The purpose of this survey was to examine the current engagement levels of employees and to collect employee feedback. The employee survey results for FY15 (fiscal year), FY16, and F17 indicate low engagement levels for GCOs in the office of research administration. The survey results demonstrate that the GCO team has been the least engaged team for 3 consecutive years. These low engagement survey results prompted this qualitative exploratory study using phenomenology methodology. This research study examined current engagement levels in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals and potential ways to improve GCO engagement levels in this rapid-growing profession.

Historical Background and Overview

Research administration is growing at a rapid speed and has undergone four major eras over the last 40 years including the expansion era, the transition era, the para-profession era, and the independent professional era, which are all discussed in further detail in Chapter 2. Although research administration is becoming a global profession, there is still a lack of understanding as to what research administrators do. The office of

research administration (ORA), also known as office of sponsored research administration, division of sponsored research programs, office of contract and grant administration, and pre-award and post-award offices has become a key component of the central core of the higher education administrative infrastructure (Cole, 2010). Shambrook and Roberts (2011) argued that little has been done to date to describe who research administrators are as a profession. Hansen and Moreland (2004) reflected upon the challenges research administrators face in their constant balancing between the competing demands of sponsoring agencies and over-worked academic researchers. Research administrators must assume many roles, perform both complex and mundane functions, and act as a liaison with both internal and external parties. It takes a multitalented and mission-dedicated individual to thrive or succeed in the profession (Shambrook & Roberts, 2011). As indicated in the study conducted by Shambrook and Brawman-Mintzer (2007), research administrators perceive this work is often done in stressful environments with little recognition from their nonadministrative colleagues to whom they provide a service.

Kerridge and Scott (2018) conducted a demographic study on research administration around the world, which demonstrated that research administration is becoming recognized as a profession in various parts of the world. However, although this fast-growing profession was established over 50 years ago, there are different expectations of and boundaries to what a research administrator does. There is not a universal job description or universal set of duties and responsibilities for a GCO; these vary depending on the infrastructure of each organization.

Further, grant management requires technological software and programs specifically designed to manage grants, contracts, and awards. Janice Besch, the Managing Director of the National Institute of Complementary Medicine at the University of Western Sydney, expressed the following:

> Researchers require robust management systems to support their activities in a funding environment that is highly competitive and carry a significant compliance burden. If they are not well supported, they are likely to scale down, or fail in, their grant seeking activities; funding will diminish; and there is a risk that whole research programs could be shut down due to compliance breaches. (Besch, 2014, p. 1)

A pre-award management software with embedded features that allow research administrators to develop, validate, route, and submit proposals and to create budgets and projects is needed to help draft, submit, and manage grants effectively and efficiently. Although pre-award software facilitates research administration, the fundamentals of grant management are the research administrators themselves.

Currently, there is a lack of standard performance metrics for research administration services, which creates validity concerns and makes comparisons across offices more difficult (Marina, Davis-Hamilton, & Charmanski, 2015). There is not yet a measurable metric that truly captures the scope of work performed by research administrators and GCOs. Although many research administration offices use quantitative metrics to evaluate their work, there is a need for an effective, evidence-based metric standard that captures the complexity of the field (Marina et al., 2015). For instance, there are quantitative metrics that measure the number of proposals submitted

and the number of active awards in any given portfolio. However, there are no metrics that measure the quality of work and services rendered. There are metrics that measure how many grant proposal applications a GCO submits, but there are no metrics that measure how much time it takes a GCO to conduct a full comprehensive review of a grant proposal application. The results of a study by Shambrook and Roberts (2011) indicated the average work hours per week of a research administrator ranges anywhere between 40 to 45 hours, which illustrates the average volume of work a research administrator handles.

Organizations with research administration officers should create workplace environments that offer support and appreciation and foster engagement in research administrators to nurture high levels of engagement, which in turn, may affect professional relationships, emotional dimensions in the workplace, and aesthetics in the workplace. Kompaso and Sridevi (2010) argued that organizations must provide a psychologically safe workplace to improve employee engagement. Further, Nasomboon (2014) indicated that the manner in which individuals feel satisfied and enthusiastic in work-related activities fosters employee engagement. These authors argued that organizational culture plays an important role in creating environments that engage employees. Organizational culture ungirds professional relationships. This study examined the factors that affect engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals by exploring the effects of professional relationships. The organizational culture framework was used to examine the effects of professional relationships on the engagement of GCOs.

May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) noted that engagement entails the active use of emotions and behaviors in addition to cognitions. Expression of emotion at work should

facilitate engagement and make the connections with others at work more meaningful (Kahn, 1990; Waldron, 1994). Work by Hochschild (1983) and Morris and Feldman (1996) suggested that when there is a lack of congruence between one's felt emotion and the organizationally desired emotion, individuals experience emotional labor and potentially disengage from their work. This study examined the factors that affect engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals by exploring the effects of emotionality in the workplace.

HayGroup is a management consulting services company that indicates one of the strategies organizations can use to engage employees is to enable the work environment. An enabling environment includes a friendly, well-designed, safe physical space; good equipment; effective communication; and good training (HayGroup, 2001). HayGroup suggested listening and addressing employee concerns that may reference slow equipment, uncomfortable room temperature, the need for ergonomic equipment, the request to put up pictures on the walls, and even requests for a fitness center. HayGroup (2001) indicated that to create an enabling environment in a cost-effective way, employers have to understand their employees' real needs. HayGroup indicated employers need to consider how investments in employees will affect the bottom line and deliver where it matters most (HayGroup, 2001). This study examined the factors that affect engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals by exploring the effects of aesthetics in the workplace.

Employee engagement is critical to any organization and has emerged as one of the greatest challenges in today's workplace (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). William Kahn (1990) first introduced the concept of *engagement* as the way in which people

employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. The concept of *employee engagement* is relatively new and has appeared in the literatures for almost 2 decades (Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Tripathi & Sharma, 2016). To date, there is no single and generally accepted definition for the term *employee engagement;* instead, several scholars have provided many but somewhat similar definitions of the concept of employee engagement (Obeidat, 2016). Recent studies on employee engagement have gone beyond attempting to define employee engagement and have embarked on a search for methods that can be used to improve employee engagement.

Employee engagement has been associated with the success and financial performance of an organization. Organizations that have highly engaged employees have greater profits than those that do not. Kortmann, Gelhard, Zimmermann, and Piller (2014) argued that leaders need to work hard to engage employees to make or maintain company profitability. Recent research indicates organizations with highly engaged employees experience increased customer satisfaction, profits, and employee productivity (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). According to Harter (2018), it is important for organizations to create a culture and atmosphere that facilitate employee engagement and adopt different practices that enable them to maintain engagement to ensure superior organizational performance. Development Dimensions International (DDI, 2005) stated that to create a highly engaged workforce, management should align efforts with strategy, empower employees, promote and encourage teamwork and collaboration, help people grow and develop, and provide employee support and recognition.

Gabriele and Caines (2014) conducted a study on research administrators as servant leaders. This study indicated that to ensure the continued productivity of the research enterprise while respecting its wider and more powerful mission of service to the public trust, research administrators have a critically important role that can open the research enterprise to new depths, unprecedented possibilities, and unforeseen horizons of opportunity. Providing for these expansive missions necessitates that the research administrator as a servant leader understands and courageously enters into the dynamic, never-ending process of being a leader (Gabriele & Caines, 2014). This study highlights the importance of research administrators being connected, remaining competent, and committed to the profession. The importance of research administrators being connected and committed alludes to variables associated with engagement. More succinctly, it is important for research administrators to be engaged in their organizations. Currently, there is an absence of scholarship that examines employee engagement in GCOs. This research study bridged that gap by exploring how GCOs define employee engagement, their current levels of engagement, and potential ways in which engagement levels may be improved.

Statement of the Problem

Previous literature has indicated that research administrators are overworked and feel underappreciated by colleagues to whom they provide administrative services. The problem is the lack of engagement in the research administrator population. The problem statement of this research study is founded upon existing literature and was prompted by the lived experiences of GCOs working at CSMC. For 3 consecutive years, the results of the annual employee engagement survey demonstrated the GCO team was the least

engaged team in the ORA. The engagement survey results demonstrate a progressive

decrease in the engagement levels of GCOs over 3 consecutive years. During these 3

consecutive years, management experienced changes a couple of times. Although GCOs

voiced concerns and comments through the surveys, it appeared no changes were evident,

which could have played a role in the decreased engagement levels. CSMC sends out

annual employee engagement surveys to all employees. These surveys are conducted

electronically and are completely confidential. The survey asks questions about an

employee's direct manager, department or unit, and organization as a whole. The survey

questions cover various categories, some of which include employee support and

feedback and recognition. The CSMC ORA is made up of four teams: the pre-award

team, which is composed of the GCOs; the post-award team; data analytics; and the

industry sponsored research team. Figure 1 illustrates that in FY15, the GCO team was

37.50% engaged. Figure 2 illustrates that in FY16, the GCO team was 25% engaged.

Figure 3 illustrates that in FY17, the GCO team was 0% engaged. In FY17, only 90% of

the department responded to the survey compared to a 100% response rate for the 2

previous years. The FY17 survey results did not include any information for the data

analytics team; thus, Figure 3 illustrates the survey results for post-award, pre-award, and

industry sponsored. The survey results demonstrate the engagement levels of GCOs have

been the lowest in the ORA for 3 consecutive years. More specifically, the survey results

demonstrate the GCO engagement levels have been progressively declining, which

illustrates the problem this study sought to address.
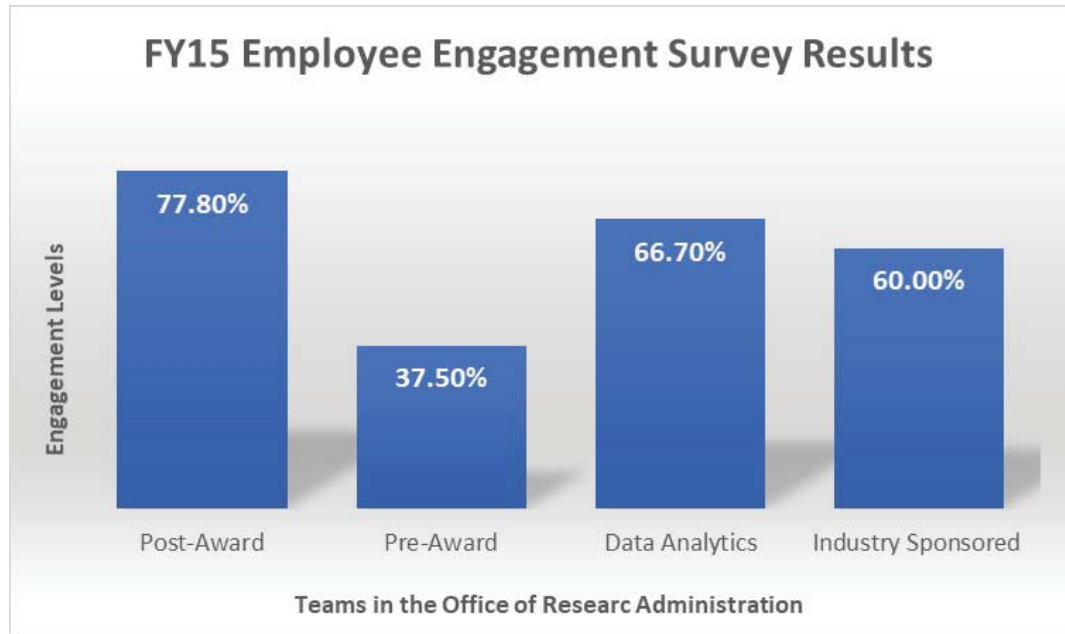
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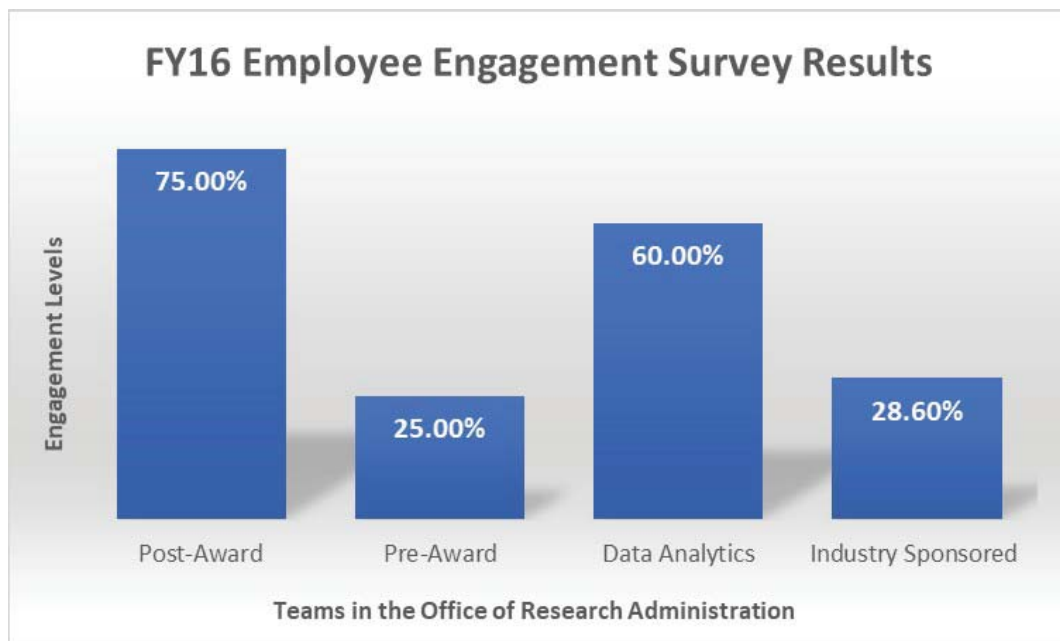
Figure 2. Engagement levels in fiscal year 2016.
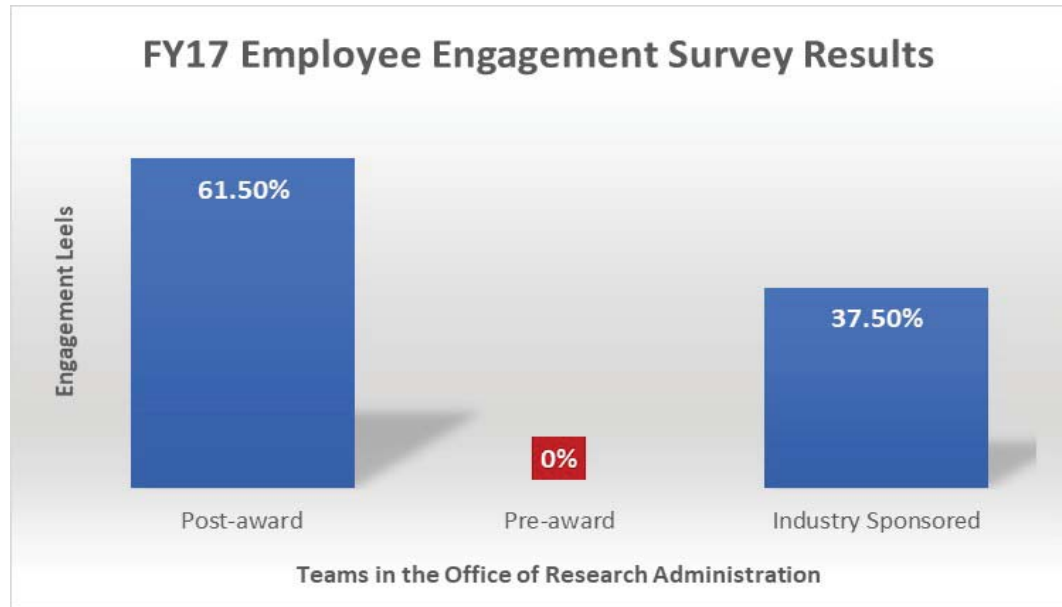
Figure 3. Engagement levels in fiscal year 2017.

Existing literature has alluded to the fact that this problem is pervasive in the research administration field. Maintaining engaged employees will help retain GCOs with years, if not decades of experience in the research field. Hospital leadership should understand the engagement levels of GCOs and most importantly, should find ways to keep them engaged to retain talent and experience. A study by Shambrook and Roberts (2011) indicated the average years of experience of a research administrator is between 10-20 years. Maintaining engaged GCOs can help organizations maintain appropriate administrative oversight over millions of dollars of research funding. Thus, it is pertinent for leadership to learn how to improve engagement in GCOs, which in turn will help organizations manage ongoing research portfolios in an effective manner and help ensure research administration compliance by adhering to sponsor agency policies, regulations, and procedures.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that affect engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals by exploring the effects of professional relationships, the effects of emotionality in the workplace, and workplace aesthetics. Kahn's (1990) theory of employee engagement undergirds this study as it proposed that engagement varies based on perceptions and experiences. This research study examined the factors that affect engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals by exploring the effects of professional relationships, the effects of emotionality in the workplace, and the aesthetics of the workplace. Bersin (2014) found that only 13% of employees worldwide are fully engaged at work. Other studies have shown that organizational productivity is determined by employees' efforts and engagement (Bersin, 2014). The results of this study contribute to the body of literature on the research administration field and provide insight on the topic of employee engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals. This study introduces a new paradigm to current scholarship in employee engagement by focusing on a unique population and setting, GCOs in nonprofit hospitals.

The specific aim of this study was to provide research administration leadership with information on how to potentially improve engagement levels in GCOs. This study sought to provide an understanding of how GCOs view employee engagement through their lived experiences, working in nonprofit hospitals. Existing literature on research administrators has focused on the university setting; this research study focused on the nonprofit hospital setting, which is currently underresearched. Finally, this study intended to explore ways to address the lack of engagement.

Significance of the Study

Research administration began in the 1940s with a call to organize science and a growing concept of federally funded research. In the 1940s, President Roosevelt advocated for the creation of organizations to coordinate federal funding of science, which led to the creation of the National Research and Defense Council (NRDC). NRDC was the first national-level coordinating organization for research in the United States (Campbell, 2010). Professional organizations began to surface in the 1950s to support scientific research including the creation of a National Science Foundation ([NSF], n.d.), which was established by Congress to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; and to secure the national defense. Research administration is a fairly new profession; thus, there is little research on this field in comparison to other fields such as the medical and education fields. The research that currently exists on research administration has focused on understanding the roles and responsibilities of research administrators. The significance of this study is that it goes beyond describing and understanding the roles in research administration and explores perceptions of how engagement in GCOs can be improved. This study addresses the missing gap in research administration scholarship by examining the perceptions of how GCOs define employee engagement, examines the current levels of engagement, and explores ways of potentially improving engagement. This study introduces a new paradigm of employee engagement, GCOs, and focuses on a new setting, the nonprofit hospital setting.

The majority of the existing research on research administration has focused on research administrators at the department level rather than on research administrators at

the central administration level. DRAs are professionals who work directly with

principal investigators in specific departments such as neurology, neurosurgery,

psychiatry, and so forth. They are responsible for preparing study budgets as well as

preparing the required documentation for grant proposal submissions. In addition, they

directly oversee the work completed in ongoing studies, which usually requires them to

have administrative oversight of laboratories where the research is conducted. According

to the University of Colorado, DRAs are responsible for proposal development, post-

award administration, and regulatory compliance as it relates to sponsored projects

(University of Colorado Denver, n.d.). According to Johns Hopkins University ([JHU],

n.d.), DRAs

> Provide the first line of assistance for faculty and are responsible for facilitating
>
> communication between faculty and the office of research administration;
>
> facilitate communication between ORA and sponsors; assist in the development
>
> of proposals, including budget creation and initial review; managing sponsored
>
> accounts; and assist faculty in financial reconciliations. (p. 1)

The NCURA defined DRAs as follows:

> Unit-level administrators, who work at the department and college levels, have
>
> expertise in both pre- and post-award activities, and are intimately involved with
>
> all facets of the research administration process, including daily interactions with
>
> faculty, while concurrently managing other department-specific responsibilities.
>
> (NCURA, n.d., p. 1)

> In contrast, GCOs are research administrators at the institutional level and work in

the central office of a research administration. GCOs are responsible for administrative

and institutional oversight of research proposals and grants. GCOs are authorized

organizational officials who review grant applications and ensure grant proposal

applications are in compliance with institutional and sponsor guidelines. In addition,

GCOs negotiate research contracts and agreements with various sponsor agencies and

provide administrative oversight of active research grants. According to UCLA's ORA,

GCOs are responsible for the following:

> Assisting faculty and staff in assessing funding opportunities and submitting
>
> applications/proposals for funds to governmental (federal. state, county,
>
> municipal and foreign) and nonprofit entities (foundations, educational
>
> institutions, research organizations); serving as an active participant in the
>
> campus' shared responsibility for ensuring sound stewardship for funds provided
>
> by external sponsors; contracting on behalf of the Regents of the University of
>
> California for financial support of such programs; provide on-going contract
>
> management for the University; and participate in the close-out process. (UCLA,
>
> 2017b, p. 2)

According to CSMC, GCOs are responsible for the following:

> Pre-award management; negotiating research agreements with federal, nonprofit
>
> and private institutions; being a liaison between Cedars-Sinai and federal
>
> agencies, nonprofit organizations and subaward partners; award management;
>
> award transfers (incoming and outgoing); administrative compliance oversight in
>
> the areas of sponsor regulations; training and education in research administration
>
> and compliance; award closeouts. (CSMC, 2019, p. 2)

Existing research on GCOs has focused on the demographics of the GCO role and on providing an understanding of the duties and responsibilities of this role. This study is significant because it impacts public administration by contributing to two concepts of public administration: the efficiency/effectiveness concept and the responsibility/ representation concept. Lockwood (2007) argued that employee engagement can be a deciding factor in organizational success. She indicated that employees with the highest levels of commitment perform 20% better and are 87% less likely to leave the organization and illustrated a link between engagement and organizational performance (Lockwood, 2007). Lockwood's study results found that organizations that have a highly engaged workforce were found to have almost 10 times as many committed, high-effort workers as those with a low-engaged workforce. Based on these findings, employees who are engaged are committed to their organization and therefore perform better. This alludes to the fact that engaged employees result in a more effective and efficient workforce, which in turn results in more effective and efficient organizations. This research study explored potential ways of how engagement in GCOs can be improved, which can lead to positive employee performance and in turn, help organizations be more effective and efficient.

Moreover, this research study contributes to the concept of representation and responsibility in public administration. Donald Kingsley, who developed the representative concept in 1944, argued that bureaucracies, to be democratic, must be representative of the groups they serve (Dolan & Rosenbloom, 2003). Kingsley believed a bureaucracy should represent the dominant parties in society as they are the ones with the larger voice and votes. A study conducted by Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday

(2004) found that the strongest driver of employee engagement is a sense of feeling valued and involved. This study found that the key components of feeling valued and involved include: involvement in decision-making, being able to voice ideas and having managers who value these contributions, opportunities to develop their jobs, and working in an organization that is concerned with employee well-being (Robinson et al., 2004). Some of the interview questions addressed the emotionality component of the job and asked participants whether they felt supported in maintaining a positive motivational state in the workplace, which alluded to the overall well-being of the employee. This researcher examined whether representation/responsibility had an effect on the engagement of GCOs. The results from this research study contribute to public administration as the findings indicate that the well-being of an employee, including the emotional state in the workplace, affects engagement; feeling supported and valued led to engagement whereas feeling neglected overlooked led to disengagement. More specifically, this study explored the drivers of engagement in GCOs working in nonprofit hospitals. This research study fills the scholarship gap that previously existed in the research administration field. The findings from this study will serve as a foundation for future researchers who will be able to expand on this topic by examining different components of the GCO profession. This research study also provides research administration leaders with information on how they can improve engagement of GCOs in their respective organization.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

An exploratory qualitative phenomenological research design and methodology for conducting this study was used and was based on a need to understand the lived experiences of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals. The basic assumption was that participants interviewed would answer questions and engage discussions in an open and honest manner that relayed their lived experiences. The overarching assumption was that after the study was conducted, the findings would enrich the body of knowledge on employee engagement by exploring the potential factors that drive engagement in GCOs working in a nonprofit hospital setting.

Limitations

Limitations are factors that the researcher cannot control. This study was conducted to explore the current levels of engagement in GCOs and to explore the potential factors that affect engagement. One limitation in this study was the sample size. Qualitative phenomenological studies are limited to small sample sizes. Crouch and McKenzie (2006) indicated that less than 20 participants is ideal in a qualitative study and helps a researcher build and maintain a close relationship and thus improve the open and frank exchange of information. This study consisted of 14 participants from nonprofit hospitals in Massachusetts, which may have limited the perception of the phenomenon and may have illustrated low representativeness. Another limitation in this study consisted of potential weaknesses that the researcher could not control and include participants' perspectives, experiences, and feelings in their descriptions of their respective nonprofit organization. The final limitation was participants' interpretation of

the interview questions. Participants could have approached the in-depth interviews with preconceived ideas of their field and of their jobs, which may have prevented them from answering the questions objectively. Participants may have misinterpreted the questions different than their intent, which may have led them to answer the questions based on their personal biases.

Delimitations

This study had a couple of delimiting factors. Delimitations are in the control of the researcher who defines the scope and boundaries of the study. Delimitating factors included the decision to limit the participation only to full-time and permanent GCOs working in four nonprofit hospitals located in Massachusetts. The four nonprofit hospitals were selected based on National Institutes of Health (NIH) reporting that lists all the organizations that receive federal funding. Another delimitation of the study was the relatively small sample size. The study included 14 participants working in four nonprofit hospitals with the highest number of federal awards in terms of quantity and funding. The research was used to explore the perceptions of employee engagement and the factors that affect engagement in GCOs with various levels of experience. Performing data analysis on participant responses provided insight into the perceptions of employee engagement and the factors that contribute to employee engagement. Examining the lived experiences of employees and understanding their perceptions are pertinent in obtaining new knowledge.

Overview of Theoretical Framework

Employee Engagement

The theoretical framework of this research study was based on William Kahn's (1990) theory of employee engagement. Kahn's theory of employee engagement helped identify factors that lead to engagement by examining employees' physical, cognitive, and emotional roles.

Kahn's theory of employee engagement helped identify how GCOs feel in terms of the meaningfulness, safety, and availability of their current workplaces. Kahn (1990) developed the employee engagement theory and researched factors that motivate employees within an organization. Kahn (1990) indicated that employees can assume any one of the three roles as indicated by the employee engagement theory, which include physical, cognitive, and emotional roles. According to Kahn (1990), the performance level of an individual in the workplace depends on physical, cognitive, and emotional factors.

A personally engaged employee can become physically involved in his or her tasks, become emotionally and empathically attached to others in the organization, and cognitively observant of what happens in the organization (Kahn, 1990). According to Kahn (1990), an employee who is engaged becomes physically involved in tasks, whether alone or with others, cognitively vigilant, and empathically connected to others in the service of the work they are doing in ways that display what they think and feel, their creativity, their beliefs and values, and their personal connections to others. However, an employee who is disengaged demonstrates withdrawal, defensiveness, and behaviors that promote a lack of connections; physical, cognitive, and emotional absence; and passive,

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incomplete role performances (Kahn 1990). The personally disengaged individual tends

to avoid associating with coworkers and is usually defensive toward the work role given

to him or her (Kahn, 1990). Further, personally disengaged individuals are cognitively,

physically, and emotionally absent in the workplace and are usually not able to complete

assigned tasks (Kahn, 1990).

Recent research has demonstrated that employees can become disengaged when

they experience unethical leadership behavior such as not adhering to checks and

balances, lack of internal controls, and not adhering to company rules and regulations

(Van Vugt, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2008). Further, if employees experience anxiety,

uncertainty, stress, apprehension, and/or lack of security as a result of particular

situations in the organization, then the individuals will decide to disengage from activities

in the organization (Chughtai & Buckley, 2008). The employee engagement theory by

Kahn (1990) is excellent for identifying reasons as to why an employee is engaged or

disengaged. This theory undergirded the engagement variables of this research study and

provided content for the interview questions, which focus on the effects of professional

relationships, emotionality, and aesthetics in the workplace of a GCO.

Research Questions

According to the Haak, McKee, and Schultz (2018), research administrators have

a lot in common with meteorologists. Research administrators "monitor looming

deadline storms and workloads that swirl around like a hurricane [and] forecast both

sunny and cloudy days based on current and historical information; information and

expertise are used to prepare faculty researchers for the days ahead" (Haak, McKee, &

Schultz, 2018, p. 8). Added pressure appeared in the mid-to-late 1980s with the public

policy trend moving toward cooperative research programs. These types of workplace environments can pose a challenge for engagement in GCOs.

A study by Cole (2010) revealed that principal investigators indicated knowledge and competence were the most important aspects in the ORA. The average range of experience for a GCO is 10 to 20 years, which embodies decades of knowledge and expertise. In order to retain this kind of knowledge and expertise, it is pertinent that research administration leadership maintains engaged GCOs. The following three research questions sought to obtain an understanding of how GCOs define employee engagement.

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of employee engagement among GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

Research Question 2: What perceived effects do professional relationships in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

Research Question 3: What perceived effect does emotionality in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

Research Question 4: What perceived effects do aesthetics in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

Definitions of Terms

The terms defined in this section are specific to this research study to help the reader gain a better understanding of this research paper. The following terms defined appear frequently throughout the research paper and are critical to the understanding of the reader. These terms include research administration, research administrator,

department research administrator, grant and contract officer, principal investigator, and employee engagement.

Department research administrator (DRA). Unit-level administrators who work at the department and college levels. DRAs are responsible for a wide range of responsibilities and functions while managing research portfolios. DRAs must have expertise in both pre- and post-award activities. DRAs are distinguished from other research support functions because they are intimately involved with all facets of the research administration process, including daily interactions with faculty, while concurrently managing other department-specific responsibilities (NCURA, n.d.).

Employee engagement (EE). Employee engagement refers to a positive attitude held by the employee toward the organization and its values (Robinson et al., 2004). An engaged employee is aware of business context and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization (Robinson et al., 2004).

Grant and contract officer (GCO). Grant and contract officer, also known as authorized organization representative and/or signing official, refers to the individual named by the applicant organization who is authorized to act for the applicant and to assume the obligations imposed by the federal laws, regulations, requirements, and conditions that apply to grant applications or grant awards (NIH Grants Policy Statement, 2018).

Organizational culture. Organizational culture is defined as the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration and that have worked

well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1983).

Positive organizational behavior (POB). Positive organizational behavior was defined by Luthans (2002b) as "the study and application of positively-oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed and effectively managed for performance improvement in today's workplace" (p. 59).

Principal investigator (PI). Principal Investigator is defined as the individual(s) judged by the applicant organization to have the appropriate level of authority and responsibility to direct the project or program supported by the grant. The applicant organization may designate multiple individuals as program directors/principal investigators (PD/PIs) who share the authority and responsibility for leading and directing the project, intellectually and logistically. When multiple PD/PIs are named, each is responsible and accountable to the official(s) at the applicant organization/recipient, or as appropriate, to a collaborating organization for the proper conduct of the project, program, or activity including the submission of all required reports (NIH Grants Policy Statement, 2018).

Research administration. Research administration is a process that has tasks that take place during the entire lifecycle of a research project (Spencer & Scott, 2017).

Research administrator. A research administrator refers to the individual who works closely with principal investigators before, during, and after research has begun and is tasked with ensuring the verification of compliance (Spencer & Scott, 2017).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 of the study included the introduction and statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, and the definitions of key terms.

Chapter 2 is the literature review, which addresses the following topics: research administration, GCOs, and employee engagement.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology used in the study including the research design, population and sampling procedure, and instrumentation. It presents the discussion of the process to obtain research approval and informed consent from study participants and provides information on validity and reliability. The chapter describes the procedures for data collection and the plan for data analysis as well as the strengths and limitations of the design elements.

Chapter 4 presents a comprehensive review of the findings of this research study. The chapter provides a detailed analysis of interviews with GCOs in four nonprofit hospitals located in Massachusetts. The chapter provides an analysis of themes based on the in-depth interviews and provides an explanation of how these results relate directly to the research questions of the study. Finally, this chapter explains the bracketing process, the interview process, the sample demographics, data collection procedures, and the qualitative findings.

Chapter 5 presents the results of the research questions, important themes that emerged from the study, recommendations for future research studies, and a concluding summary.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a synthesis of the existing literature related to research administration and employee engagement. This chapter provides historic, current, and developing literature related to research administration and employee engagement. The research presented in this chapter is literature from peer-reviewed articles, books, and dissertations. This chapter addresses the development of research administration as a field and as a profession. Research administration has evolved significantly since its inception in the 1940s. The literature presented in this chapter offers an overview of the complexity that has overtaken the research administration field as well as different aspects of research administration that have been previously studied. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the various concepts and definitions associated with employee engagement. This chapter addresses the evolution of employee engagement and how it relates to research administration. It addresses organizational culture to examine how working relationships affect engagement. Finally, this chapter examines literature on aesthetics in the workplace and how it affects employee engagement.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the literature's key terms that include research administration, research administrator, department research administrator (DRA), grant and contract officer (GCO), and employee engagement. Chapter 2 discusses the historical context related to research administration and employee engagement. This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of employee engagement that undergirds this

study. Finally, this chapter addresses literature analysis and review with a focus on the ties to the research questions.

Research Administration

Research administration is a process with tasks that take place during the entire lifecycle of a research project (Spencer & Scott, 2017). Research administration and management have had a profoundly rich development and history since their inception in the 1940s. The professional presence of research administration in the United States and across the globe has grown exponentially. Concurrently, the identity, service, and mission of research administration has grown and developed in vastly unforeseen ways as well (Gabriele & Caines, 2014). The key personnel in research administration include the principal investigator (PI), the DRA, and the GCO.

The PI is defined as the individual(s) judged by the applicant organization to have the appropriate level of authority and responsibility to direct the project or program supported by the grant (National Institutes of Health [NIH], n.d.). The National Cancer Institute (NCI) defines the PI as the person(s) in charge of a clinical trial or a scientific research grant. The PI prepares and carries out the clinical trial protocol (plan for the study) or research paid for by the grant. The PI also analyzes the data and reports the results of the trial or grant research. In other words, the PI is responsible for the scientific component of the proposal, award, and research. The DRA is the unit-level professional research administrator. DRAs work at the department levels and face unique challenges and a wide range of responsibilities and functions while managing research portfolios (NCURA, n.d.). GCOs commonly referred to as pre-award, grant officers, grant administrators, office of research administration (ORA), authorized organization official,

and signing official are the individuals, named by the applicant organization, who are authorized to act for the applicant and to assume the obligations imposed by the Federal laws, regulations, requirements, and conditions that apply to grant applications or grant awards (NIH Grants Policy Statement, 2018).

Research awards, grants, and contracts undergo three main stages: pre-award, post-award, and closeout. The pre-award stage includes all of the activities up to the moment the grant application is submitted to the funding agency. These activities typically include a review of funding announcement guidelines, budget preparation, proposal preparation, institutional review and approval, and grant application submission. The post-award activities typically include the award acceptance; ensurance that all appropriate certifications (i.e., IRB approval) are in place prior to grant activation; annual and interim progress report submissions; and adherence to compliance regulations regarding risk assessment of the project, animal subjects, conflict of interest, data management, environmental health and safety, export controls, and human subjects (SRA, 2019). The closeout stage typically includes the submission of final financial and technical progress reports and the reporting of any inventions or technologies that arose during the lifetime of the grant.

Research Administrator

Shambrook and Roberts (2011) indicated little has been done to date to describe who research administrators are as a profession. A quantitative study by Shambrook and Roberts (2011) provided demographic date for research administrators. Their study included 226 survey participants who were part of the National Council of Research Administrators (NCURA) Region III, which is composed of 11 Southeastern states and

the Territory of Puerto Rico. The findings from the study provided work-related factors

and social demographic factors, which help illustrate the research administrator profile.

The findings demonstrated that 30.3% of research administrators were DRAs, 29.6%

were pre-award administrators also known as GCOs, 18.1% were post-award

accountants, 3.1% were in research integrity/compliance, and 18.8% were in a different

type of research administration role (Shambrook & Roberts, 2011). Next, the findings

showed that 2.3% of research administrators had less than 1 year of experience, 25.1%

had 1-5 years of experience, 26.5% had 5-10 years of experience, 30.7% had 10-20 years

of experience, and 15.3% had more than 20 years of experience.

Further, the findings indicated that the average hours worked per week were

between 40 and 45 hours. The findings indicated that 80.1% of research administrators

were female and 19.9% were male. The average age of a research administrator was

between 40-49 years old, and the average level of education achieved was a bachelor's

degree. These research findings provide concrete demographics about research

administrators that provide further understanding about these professionals. Research

administrators may be described as a nearly homogeneous group who are

overwhelmingly university degreed, have years of experience, are mostly female, and

with a majority over 40 years of age. Kaplan (1959) indicated that the research

administrator is frequently viewed as an impediment to the research but a necessity for

the organization. Kaplan further stated that the research administrator can never take

direct credit for the accomplishments within the organization but must always be ready to

receive the complaints of those who feel that they interfere with the accomplishments of

these goals (Kaplan, 1959).

Department Research Administrator

DRAs are distinguished from other research support functions because they are closely involved with all facets of the research administration process, including daily interactions with faculty, while concurrently managing other department-specific responsibilities (NCURA, n.d.). DRAs must have expertise in both pre- and post-award activities in order to assist the PI with the proposal preparation of a grant application and the management of ongoing grants and contracts. The DRA is responsible for tasks performed at the unit or department level, which may include purchasing, payrolls, personnel matters, and maintenance of building, equipment, and service operations (Kaplan, 1959). The range of duties of a DRA is very wide not only within a given organization but also between organizations (Kaplan, 1959). In his dissertation, Cole (2010) defined the DRA as the following:

> These individuals are typically administrative and staff employees as opposed to faculty, and have their primary responsibilities connected with all of the administrative aspects of the research award from proposal stage through completion of the actual research that is performed by the faculty member. These department administrators are not involved in the actual research activities associated with the contract or grant but deal with the Offices of Research Administration on an equal basis with the principal investigators. (p. 11)

Grant and Contract Officer

The ORA serves as a clearinghouse or conduit between the agency awarding the research funds and the recipient organization. Typically, the organization's ORA has administrative accountability for review of all research-related documents from the

proposal stage to the completion of the research award. In addition, the ORA is

responsible for the assurance of compliance with both the regulations of the sponsor

agency and with the organizational policies, at times divergent from each other (Atkinson

& Gilleland, 2007). GCOs work in ORA and have institutional authority to legally bind

the institution in grants administration matters. They are primarily responsible for

managing the administrative processes of the grant at the institutional level. The GCO is

responsible for providing professional expertise in grant and contract administration to

ensure full compliance with donor rules and regulations. In other words, the GCO is the

designated individual who is officially responsible for the business management aspects

of a particular grant, cooperative agreement, or contract. Serving as the counterpart to

the business officer of the grantee/contractor organization, the grant/contract officer is

responsible for all business management matters associated with the review, negotiation,

award, and administration of a grant or contract and interprets the associated

administration policies regulations, and provisions (Texas State, n.d.).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a relatively new term in literature and has grown in

research scholarship within the last 2 decades. There is currently a lack of a universal

definition of employee engagement; instead, there are various definitions and concepts of

employee engagement having been operationalized and measured in many disparate ways

(Kular, Gatenby, Rees, Soane, & Truss, 2008). Employee engagement is an important

area that an organization should concentrate to be productive and to get an effective,

loyal, and committed workforce (Tripathi & Sharma, 2016). The longevity of an

organization is affected by employee engagement. In fact, research studies indicate that

organizational productivity is determined by employees' efforts and engagement

(Musgrove, Ellinger, & Ellinger, 2014; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Further, a study by

Bersin (2014) found that only 13% of worldwide employees are fully engaged at work.

Bersin found that twice as many are so disengaged that the negative behavior is spread to

other employees. It has even been reported that the majority of workers today, roughly

half of all Americans in the workforce, are not fully engaged or they are disengaged,

leading to what has been referred to as an "engagement gap" that is costing U.S.

businesses $300 billion a year in lost productivity (Bates, 2004; Johnson, 2004;

Kowalski, 2003).

The term *engagement* was first introduced by William Kahn (1990) and defined

as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement,

people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during

role performances" (p. 694) The two main components of Kahn's definition of

engagement include (a) the psychological experience of work that drives people's

attitudes and behaviors and (b) the individual, interpersonal, group, intergroup, and

organizational factors that simultaneously influence these experiences. Kahn indicated

engaged employees are highly motivated and have a sincere desire to add value to their

team and organization (Kahn, 1990).

Employee engagement is critical to organizations because it is a critical element

in maintaining the organization's vitality, survival, and profitability (Albrecht, Bakker,

Gruman, Macey, & Saks, 2015; Breevaart, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2013; Farndale &

Murrer, 2015). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) described the experience of engagement as

a fulfilling, positive work-related experience and state of mind. Further studies have

indicated that antecedents of employee engagement include leadership, organizational culture, rewards and recognition, employee empowerment, and a relationship between leaders and employees (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Similarly, Saks (2006) indicated antecedents of employee engagement include job characteristics, perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, rewards and recognition, procedural justice, and distributive justice. In addition, practitioners and academics tend to agree that the consequences of employee engagement are positive (Saks, 2006). Saks indicated these consequences of employee engagement include job satisfaction, organizational commitment, employee retention, and organizational citizenship behavior.

Review of the Literature: Historical Background

The History of Research Administration

Research administration emerged in the 1940s after Vannevar Bush persuaded President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to create an agency that would coordinate collaboration between federal and civilian laboratories (Shambrook & Roberts, 2011). Research administration has undergone four eras of development since its inception in the 1940s.

First, the Expansion Era, between 1940 and 1960 indicates the inception of research administration as the government began funding research projects and activities. Uncoordinated research projects that conducted unethical investigations and unacceptable treatments of research human subjects made it evident that additional regulations and control were necessary. During this time, recommendations for research administrators to oversee these studies were made. Next, during the Transition Era, between 1960 and 1980, it became increasingly clear that scientists could not handle the administrative and

regulatory burden alone; thus, the research administrative professional was solidified, and the profession was born. During this time, professional societies began to surface, which offered support to this emerging profession (iDoGrants, 2018). Then, during the Para-Professional Era, between 1980 and 1990, the profession began to shift and take on a true and unique identity as the external demands for research accountability began to grow (iDoGrants, 2018). The explosive growth of biomedical research during this time led to an overwhelming set of regulatory need that faculty and nonresearch administrators could not fill. Research administrators filled this gap to provide oversight of these regulations. During this time, there was also a separation between central and departmental research administration. Finally, during the Independent Professional Era, 1990-2018, research administration became a separate and recognized profession by peers, professionals, and societies and represented a critical piece in the conduct and management of research (Brandt, 1997). During this time, federal agencies began requiring the presence of a research administrator before federal funds were even awarded. Over time, research administration has become more complex and necessary. Federal strict regulations have risen as a result the Holocaust experimentation, eugenics, the U.S. Public Health Service syphilis study perpetrated on the men of Tuskegee, the abuse of animals in various experiments, the misuse of appropriations, or the falsification/fabrication of data for personal prestige or power that comes with the notoriety of publication (Gabriele & Caines, 2014).

Collinson (2006) recognized that knowledge about occupational groups within academia is relatively scant. He argued there is an almost exclusive concentration upon the teaching staff and thus aimed to fill the gap by focusing on research administration,

which he noted was underresearched to that date. Collinson noted that there is a wide range of roles and divergent responsibilities covered by the tile of research administrators, which has led to the emergence of salient features together with the boundary-crossing, ambiguous nature of much research administrative work. Because research administration is an underresearched field, Collinson examined the "identity work" undertaken by research administrators, which provides historical context for this specific study regarding grant officers. The limited research on research administrators that does exist has focused on the university setting; research on the nonprofit hospital is all the more scarce. This research study expanded on previous research regarding research administrators and also focused on a new setting—the nonprofit hospital setting.

The Growth of Research Administration

Over the past 3 decades, regulatory, economic, and political forces have altered the boundaries of sponsored research (Hansen & Moreland, 2004). Hansen and Moreland (2004) compared research administration to the Roman god Janus because Janus was the god of entrances and exists. Similarly, research administration is an organization's gateway for grants and contracts. Changes in the regulatory environment, economic environment, political environment, and in the organizations have led to a growth in the complexity of the scope of work of research administration.

A regulatory change that deeply affected federal grants in organizations was Washington's growing number of rules regarding the management of research funds (Hansen & Moreland, 2004). The Office of Management and Budget, for instance, revised the administrative requirements and provided a framework for the management of grants, forcing organizations to create new systems for control. Another regulatory

change included a new focus on auditing (Hansen & Moreland, 2004). The passing of the Single Audit Act in 1984 resulted in regulations that mandated specific financial accountability and control including those of federal grants. This, in turn, led to stricter organizational policies regarding research activities.

Changes in the economics of higher education led to changes in research administration (Bok, 2003; Hansen & Moreland, 2004). After 1951, federal support for research increased from $1.85 billion to $84.9 billion (Hansen & Moreland, 2004). These economic factors pressured research organizations and held them accountable for larger funding accounts and larger research portfolios. As a result, this called for yet stricter managing of ongoing grants and awards.

Changes in the political environment are yet another factor that led to the complexity of research administration. Granting taxpayers' money gave policy makers the right to determine how that money would be spent, and because the public demanded solutions to many numbers of problems, these problems were directed at research for solutions (Hansen & Moreland, 2004). This led to funding for specific and specialized areas such as breast cancer research and stem cell research. The way research institutions responded to the changes in the regulatory environment, the economic factors, and the political agenda for research also affected the principles of research administration.

In order to keep up with all the regulatory changes in society and in government, organizations created complex bureaucracies to manage the exponential growth of funding and complicated legal and regulatory environment (Hansen & Moreland, 2004). The more money Washington granted to organizations for research, the more research cost and the more cumbersome it became to conduct that research. It then became

increasingly difficult for research administrators to facilitate the grants process as the institutional bureaucracy grew in magnitude (Hansen & Moreland, 2004). Hansen and Moreland (2004) indicated that with the growth in the size and complexity of the bureaucracy came what can be best described as a change in the institutional culture of research. A decline in the culture of research administration was evident as there arose a loss in mutual social obligation, loyalty, and dedication. The relationship between faculty and research administrators became adversarial rather than collaborative. While investigators were busy working on completing the aims of their research, research administrators were busy trying to comply with numerous policies and regulations. This research study examined the dynamics of the relationships between GCOs and faculty in nonprofit hospitals. Further, this study explored the effects of these working relationships on the engagement levels of GCOs in the nonprofit hospital setting.

The Role of the Research Administrator

Research administrators have critical managerial roles that are responsible for ensuring research activities are conducted successfully, comply with the wide and expansive requirements of research sponsors, are performed in ways that respect the resource requirements of the institution and related entities, and become a leverage for the development of future opportunities in light of the performing institution's mission (Gabriele & Caines, 2014). Collinson's (2007) qualitative exploratory study focused on examining the hitherto underresearched occupational world of British university research administrators. This occupational group is of particular interest as many research administrators appear to straddle the supposed academic–administrative divide, incorporating considerable academic elements within their routine work tasks (Collinson,

2007). The results of Collinson's research study indicated research administrators experienced varying degrees of marginality and represented somewhat of an underclass within their working environment, at least on dimensions such as pay, conditions, and flexibility of working hours. Further, the article focused on the identity work that research administrators undertake, particularly in relation to their contestation of, and resistance toward, being categorized negatively by academics as "just administrators" and "non-academic" Collinson (2007). Research has indicated that research administrators are faced with having to validate their positions as professionals as well as establishing 2-way respectful working relationships. Collinson's study focused on research administrators in the university setting. This study examined the working relationships between GCOs and faculty in the nonprofit hospital setting. Further, this study identified similarities and/or differences in the dynamics of these working relationships in nonprofit hospitals compared to those in academic universities.

Kaplan (1959) provided excellent historical context for the challenges research administrators encounter on a daily basis. In this article, Kaplan noted the complexity and intricacies of a research administrator. Kaplan (1959) indicated the research administrator is seen as a "man in the middle," caught between the frequently conflicting goals of the research scientist and the research organization (p. 41). The research administrator attempts to maintain controls over the allocation and use of the scarce resources of the organization and is the focal point for the scientist's grumbling about red tape and about the unnecessary interference with research. Kaplan argued that the levels of performance as well as the rewards experienced by administrators are affected by the ambiguities in this relatively new role. Kaplan argued that the range of duties of the

research administrator is very wide not only within a given organization but also between organizations. Some of the duties include routine administrative tasks (i.e., payroll, maintenance, equipment) as well as being wholly or partly responsible for the allocation of laboratory space within the organization. Kaplan noted the biggest difference between research administrators and general administrators is personality, that is, knowing how to handle interactions with scientists. One of the biggest challenges in the relationships between research administrators and faculty is their scope of work. Although scientists are concerned with the scientific aspect of a grant, the research administrator is concerned with the administrative aspect of the grant. The difference in the scope of work often leads to friction between research administrators and faculty. This research study explored these working relationships and their effects on engagement in research administrators.

Kaplan (1959) noted that nonresearch administration involves an administrator who is as qualified as the individuals he or she directs in the administrative capacity. However, in research administration, the scientist knows more about his job than the administrator, a fact that tends to lead to dislike for the research administrator. Most importantly, Kaplan noted the difference in priorities in research administrators and in scientists. The research administrator's priority lies with the institution; ensuring compliance is met and maintained in terms of regulations, finances, and reporting. The scientist's priority, on the other hand, is the science, not taking in to consideration any organizational policies that the research administrator voices. This leads to the research administrator being viewed as an impediment to the research but a necessity for the organization. Kaplan's article presented a preface that accurately explains the role of a

research administrator and provided excellent background information. This research study built on these findings by exploring the effects of working relationships on the engagement levels of GCOs.

Spencer and Scott (2017) provided historical context for the complexities and intricacies in research administration. More specifically, it provided insight to the research administrative burden of a research administrator. Spencer and Scott noted that as research administrators attempt to define their roles as professionals, the need to address perceived administrative burden has become a valuable next step in improving research administration. In addition, Spencer and Scott provided historical facts pertaining to research administration. They noted that research administration arose as a profession in the 20th century when there was a series of high-profile public cases of scientist who conducted unethical investigations and unacceptable treatment of research subjects. The results of the study by Spencer and Scott defined important aspects of the interactions between actors, critical dimensions of the underserved cooperation between research administrators and investigators. The results indicated two important themes from the research administrator standpoint: the desire to collaborate, which was often difficult to achieve, and the desire to be seen as a professional and as part of the team. A study by Gabriele and Caines (2014) noted that the challenge in the identity in research administrators in the culture of research is that it is always in permanent flux.

Characteristics of a Research Administrator

Gabriele and Caines (2014) indicated that research administration is much more than a practical and practicable function. It is a form of service that is meant to assist, aid, and deepen the very purpose for which the research itself was sponsored, funded,

awarded, and performed, namely the advancement of knowledge and the betterment of the human condition (Gabriele & Caines, 2014). Research is conducted to achieve a greater purpose—to achieve the greater good. In other words, the nature of research itself is something far greater than just experimenting in a lab. Research administrators have an important role of service not just to the management of research activities but also to the importance of the mission of the institution for the greater good. Research administrators become servant leaders when they move from performing their work away from rudimentary obligation toward an ownership of mission that is imbued with pride and possibilities (Gabriele & Caines, 2014). In other words, research administrators practice servant leadership when they interact with investigators and develop programs that provide educational enrichment and awareness. Research administration is becoming more and more intrinsic to the research enterprise so that it is more than just a practice; it is an evolving profession (Gabriele & Caines, 2014).

A specialized skillset is needed to be a successful research administrator. According to Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (Roundtable: Research Administration, 2014), research administrators should be clear communicators, good problem solvers, and should demonstrate high levels of ethics and integrity. According to the research administrator competency model developed by MUHAS (2014), research administrators should be able to communicate proactively and effectively, understand communication styles, network with colleagues to share information, and should be able to explain and support a decision.

Campo (2014) posited that characteristics essential to making a great and successful leader in research administration include communication skills, team building,

interpersonal skills, and a positive "can-do" attitude. Campo (2014) indicated that

communication skills are used daily by research administrators, and therefore having the

ability to communicate effectively and accurately is essential to accomplishing daily

tasks and responsibilities. Next, Campo noted that team building is essential and

highlights the importance of knowing the bigger picture, which sets expectations for

individuals and makes them feel part of the overall organization even if their direct

contributions are only one piece of the puzzle (Campo, 2014). Third, having the ability

to connect with people and get along with everyone makes one an approachable person,

which is an absolute must as a research administrator (Campo, 2014). Research

administrators interact with many people and with many personalities, so it is important

for research administrators to be able to provide great customer service even during

stressful, high-pressure, and time-sensitive situations. Finally, Campo (2014) indicated a

great research administrator will have a can-do attitude and always attempt to achieve a

"win/win" situation. Win/win means that agreements or solutions are mutually beneficial

and mutually satisfying (Covey, 1989). Often, research administrators work with

investigators and department administrators to resolve grant-related issues that are time-

sensitive and require a 24-hour turnaround response. A positive can-do attitude helps

handle these stressful situations and can help in finding solutions to complex, time-

sensitive matters. It is important for research administrators to maintain their composure

while trying to resolve stressful and time-sensitive situations. The American

Psychological Association (n.d.) indicated stressful deadlines, expectations, and other

responsibilities in the workplace can have an emotional toll on an individual. This

research study explored the effects of the emotional component of a workplace in the engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals.

Principles of a Research Administrator

The principles and values of research administrator evolved as the profession grew in the first decades after WWII. The first principle was that research administrators had to serve as a kind of oil in the grants process, reducing the inevitable friction that occurs when the interests of the faculty, organization, and sponsor collide (Eurich, 1967). It is common for the interests of the faculty, the sponsor, and the organization to be conflicted, and this is where the research administrator comes in. The job of the research administrator is to reduce the friction between these conflicting parties and keep the process moving.

The second principle of research administrators is that research administrators serve as mediators-expeditors of the grant process (Beasley, 1970). According to Beasley, the grant process is both delicate and complex and requires an individual to balance the entire gamut of tasks from identifying funding agencies to submitting financial reports. A research administrator needs to juggle tasks between the interests of the researcher and the demands of the sponsor agency; this is the way to expedite the grant process (Beasley, 1970).

The third principle of research administrators is that the purpose of research administration is the management for research not of research (Woodrow, 1978). Woodrow argued that research administrators were to make it possible for faculty to conduct research by managing the grants process for investigators including all regulatory, administrative, and financial matters (Woodrow, 1978). Essentially, research

administrators are to free up the investigators by handling all of the administrative, that is, nonscientific matters.

The final principle of research administrators indicates that effective research administration is dependent on positive collaborative relationships with the faculty. Rodman and Dingerson (1979) argued that research administrators need to have the trust of the investigators and that they should represent the faculty voice when mediating between the interest of the sponsor and the organization. This describes the research administrator description Kaplan (1959) coined as "the man in the middle." (p. 41).

Dynamics Between Faculty and Research Administrators

Pelz's (1959) study focused on the interaction between scientist and auxiliary staff, that is, research administrators during the time when research was just beginning to flourish. Questionnaires were sent out to auxiliary staff inquiring about interactions with scientists. The results indicated that half of the respondents were neutral and the other half was a combination between having pleasant interactions with scientists and others feeling as if scientists were condescending to them. The data indicated that constant contact between scientists and central administration brings the greatest increase in negative feeling on the item that scientists "tend to regard the nonscientists with some condescension, or to regard their work as of lesser importance" (p. 325). The findings from Pelz's study are relevant to this day even though the Pelz study was conducted over 50 years ago. Current research administrations are faced with the same challenges regarding communication with scientists. The Pelz study offered great context regarding the relationship aspect of the research administration profession. Gabriele and Caines (2014) indicated that the responses of some investigators regarding research

administrators were quite alarming; sometimes investigators do not feel helped but hindered. Thus, they come to resent requirements and look for a way around the system's direction (Gabriele & Caines, 2014).

Employee Engagement

Kahn (1990) undergirded the theoretical framework for this research study because this study explored the factors that affect engagement in GCOs working in nonprofit hospitals. In his study, Kahn (1990) illustrated three psychological conditions: meaningfulness, safety, and availability, which are linked to the psychological conditions of engagement and disengagement at work. Kahn argued that personal engagement and personal disengagement refer to the behaviors by which people bring in or leave out their personal selves during work role performances. Kahn defined personal engagement as the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. Further, Kahn defined personal disengagement as the uncoupling of selves from work roles; in disengagement, people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances. The three psychological conditions including meaningfulness, safety, and availability are based on individual experiences, benefits, guarantees, and resources, and help shape the engagement or disengagement in the workplace. Psychological meaningfulness is associated with work elements that create incentives or disincentives to personally engage. Psychological safety is associated with elements of social systems that create more or less nonthreatening, predictable, and consistent social situations in which to engage. Psychological availability is associated with individual distractions that

preoccupy people to various degrees and leave them more or fewer resources with which to engage in role performances. The personal engagement and disengagement concepts developed in Kahn's (1990) study integrate the idea that people need both self-expression and self-employment in their work lives as a matter of course. Kahn's article was excellent for my theoretical framework because it provided the theoretical concept and foundation for my research.

Owusu-Ansah (2018) used the employee engagement theory by Kahn to examine employee engagement and satisfaction in retail industry managers. In-depth semistructured interviews were used to collect information from the participants based on their experiences with employee engagement in the organization. The research study involved a snowball sample of 10 managers from retail stores in the Forest Park Community in the Columbus, Ohio area. The criterion for selecting the managers was based on their successes in creating and using strategies that engaged employees to achieve job satisfaction within the organization. Although the study examined retail industry managers in Ohio, the methodology and framework used provide useful insight for identifying factors that affect engagement in GCOs working in nonprofit hospitals. The findings from the data analysis of Owusu-Ansah's study identified three main themes in practices used to engage employees: effective communication, supportive manager-employer relationship, and incentives. These themes provided foundational content for examining the engagement as a variable.

Harris (2018) wrote a dissertation entitled *Employee Engagement: The Path to Understanding Public Sector Silent Heroes—Millennial Accountants* in which she interviewed 20 employees who were in an accounting series position in the county of

Riverside. Similarly, Harris (2018) used the social exchange theory to examine employee engagement in millennial accountants in the public sector workforce. The purpose of her study was to identify how local county government millennial accountants define employee engagement and to discover what antecedents they perceive to influence engagement in the workplace through their lived experiences. Harris's study was relevant to this research study because it provided foundational information regarding employee engagement in a specific population of employees. This research study explored engagement levels in a different profession and in a different work environment—GCOs working in the nonprofit hospital setting. The findings from the participant interviews in Harris's (2018) qualitative phenomenological study indicated seven universal themes:

1. Employee engagement is important to public sector millennial accountants
2. The key to millennial employee engagement is having supportive supervisors who make their employees feel valued while showing care and concern for both their personal and professional growth.
3. Millennial employees want to engage in work that is meaningful and contributes to the greater good.
4. Employee engagement is enhanced when organizations foster an environment where millennials can feel their voice is heard; they can give their input and opinions and perform their tasks autonomously.
5. When millennial employees are engaged, they seek to reciprocate with increased productivity, efficiency, and retention.

6. Increasing employee engagement can be effectively accomplished without spending any of an organization's budgeted funds through the use of feedback, encouragement, and recognition.

7. Individual antecedents are more influential to a millennial accountant's level of employee engagement than organizational antecedents. (p. 200)

Harris (2018) concluded her dissertation by noting that employee engagement in the workplace is important for millennials. Her study proved that although organizational antecedents are influential to employee engagement, local public sector millennial accountants are most influenced by individual antecedents such as supervisor support, work-life balance, meaningful work, and autonomy. One of the recommendations for future studies that Harris made was to determine whether there are other areas within a public sector organization that are deemed to be a support function. Researchers can then assess whether those millennials feel engaged and whether they perceive to receive the same level of support at the organizational level as those in a primary role. This research study built on this recommendation by focusing on a different role in a similar working sector—the GCO role in a nonprofit hospital. GCOs are a support function in research administration who have been associated with servant leadership. Exploring how GCOs define employee engagement through their lived experiences will add insights and knowledge to the existing body of literature related to defining employee engagement.

Ortiz (2017) focused on the motivation of individuals in the workplace by using a motivation theory to undergird his research. This study explained how traditionally, the concept of work engagement has been considered and studied as a relatively stable-in-time concept. A great portion of research has been carried out with transactional designs

and with self-report questionnaires. However, Ortiz's study aimed to address the study of the intraindividual variables of cognition and affect that could be related to the daily state work engagement and explain how they are related. This study presented a model that proposed to explain how the antecedents of state work engagement function and what some moderators of transient affect are. The results highlighted the importance of the temporary character of states such as affect, daily work engagement, and cognitive appraisals about events at work. The results proposed a multilevel approach to study the dynamics of the process that generates work engagement on a daily basis. This study presented a theoretical framework for the grant office research study and definitely helped create and develop a model for addressing the research questions.

May et al. (2004) further examined coworker relations and their effects on engagement by building on Kahn's (1990) concept of work interactions. May et al. (2004) conducted a quantitative study at a large insurance firm located in the Midwestern United States aimed at gathering information about how employees react to various aspects of their work and work situations. The study findings indicated that coworker relations had a significant positive relation with feelings of psychological safety (May et al., 2004). The findings confirmed the expectations that coworkers who supported each other during tough times at work would have mutual respect for one another and would value each other's contributions, which engendered trust and heightened perceptions of psychological safety and engagement. May et al. indicated individuals who have rewarding interpersonal interactions with their coworkers should also experience greater meaning in their work. They argued that coworker relations are significant to the extent that these interactions foster a sense of belonging, a stronger sense of social identity, and

meaning (May et al., 2004). Finally, May et al. noted that future research should study the effect of coworker relations on meaningfulness in other types of jobs and contexts to understand the reasons for inconsistent findings in prior research. This research study built upon May et al.'s recommendation for future research as it explored how working relationships affect engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals.

Organizational Culture and the Workplace

Culture is an important aspect of any institution, yet there is not a single unified definition of organizational culture. According to Schein (1983), an organizational culture depends for its existence on a definable organization in the sense of a number of people interacting with each other for the purpose of accomplishing some goal in their defined environment. Schein (1983) defined organizational culture as follows:

> The pattern of basic assumptions which a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 13)

Slack, Orife, and Anderson (2010) argued that employee engagement is often referred to as organizational commitment or organizational citizenship and is an emotional and intellectual commitment to an organization (Andrew & Sofian, 2012; Meyer, Stanley, & Parfyonova, 2012). Organizational culture is a major determining factor in the success of an organization and is applicable to all kinds of organizations around the world.

The term organizational culture, or culture in the organizational context, was first introduced by Dr. Elliott Jacques in 1951. According to Schuneman (2019), Jacques

based his study on a British company engaged principally in the manufacture, sale, and servicing of metal bearings. His study was concerned with the description, analysis, and development of the corporate group behaviors (Schuneman, 2019). According to Jacques (1951),

> The culture of the factory is its customary and traditional way of thinking and doing of things, which is shared to a greater or lesser degree by all its members, and which new members must learn, and at least partially accept, in order to be accepted into service in the firm. (p. 251)

Jacques believed organizational culture referred to the extent in which people could share common wishes, desires, and aspirations and commit to work together (Schuneman, 2019).

Organizations must provide a psychologically safe workplace to improve employee engagement (Kompaso & Sridevi, 2010). Nasomboon (2014) argued that the manner in which an individual feels satisfied and enthusiastic in work-related activities fosters employee engagement. Further, Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) indicated that one of the factors that affects employee engagement is colleagues. According to Harter et al.'s (2002) findings, supervisors can influence the extent to which employees respect one another by selecting conscientious employees, providing common quality-related goals and metrics, and increasing opportunities for employees to have interaction about these outcomes. These findings highlight the importance of working relationships in the workplace and served as a foundation for this study's focus on exploring the effects working relationships have on the engagement of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals.

According to Kahn (1990), positive work interactions lead to engagement, but negative work interactions lead to disengagement. The findings from Kahn's (1990) ethnographic study of a summer camp and architecture firm indicate that people experience psychological meaningfulness when their task performances include rewarding interpersonal interactions with coworkers and clients. He argued that meaningful interactions promote dignity, self-appreciation, and a sense of worthwhileness. Positive interactions with colleagues are valuable because they add meaning in people's lives. Such connections allow people to feel known and appreciated and also let them know they are sharing their professional journeys with others (Kahn, 1990). Conversely, work relationships that communicate a lack of care, respect, or appreciation lead to disengagement (Kahn, 1990). The findings from Kahn's (1990) ethnographic study demonstrate camp counselors found meaningfulness diminished when the campers communicated a lack of care, respect, or appreciation for the counselors' work. Similarly, the findings from the study conducted at the architecture firm demonstrate architectural clients who did not appreciate the efforts of firm members created relationships devoid of respect and meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990).

Counselors of the summer camp site expressed that interacting with other staff members as cohorts rather than coworkers helped create meaningful interactions (Kahn, 1990). This research study explored the professional relationships GCOs have with PIs and DRAs and explored how these interactions affect engagement. This research study examined whether positive relationships with faculty and staff lead to engagement and similarly, whether negative relationships with faculty and staff lead to disengagement. Finally, Kahn indicated meaningful interactions allow people to feel valuable and valued;

this means expressing mutual appreciation, respect, and positive feedback. This concept

served as a foundation for this research study because this study examined whether

professional relationships affect engagement in GCOs, either positively or negatively.

Organizational Behavior and the Workplace

Luthans (2002b) defined positive organizational behavior (POB) as "the study and

application of positively-oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities

that can be measured, developed and effectively managed for performance improvement

in today's workplace" (p. 59). According to Luthans and Youssef (2007), four key

psychological resource capacities that best meet the inclusion criteria for POB are self-

efficacy, hope, optimism, and resiliency. Bandura (1982) defined self-efficacy as the

belief that one has the capabilities to take the actions required to manage prospective

situations. Snyder, Irving, and Anderson (1991) defined hope as "a positive motivational

state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (1) agency (goal-

directed energy) and (2) pathways (planning to meet goals)" (p. 285). Having hope to

achieve goals helps employees develop determination and motivation to accomplish their

goals and also helps them overcome any obstacles that may come up (So, 2009).

According to Seligman (1998), optimism is an attributional style that explains positive

events in terms of personal, permanent, and pervasive causes and negative events in

terms of external, temporary, and situation-specific ones. Similarly, So (2009) indicated

optimism is defined by positive psychologists as a cognitive characteristic in terms of an

expectancy of positive outcome and/or a positive causal attribution. Finally, resiliency

was defined by Luthans (2002a) as "the developable capacity to rebound or bounce back

from adversity, conflict, and failure or even positive events, progress, and increased

responsibility" (p. 702). Resilience allows individuals to learn and grow from lived experiences. So (2009) highlighted the importance of POB and noted that POB encourages managers and leaders to build on individuals' strengths instead of focusing on improving weaknesses. So (2009) indicated that POB can be learned and developed and results in positive behaviors such as altruism, conscientiousness, civic virtue, sportsmanship, and courtesy.

According to Rafaeli and Sutton (1987), research conducted on feelings experienced and expressed by organizational members emphasized emotions as indicators of well-being and happiness. Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (p. 1300). Goffman (1969) addressed the causes and consequences of expressed emotions. His work on strategic interactions focused on how people manipulate emotional expression to promote their own interests. In addition, Goffman (1969) argued employees also display feelings to promote the interests of others including clients and coworkers. The study by Rafaeli and Sutton (1987) was based on Goffman's (1969) work and focused on work settings in which employees display emotions in order to fulfill role expectations. The framework used in their study covered the sources of role expectations about emotional expression, the range of such emotional expressions, and the influence expressed feelings have on the organization and on the role occupant (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). This research study s emotionality in GCOs by examining organizational behavior as the undergirding concept.

Aesthetics in the Workplace

Physical settings are important because, as Hatch (1987) indicated, they provide contexts for behavior. Physical settings are thought to influence through their ability to support the range of activities that becomes associated with them and to constrain other forms of activities (Barker, 1968; Becker, 1981). Becker (1981) indicated that some design configurations can stimulate organizational creativity through social interaction between organizational members. Still, several organization theorists have proposed models in which communication and social interaction are offered as the primary work-related activities affected by the physical structure in an organization (Becker, 1981; McKelvey, 1984; Steele, 1973, 1986; Sundstrom, 1986).

Although the influence of the office environment on occupants has attracted inter-disciplinary research attention over recent decades, the literature remains incoherent and ambiguous (Kim & de Dear, 2013). GCOs in the research industry work in different kinds of environments, depending on the type of institution they work at. Some GCOs work in private offices, but others work in cubicles, separated by partitions. Hatch (1987) conducted a study to examine the common belief that barriers around offices are desirable because they reduce interaction, thus allowing more time for accomplishing tasks. Hatch conducted a field study in two high-technology firms in the San Francisco Bay area. The research findings indicated the common belief about desired barriers around offices was erroneous (Hatch, 1987). Instead, Hatch found that interactions among professional-technical works in research and development firms may be greater for workers who are given enclosed workspaces more than those lacking physical barriers. Hatch indicated that different barrier measures are associated with different

interaction measures. Enclosure by partitions (or walls) and a door was found to be positively associated with the amount of time individuals reported working with others. Partition height was also positively related to reported amounts of meeting time (Hatch, 1987). Enclosure by partitions (or walls) and a door was found to be positively associated with the amount of time individuals reported working with others. Several types of interaction were found to be associated with physical barriers, independent of their association with task characteristics and individual differences. Hatch made recommendations for future research and indicated additional research was needed to determine whether these relationships generalize to other jobs and firms (Hatch, 1987). Hatch's research study served as a base for this research study because it provided fundamental information on the effects of office workspace on employees. This research study built on these findings by examining how the aesthetics in the workplace affects employee engagement in GCOs.

According to Kim and de Dear (2013), open-plan office layout is commonly assumed to facilitate communication and interaction between coworkers, which is meant to promote workplace satisfaction and teamwork effectiveness. Open-plan office layout refers to removing internal walls and is believed to facilitate communication and interaction between coworkers, which should improve individual work performance and organizational productivity (Brand & Smith, 2005; Kupritz, 2003). On the other hand, open-plan layouts are also known to be more disruptive because of uncontrollable noise and loss of privacy (Kim & de Dear, 2013). Kim and de Dear (2013) conducted a study on the occupant survey database from Center for the Built Environment (CBE) to determine the effects of office layouts on employees. The findings indicate satisfaction

level with workspace environment was the highest for those in enclosed private offices. Kim and de Dear (2013) found that occupants' satisfaction on the interaction issue was actually higher for occupants of private offices. The ease of interaction in open-plan office layouts was offset by the negative impacts of noise and privacy. Distraction by noise and loss of privacy were identified as the major causes of workspace dissatisfaction in open-plan office layouts. These results imply that although employees are satisfied with interactions in open-plan layout, their overall workspace satisfaction will eventually decrease unless a certain level of privacy and acoustical quality are provided (Kim & de Dear, 2013).

Conversely, Jensen and Arens (2005) conducted a study on office environments in buildings surveyed by the CBE. Their study examined how office workstations made a difference in workplace acoustics and how this affected employees. The findings of their study show that occupants in open office environments are significantly more satisfied with noise level and speech privacy than occupants working in cubicles (Jensen & Arens, 2005). The results demonstrate that occupants in open office environments are more satisfied than the occupants of cubicles with either high or low partitions mainly because of noise and speech privacy (Jensen & Arens, 2005). Jensen and Arens (2005) found that people working in open office environments (without cubicle partitions) seem to be more satisfied with both noise and speech privacy than those in cubicles, and therefore, that open office environments affected them positively.

Similarly, Brown (2010) noted that working without walls fosters communication, openness, and collaboration. Such models pertaining to working without walls have been led by key government departments including the Ministry of British Defense, Scottish

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Enterprise, and the Treasury. Allen (2004) indicated the Treasury redevelopment project pertaining to working without walls included the removal of seven miles of internal walls. The physical change was symbolic of a multifaceted transformation including a cultural, business, and technological transformation.

Different studies on the aesthetics have been conducted, which have resulted in different findings. This research study focused on exploring the effects of office workspace on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals.

Review of the Literature: Ties to Research Questions

Central Research Administration

The ORA is a central pre-award office that provides administrative services to faculty and department administrators regarding grant submission and management. The ORA provides pre-award and nonfinancial post-award services to faculty and department administrators. The research administrator is seen as a man in the middle, caught between the frequently conflicting goals of the research scientist and the research organization (Kaplan, 1959). It is evident that the complexity of the scope of work performed by GCOs is growing at a rapid speed as is research in general. According to Hansen and Moreland (2004), the challenge for research administration is how to preserve its fundamental principles while responding to the pressures of continual social, economic, and political change

Demographics of a Research Administrator

A study by Shambrook and Roberts (2011) focused on the demographic profile of research administrators and demonstrates that the academic environment in which they work is stressful. The results of this study indicate research administrators experience

high levels of workplace stress and poor health behavior (Shambrook & Roberts, 2011).

Kaplan (1959) noted that scientists tend to be temperamental and have an inherent dislike

for administrators. Some research administrators find themselves caught between the

demands of the organization and the demand of the scientist as they are transmitted in

complaints, bickering, and low morale. The main concern of PIs is the scientific work;

they do not want to deal with policies, regulations, or guidelines and just want to get the

work done. Research administrators, on the other hand, are responsible for ensuring

ongoing grants follow organizational and sponsor agency policies, regulations, and

guidelines. These different sets of priorities can cause friction between the scientist and

the research administrator (Kaplan, 1959). This also leads to an absence of recognition

for research administrators among research scientists.

The field of research administration has long been characterized by seemingly

endless crises and deadlines, mountains of paperwork, bureaucratic red tape, and the

pressure to do more with less (Hesselton-Mangan, 2003). Similarly, school

administration is a profession that experiences high levels of stress because of the

complexity of the job (Koch, Tung, Gmelch, & Swent, 1982). Koch et al. (1982)

conducted a study in the Confederation of Oregon School, which showed that school

administrators experience stress because of their role in the organization, day-to-day

administrative tasks, responsibilities of linking internal and external networks, and

responsibility for resolving conflicts. Koch et al. (1982) found that school administrators

worked in stressful environments because of various facets of their jobs. The study

findings demonstrated school administrators felt they had to meet self-expectations as

well as others' expectations (Koch et al., 1982). Next, the study results indicated that

school administrators were responsible for coordinating activities that often took place during extreme time demands (Koch et al., 1982). The study findings also demonstrated that school administrators were responsible for connecting the school to the external environment through collective bargaining, dealing with regulatory agencies, and gaining public support for school budgets (Koch et al., 1982). Finally, the findings indicated that school administrators were responsible for mediating conflicts, including parent/school conflicts (Koch et al., 1982). The study results demonstrated that school administrators experienced stress because of the complexity and intensity of their daily tasks. This study found that school administrators experienced role-based stress, task-based stress, boundary-spanning stress, and conflict-mediating stress (Koch et al., 1982). It is difficult for a person to be engaged when working in stressful and hectic environments. Hesselton-Mangan (2003) indicated that the role of the research administrator will not become easier over time, that there will always be the hectic days, impossible deadlines, and the occasional feeling of being overwhelmed. Employee engagement has been referred to as emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization (Baumruk, 2004; Richman, 2006; Shaw, 2005). Being emotionally and intellectually committed to an organization is difficult and challenging when one is working under stressful and pressure-driven environments.

Furthermore, the nurse manager role (like the research administrator role) has not changed over time, but it has become increasingly complex (Gray & Shirey, 2013). According to Gray and Shirey (2013), nurse manager engagement requires an understanding of nurse manager work and the resources needed to empower these individuals in their roles. The authors indicated that nurse managers today require

different resources to navigate the complexity of current work environments and effectively execute their roles. Gray and Shirey (2013) used existing data from a 2010 Employee Opinion Survey at the Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, Texas to describe what nurse manager engagement meant to nurse managers and staff nurses by incorporating an organizational dashboard to document engagement outcomes. The study findings showed that 100% of the nurse manager participants were engaged and also led to the development of definitions for empirical outcomes for nurse manager engagement. Their study results indicated that nurse manager engagement was a measurable expression of role performance over a period of time and noted the nurse managers' ability in being able to help shape the psychological environment of the organization for success (Gray & Shirey, 2013). Gray and Shirey's (2013) study provided information on the factors that affect engagement in Nurse Managers. This research study focused on exploring the factors that affect engagement in a similar role—the GCO role.

Research administrators are burdened with grant proposal application deadlines; budget deadlines; and monthly, quarterly, and yearly financial reporting deadlines. They are challenged by uncommunicative and/or procrastinating faculty and by the often-serious understaffing of departments (Hesselton-Mangan, 2003).

As a profession, research administrators work well over the normal 40 hours per week. Research administrators often take work home and more than occasionally find themselves in their offices late in the evening or on the weekends (Hesselton-Mangan, 2003). MacLeod and Clarke (2009) referred to employee engagement as a "workplace approach designed to ensure the employees are committed to their organisation's goals

and values, motivated to contribute to organisational success, and are able at the same time to enhance their own sense of well-being" (p. 9).

Research administrators spend much of their time encouraging more proposal submissions, strengthening the institutional research culture, securing administrative and faculty buy-in to research and scholarly activities, and training personnel about research policies and procedures (Miner, Miner, & Griffith, et al., 2003).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement has become a relevant topic in recent years because organizations are demanding that employees contribute more to the development of the organization (Owusu-Ansah, 2018). Markos and Sridevi (2010) noted that managers agree that this century demands more efficiency and productivity than any other times in history. Thus, businesses are striving to increase their performance, which in turn is causing managers to grapple with many challenges to succeed and put their companies ahead of competitors (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Managers have found that a strategy in succeeding is to keep employees engaged in their job; employers now realize that by focusing on employee engagement, they can create a more efficient and productive workforce (Markos &Sridevi, 2010). Atcioğlu and Köse (2018) conducted a study to reveal the relationship between engagement levels of employees and the effectiveness level of schools. More specifically, they examined the engagement levels of primary and secondary school teachers and administrators working at private and state schools. Engagement and effectiveness levels were determined by using the engagement scale, which determined the engagement levels of the teachers and administrators and the effective scale, which identified their perceptions toward the effectiveness of schools.

The research results revealed a positive and significant relation between the engagement levels of the employees and the effectiveness of schools (Atcioğlu & Köse, 2018). The results indicated that the engagement levels of the teachers and administrators were found to be a significant predictor of effective schools and accounted for about 34% of the total explained variance of the effectiveness level of primary and secondary schools. Further, a statically statistically significant difference was found in all dimensions of the engagement scale in favor of those working at private schools. This difference suggests that private education institutions have more opportunities and that employees in private education institutions have to guarantee their jobs for future years (Atcioğlu & Köse, 2018).

Finally, Atcioğlu and Köse, (2018) suggested that because work engagement is of great importance for the effectiveness of the school, environments that provide job engagement should be created by top management through the examination of situations that cause or obstruct the administrators and teachers to perform tasks. At this point, the views and recommendations of administrators need to be taken into consideration to raise awareness and appropriate action. The study by Atcioğlu and Köse was relevant to this study regarding the factors that affect engagement in grant officers. The relationship between administrator work engagement and the school effectiveness could potentially resonate a relationship between grant officers and effective grant administration.

Stephen Owusu-Ansah's (2018) dissertation entitled *Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction: An Exploratory Qualitative Study of Retail Industry Managers* explored strategies that retail industry managers can use to engage employees, which in turn would help achieve job satisfaction within the organization. In his exploratory qualitative study,

Owusu-Ansah interviewed 10 managers from retail stores in the Columbus, Ohio area. Owusu-Ansah noted the problem that was addressed in his study was that leaders in various organizations, including the retail industry, may not be doing enough to improve employee engagement levels. Three main themes were obtained from the participant interviews: effective communication, incentives, and supportive manager-employee relationship. Owusu-Ansah concluded his study by noting that employees view a relationship with their supervisor as a primary factor for employee engagement. A recommendation Owusu-Ansah made is that future studies should explore other industries and organizations that are outside of Columbus, Ohio (Owusu-Ansah, 2018). This research study filled this gap by exploring engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals located in Boston, Massachusetts.

Hu, Cui, and Wang (2016) conducted a study to investigate the path analysis of work-family conflict, job salary and promotion satisfaction, and work engagement to subjective well-being of the primary and middle school principals and administrators and to provide advice for enhancing their well-being. The study results indicated one of the significant paths that directly influences the well-being of these professionals is work engagement. In addition to work engagement serving as a direct role in well-being, it also serves as an intermediary role in the relation between job salary, promotion satisfaction, and subjective well-being (Hu et al., 2016). The research results indicated that subjective well-being is positively correlated with work engagement and job salary and promotion satisfaction, which means that if employees are positively engaged in their roles, then they will have a positive well-being. Finally, Hu et al. (2016) suggested that a high level of work engagement could improve headmasters' work efficiency, bring them

the pleasure of work, make them feel in a positive emotion, and thus enhance their subjective well-being. The authors suggested two ways of improving engagement include raising the salary of principals in primary and middle schools and offering opportunities of training, which could propel their career development, thus improving their level of work engagement.

Kadlec and Rowlett (2014) introduced lessons and checklists learned from working with dozens of community college systems, more than a hundred individual colleges, and thousands of institutional practitioners across the country. Kadlec and Rowlett indicated that skillful and authentic engagement of faculty, staff, and administrators can significantly improve the quality of decision-making, accelerate progress on difficult issues, and create the conditions for good ideas to become sustainable solutions. They argue that with the absence of strong engagement practices, not even the best ideas are likely to live long enough to fulfill their potential. Kadlec and Rowlett (2014) indicated that the human side of issues plays a significant role in engagement. Further, the authors argued that careful attention to the staging and sequencing of engagement efforts is an integral piece of the human side of change. According to Kadlec and Rowlett (2014), a successful engagement strategy will include an outgoing combination of communications and dialogue. They believed it is essential for leaders to regularly and repeatedly provide clear, accurate, and consistent information about how various student success efforts fit together and how the input of faculty and staff is being used to advance these efforts. Kadlec and Rowlett indicated various strategies for engagement include e-mails, standing meetings, surveys, focus groups, and periodic forums. Finally, obtaining an assessment of the culture of engagement and the

climate around any proposed innovation will help achieve the desired achievement and engagement levels (Kadlec & Rowlett, 2014).

Furthermore, King and Drake (2018) argued we are in an age in which employee engagement and turnover continue to be a challenge for many hospital systems across the country, and thus, they need structures in place to create strong workforce cultures that lead to exceptional patient outcomes. King and Drake indicated success starts with leaders and suggested engaging their employees should be a priority. There is a very clear link between high-performing and dynamic leaders and a positive impact on employee engagement, retention, and the patient and family experience. King and Drake (2018) argued there are five key commitments that nurse leaders must make to drive employee engagement. The authors indicated leaders should grow themselves and their staff, set clear expectations and drive a culture of accountability, create solid structure for onboarding and orienting new employees, communicate thoroughly with employees, and create systems for reward and recognition. Finally, as healthcare organizations are forced to do more with less while at the same time delivering exceptional patient and family experiences, reliable and consistent care, and excellent clinical outcomes, dynamic leadership is necessary (King & Drake, 2018).

Constructs of Engagement

One of the biggest challenges presented by the literature on employee engagement is the lack of a universal definition. Kahn (1990) defined engagement as the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles. Employee engagement has also been defined as emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization (Baumruk, 2004; Richman, 2006; Shaw, 2005). Frank, Finnegan, and Taylor (2004) defined

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employee engagement as the amount of discretionary effort exhibited by employees in their job. Further, Robinson et al. (2004) defined engagement as "one step up from commitment" (p. 10) referring to organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. Truss et al. (2006) described employee engagement as the passion for work, which is a psychological state that is seen to encompass the three dimensions of engagement discussed by Kahn (1990) and that captures the common theme of other definitions.

According to May et al. (2004), engagement is most closely associated with the constructs of job involvement and flow. Job involvement is described as "a cognitive or belief state of psychological identification." (May et al., 2004, p. 12). This construct is different from engagement because it is concerned more with how the individual employs himself or herself during the performance of his or her job. Also, although the focus of job involvement is on cognitions, engagement, as commonly defined, embodies emotions and behaviors.

Csikszentmihalyi (1975) presented yet another construct of engagement and referred to engagement as a holistic sensation that individuals felt when they are completely involved in their actions. It is argued that people in a flow experience do not need external rewards or goals to motivate them because the activity itself presents constant challenges. Although the construct of flow refers to the cognitive involvement of the individual in an activity on a momentary basis, definition of engagement implies a long-term involvement in work tasks (Holbeche & Springett, 2003; Kahn, 1990. This research study sought to explore how GCOs define employee engagement, the factors that affect engagement, and the ways engagement in GCOs can potentially be improved.

The Impact of Organizational Culture in the Workplace

According to May et al. (2004), individuals who have rewarding interpersonal interactions with their coworkers also should experience greater meaning in their work. When individuals are treated with dignity, respect, and value for their contributions and not simply as the occupant of a role, they are likely to obtain a sense of meaningfulness from their interactions (May et al., 2004). These authors argued that interactions with coworkers foster a sense of belonging, a stronger sense of social identity, and meaningfulness. The findings of this study demonstrated that coworker relations were associated with the feelings of meaningfulness and safety in the workplace and in turn affected engagement levels. This research study also explored coworker relations, but did so with a different focus than the one by May et al. This research study explored the effects of working relationship on engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals.

Lehman (2017) conducted a study on research administration with a focus on organizational culture. Lehman indicated that the administration and management of sponsored projects spans many levels within an organization of higher education. He noted that research administration professionals require an operational understanding of a complex set of disciplines that include project management, finance, legal, ethics, communication, and business acumen (Lehman, 2017). According to Lehman, research administration embodies explicit knowledge, which includes work processes, policies, procedures, and implicit knowledge, which includes knowledge required for the profession and is more difficult to codify, store, and share (Lehman, 2017). Lehman noted that the management of this knowledge is greatly affected by the culture of the organization depending on the workplace and research administration community of

practice. Similarly, Conley and Zheng (2009) indicated that issues within organizational

culture present some of the most difficult barriers to knowledge management success

because they determine what knowledge is, how it is stored and communicated, and what

knowledge is important. Lehman (2017) argued,

> Applying organizational culture theory to the research administration profession
>
> and exploring the shared artifacts, espoused beliefs, values, and basic underlying
>
> assumptions of research administration, reveals common barriers to knowledge
>
> management and opportunities for creating a knowledge-sharing research
>
> administration community of practice. (p. 53)

His findings indicated that institutional culture in research administration shapes

assumptions and determines what knowledge is useful and important, empowers those

who own a particular knowledge, determines what is knowledge and how it is

communicated, and decides the acceptance or rejection of new knowledge through

validation by the organization. Further, the findings from Lehman's study illustrated that

cultural factors of artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying

assumptions identify the elements of research administration that are crucial when

initiating or evaluating knowledge management programs for the profession and the

community of practice (Lehman, 2017). Lehman indicated that subcultures may exist

within a culture of an organization and suggested other culture elements including any

relevant subcultures should be explored in future research. This research study built on

this suggestion and explored the subculture of research administration in nonprofit

hospitals to help identify whether and how working relationships between GCOs and

faculty and DRAs affect engagement.

The Impact of Positive Organizational Behavior in the Workplace

Muchinsky (2000) posited that the time has come in organizational behavior to acknowledge emotions as a legitimate domain of scientific inquiry. Muchinsky (2000) indicated that the workplace brings out a variety of emotions in individuals. He argued positive emotions in the workplace offer gratifying experiences whereas negative emotions can represent some of the most vexing and hurtful experiences (Muchinsky, 2000). Luthans (2002b) indicated POB capabilities are states and are open to learning, development, change, and management in the workplace. Luthans noted that POB states can be developed through training programs, can be led on the job, or can be self-developed (Luthans, 2002b). Further, Luthans (2002b) noted that POB is led by positivity, that is, reinforcing employees for doing something right rather than catching them doing something wrong and punishing them for it. According to Luthans and Youssef (2007), positive psychology and its application to the workplace as POB attempts to give a renewed emphasis to the importance of a positive approach. Luthans and Youssef (2007) conducted two studies to examine positive psychological capacities and work-related outcomes; they examined how hope, optimism, and resilience affected performance, job satisfaction, work happiness, and organizational commitment. The first study included employees from a wide variety of organizations who had been working in their present organization for at least 6 months and had received at least one formal performance review. The second study included only organizations that clearly utilized and were willing to fully share with the researchers a formal performance appraisal system (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). The findings from study one showed that each of the three psychological capacities was significantly positively related to job satisfaction and

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work happiness after controlling for the industry and demographic variables (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). The findings from study two showed that only employee optimism was significantly positively related to performance and only employee hope was significantly positively related to employee job satisfaction, work happiness, and organizational commitment (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). Their research study suggested the POB framework should be used to further examine the relationships between positive psychological capacities and work-related outcomes because existing literature on this topic was fragmented. This research study utilized the POB framework to examine how the emotional component in GCOS affect their engagement levels.

The Impact of Aesthetics in the Workplace

According to Schell, Theorell, and Saraste (2011), there is little empirical evidence of the influence of design and workplace aesthetics on employees. Schell et al. (2011) noted that perceived environmental attributes, neighborhood, and workplace design characteristics are associated with employee well-being and job satisfaction. In their study, associations between self-reported need for aesthetic improvements in the workplace and the need for ergonomic improvement and health factors were investigated to determine the possible impact of aesthetic needs on job performance (Schell et al., 2011). The authors conducted an employee survey at the Swedish Public Service Broadcasting Company and the Radio Symphony Orchestra regarding employees' needs for aesthetic and ergonomic improvements. The study findings illustrated that aesthetic needs were more frequently reported than ergonomic needs (Schell et al., 2011). The study results illustrated that 'High rank' needs for aesthetic improvement were associated to psychologically demanding work, negative work stress, sleep disturbances, problems

at work, musculoskeletal pain and lower age (Schell et al., 2011). The need for aesthetic improvements showed a higher frequency of "high rank" responses than the need for ergonomic improvements and demonstrated a relation between work place aesthetics and health and well-being Schell et al., 2011). This research study built upon this framework by examining the effects of workplace aesthetics on the engagement levels of GCOs.

Brown's (2010) dissertation titled *The Impact of Organizational Aesthetics Upon Innovation in the Public Sector: An Exploration of Employee Perceptions of Changes to Workplace Design* focused on understanding the impact upon organizational aesthetics and innovation in the UK public sector. Brown considered the impact of two examples of the Working without Walls (WwW) design initiative in the public sector, which describe the government's initiatives in workspace redesign. This initiative was launched by the government to encourage employee participation and relationship enhancement and to improve communication as well as to reflect organizational strategy and build team identities (Brown, 2010). Brown noted that traditional workspaces in the UK public sector included imperial structures featuring classic exteriors and elaborate facades, projecting an impression of power, status, and hierarchy. The public sector buildings housed palatial management suites, high ceilings, and long, wide, corridors leading to many offices; however, in 2004, the British government launched a new incentive to work without walls, which aimed at maximizing productivity, achieving value for money, and using the physical workspace as an expression of the organization's values and thus led to a workplace redesign. Brown's study was based on contextual observation and semistructured interviews with organizational members and change agents in two public sector organizations. The findings indicate that although working without walls makes a

positive contribution toward the conditions of learning organization and subsequent

innovation, there are a number of related factors that must also be considered (Brown,

2010). Brown's study offered a foundation for this research study because although his

research focused on examining the effects of workspace aesthetics on innovation and

creativity, this research study examined the effects of workspace aesthetics on employee

engagement.

      Siler's (2009) dissertation titled *How Does Beauty Matter? An Exploration of*

Employee Perceptions of Office Aesthetics explored the importance of aesthetics in the

daily lives of people in organizations by exploring individuals' meanings of and

experiences of their offices. Siler's study concurrently examined the relationship

between aesthetics and instrumentality of the physical workplace. It examined how

participants felt about their offices—what they liked, disliked, and why. The findings of

Siler's study indicated the following:

1. Workspaces as an expression of individual identity. Participants noted it was

   important for their office to reflect who they were.

2. Workspace interfered with the organization's work. Participants noted that they held

   emotional responses to their offices. Participants experienced a disconnect between

   the way the office looks and the way the organization functioned.

3. A decreased emotional response to the building, giving more attention to the

   instrumental aspects of work.

4. Opinions about the building were also opinions about the organization. Participants'

   feelings about the organization were expressed through their feelings about the office

Siler's findings indicated that the aesthetics of the workplace matter because it stands in for the organization as a whole and evokes strong emotions. Aesthetics are associated with instrumentality in that it is difficult for people to differentiate the two in their own experiences. Siler noted that beauty in the workplace matters because it is a part of everyday life and people give it meaning and make sense of it just like they do any other aspect of organizational life (Siler, 2009). The presence of aesthetics in the workplace allows people to express their identities at work and also allows them to integrate their personal and professional lives. However, the absence of aesthetics in the workplace leads to emotional distress and attempts to diminish its importance compared to other aspects such as functionality (Siler, 2009). Siler's study provided a basis for this research study because it focused on the importance of employees' connection to the workplace through the aesthetics of the workplace. This research study built on Siler's foundation by exploring how workplace aesthetics affects engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals.

Summary

Research administration is a fairly new profession that is continually growing in scope and complexity. Research administrators serve as the liaison between internal and external parties and are responsible for and a wide range of tasks and functions while managing research portfolios. GCOs, specifically, are the personnel who work in the ORA and provide institutional administrative grant support to faculty, staff, and departments. The GCO role is experiencing an increase in the quantity and complexity of workload, which is due to a rise in research advancement and stricter funding agency regulations. Existing literature illustrates research administrators feel overworked,

underappreciated, and experience a lack of appreciation and respect by faculty and staff.

Shambrook and Roberts (2011) indicated the average years of experience of a research administrator is between 10-20 years. Maintaining engaged GCOs can help organizations maintain appropriate administrative oversight over millions of dollars of research funding. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the factors that affect engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals by exploring the effects of professional relationships, the effects of emotionality in the workplace, and workplace aesthetics. The theoretical basis for this study was Kahn's (1990) theory of employee engagement, which proposed that engagement is based on perceptions and lived experiences. Kahn (1990) defined engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work" roles and his findings undergirded this research study (p. 694). Further, organizational culture, POB, and workplace aesthetics are frameworks that undergird professional relationships, emotional dimensions in the workplace, and workplace aesthetics. According to Schein (1983), organizational culture is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration and has taught to new members. According to Luthans (2002b), POB is "the study and application of positively-oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed and effectively managed for performance improvement in today's workplace" (p. 59). According to Siler (2009), beauty in the workplace matters because it is a part of everyday life and people give it meaning and make sense of it just like they do any other aspect of organizational life. This research study used these frameworks to identify the factors that affect engagement in GCOs and provided potential ways to improve

engagement. Engagement is crucial to both employee and organizational growth and success.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Although employee engagement has been studied for the past 2 decades, there still is not a universal definition available. Instead, various concepts, ideas, and definitions have been developed. Kahn (1990) defined engagement as the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles. More commonly, employee engagement has been defined as emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization (Baumruk, 2004; Richman, 2006; Shaw, 2005). Truss et al. (2006) defined employee engagement as a passion for work, which is a psychological state that encompasses the three dimensions of engagement discussed by Kahn (1990) and that captures the common theme present in definitions. Although employee engagement can be defined and described in many ways, definitions often sound similar to other better known and established constructs such as *organizational commitment* and *organizational citizenship* behavior (Robinson et al., 2014). Employee engagement within many populations and professions including the medical field, the public sector, school systems, millennials, and accountants have been studied. However, engagement in grant and contract officers (GCOs) has not been studied.

The aim of this study was to explore ways that engagement levels in GCOs can be affected. This research study explored the perception of engagement in GCOs by conducting a qualitative exploratory study using phenomenology to understand how GCOs defined employee engagement, how they felt about engagement in the workplace, and what factors affected engagement. More specifically, this research study examined the factors that affect engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals by exploring the effects

of professional relationships, the effects of emotionality in the workplace, and the effects of aesthetics in the workplace.

This chapter includes the research questions, a description of the methodology used, and the research design. The latter includes the population and sample, instrumentation, materials, procedures for data collection and analysis, procedures for confidentiality, protection of human subjects, and validity and reliability of the study.

Research Questions

Scientists across the United States and the world are conducting wide-ranging research to improve the health of our nation, which is causing research to grow at an exponential rate. As a result, research administration and the GCO role are concurrently growing at a rapid speed. GCOs are responsible for providing professional expertise in research administration to ensure full compliance with sponsor and funding rules and regulations. The growth of scientific research entails a growth in active research grants, contracts, and awards, which in turn leads to a higher demand for GCOs. GCOs are the designated individuals who are institutionally responsible for the business management aspects of these awards and are essential to managing the growing portfolios. The higher demand for GCOs makes their role essential in research administration, which in turn highlights the importance of employee engagement in order to retain them in the offices of research administration. The following four research questions sought to develop a deeper understanding of employee engagement in GCOs and ways in which their engagement levels can be improved.

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of employee engagement among GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

Research Question 2: What perceived effects do professional relationships in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

Research Question 3: What perceived effect does emotionality in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

Research Question 4: What perceived effects do aesthetics in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

Research Design

The focus of this qualitative study was not only on the "what," but also in the "why"; thus, a qualitative exploratory methodology was used. The researcher used transcendental phenomenology, which focuses on people's meaning of a lived experience of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Edmund Husserl was the principal founder of phenomenology and founded the transcendental or descriptive phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl also established the term *bracketing*, which refers to allowing for the validation of the data collection and analysis process by putting aside preconceived beliefs, values, personal knowledge, and experiences to accurately describe a study participant's life experiences (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). The researcher exercised bracketing throughout the duration of the study. The researcher set aside personal experiences, opinions, and thoughts regarding the GCO role. The researcher approached this study with an unbiased mindset and set aside any personal beliefs regarding research administration. The researcher remained objective throughout the duration of the study including the review of the literature, the collection of data, and the analysis of the data. The research design of this study utilized an exploratory qualitative phenomenological research design. This study involved a semistructured

method of conducting in-depth interviews, one-on-one interviews to be more specific. An in-depth interview takes place when an interviewer conducts interviews with a studied population (individually or in groups) and allows interviewees to freely expresses any ideas, feelings, and motivations about the topic being studied (Trigueros, Juan, & Sandoval, 2017). According to Trigueros et al. (2017), semistructured interviews are interviews that are characteristically based on a flexible topic guide that provides a loose structure of open-ended questions to explore experiences and attitudes. The intent of this study was to conduct one-on-one, in-person interviews in order to have direct interaction with the participant. However, the researcher was also open to virtual meetings via Zoom for participants who were not available for in-person interviews. Using Zoom was beneficial for the study because it allowed face-to-face interaction between the researcher and the participant, even for long-distance interviews. Zoom offers a recording feature; thus, the meeting conducted via Zoom was recorded for the purpose of analysis. Finally, using Zoom allowed the researcher to make notes of any facial expressions and body language. Facial expressions and body language are important in an interview because they can substantiate the statements participants make.

Conducting semistructured interviews meant having a set of broad and open-ended questions ready for the participants. Yin (2014) posited that open-ended interview questions help participants of the research study to fully share their lived experience concerning the topic of discussion. Each participant was asked 14 open-ended questions. These questions helped obtain the information needed for this research study. Moreover, the interview questions took shape as the interviews unfolded and allowed for probes. Probes are reminders to the researcher of two types: to ask for more information or to ask

for an explanation of ideas (Creswell, 2014). This study utilized the echo probe with participants, which involved the researcher repeating what the participant said, and added probes such as "then what?" or "can you talk some more about that?" This encouraged participants to elaborate on the points they made on a specific question or topic. The researcher reiterated what the participant said to ensure the researcher had a clear understanding of responses to questions. This helped ensure accuracy and understanding of the participants' perspective on a specific question or point.

This study included purposeful sampling, which meant the sample population was thoughtfully and purposefully recruited in order to fully answer the research questions. This type of sampling was used because, as Maxwell (2005) indicated, this sampling method is used when specific settings, persons, or activities are deliberately selected to provide information that cannot be obtained from other choices. More specifically, expert sampling was used in this study. Expert sampling is a form of purposeful sampling used when research requires one to capture knowledge rooted in a particular form of expertise. In addition, Kahn's (1990) theory of engagement, which undergirds this study, was used to shape the interview questions and required participants to share their feelings, thoughts, and opinions about engagement in their workplaces. The researcher utilized organizational culture, positive organizational behavior (POB), and workplace aesthetics frameworks to help draft interview questions regarding professional relationships, emotionality, and aesthetics in the workplace, all based on the lived experiences of GCOs. In-depth interviews allowed for a saturation of information that helped answer the research questions of this study.

The exploratory phenomenological design was used to describe the phenomenon regarding GCO experiences about engagement. In-depth interviews that were semistructured were conducted in this study to understand how participants felt about their individual engagement levels in their respective workplaces. This meant that the researcher brought a set of interview questions to the interviews. The questions were open-ended and required participants to elaborate on specific points, topics, and experiences. Thirteen in-person interviews and one virtual interview were conducted to gather information on how GCOs perceive employee engagement. The goal of these in-depth interviews was to explore the factors that affect engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals located in Massachusetts.

Appropriateness of Research Design

A qualitative research design is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). Tufford and Newman (2010) indicated qualitative methodology is increasingly used within the field of social work research as a means to harness and explore the lived experiences of participants. Qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to focus on obtaining data through conversational communication, which led to a saturation of information. The researcher used transcendental phenomenology, which aims at describing the essence and nature of experiencing a phenomenon and was appropriate for this study because the intent of the study was to gather information from individual GCO experiences, focusing on factors that affect employee engagement in GCOs.

The Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is to attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of study participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The role of the researcher is to identify and implement appropriate methodology and design to provide valid and reliable data that address the research questions. A primary responsibility of the researcher is to safeguard participants and their data (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The researcher served as the principal investigator (PI) of the study and was the main instrumentation for the collection of data. The researcher audio recorded all the interviews and took notes throughout the duration of the interviews.

The researcher is a GCO herself and utilized bracketing to mitigate any potential effects of presumptions. Bracketing is a method used by some researchers to mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby to increase the rigor of the project (Tufford & Newman, 2010). The researcher set aside her own experiences and approached the study with an objective mindset of the GCO profession. The researcher maintained objectivity throughout the research study by setting aside all personal experiences, thoughts, and opinions. The researcher made sure to suspend any type of communication that would influence a participant's response. The researcher made sure to set aside any emotions that would lead to asking questions subjectively and would lead the participant to answer biased questions. The researcher was mindful to not ask questions influenced by personal experiences and interpretations. Additionally, Tufford and Newman (2010) indicated that bracketing is also a method to protect the researcher from the cumulative effects of examining what may be emotionally challenging material. The researcher remained

objective throughout the data collection, research findings, and interpretation of the research study. The researcher also maintained self-awareness as part of the ongoing research process.

Participants and Population

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) invests nearly $37.3 billion annually in medical research. More than 80% of the funding is awarded through nearly 50,000 competitive grants to more than 300,000 researchers at more than 2,500 universities, medical schools, and other research institutions in every U.S. state and around the world (Genetic Engineering & Biotechnology News, n.d.). Approximately 78% of all NIH funding is awarded to academic institutions, and 22% of NIH funding is awarded to hospitals. Massachusetts is the leading state in the nation with the highest number NIH grants awarded to hospital recipients. Massachusetts hospitals have had the highest volume of NIH grants and have been the recipients of federal grants with the highest monetary amounts issued to hospitals for 3 consecutive years. Massachusetts hospitals have been in the top 10 list of hospitals with the highest quantity of awards and highest funding amounts for FY16, FY17, and FY18. Table 1 lists the top 50 NIH-funded hospitals in FY16 and demonstrates that five out of the top 10 highest-funded hospitals are in Boston, Massachusetts. Table 2 lists the top 50 NIH-funded hospitals in FY17 and demonstrates that five out of the top 10 highest-funded hospitals are in Boston Massachusetts. Table 3 lists the top 50 NIH-funded hospitals in FY18 and demonstrates that five out of the top 10 highest funded hospitals are again in Boston, Massachusetts.

Table 1

A List of NIH-Funded Hospitals in Fiscal Year 2016

FISCAL YEAR 2016: OCTOBER 1, 2015– SEPTEMBER 30, 2016					
RANKING	ORGANIZATION	AWARDS	FUNDING	CITY	STATE	COUNTRY
1	MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL	796	$364,981,379	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
2	BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S HOSPITAL	570	$349,521,979	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
3	VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER	459	$241,415,324	NASHVILLE	TN	UNITED STATES
4	CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL CORPORATION	331	$147,762,034	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
5	BETH ISRAEL DEACONESS MEDICAL CENTER	256	$132,229,333	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
6	DANA-FARBER CANCER INST	217	$128,050,993	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
7	CINCINNATI CHILDRENS HOSP MED CTR	267	$111,850,379	CINCINNATI	OH	UNITED STATES
8	CHILDREN'S HOSP OF PHILADELPHIA	201	$111,253,000	PHILADELPHIA	PA	UNITED STATES
9	ST. JUDE CHILDREN'S RESEARCH HOSPITAL	99	$71,090,742	MEMPHIS	TN	UNITED STATES
10	SEATTLE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL	102	$50,107,892	SEATTLE	WA	UNITED STATES
11	CEDARS-SINAI MEDICAL CENTER	107	$47,454,095	LOS ANGELES	CA	UNITED STATES
12	NEW YORK STATE PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE	99	$42,984,276	NEW YORK	NY	UNITED STATES
13	NATIONAL JEWISH HEALTH	56	$32,869,336	DENVER	CO	UNITED STATES
14	RHODE ISLAND HOSPITAL	76	$29,152,940	PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
15	MCLEAN HOSPITAL	74	$27,927,109	BELMONT	MA	UNITED STATES
16	ROSWELL PARK CANCER INSTITUTE CORP	73	$27,887,985	BUFFALO	NY	UNITED STATES
17	BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER	67	$27,152,542	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
18	CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF LOS ANGELES	41	$20,236,544	LOS ANGELES	CA	UNITED STATES
19	MASSACHUSETTS EYE AND EAR INFIRMARY	47	$19,813,390	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
20	TUFTS MEDICAL CENTER	38	$19,794,122	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
21	Henry Ford Health System	31	$16,216,485	DETROIT	MI	UNITED STATES
22	MIRIAM HOSPITAL	30	$10,955,654	PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
23	CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL & RES CTR AT OAKLAND	18	$9,742,925	OAKLAND	CA	UNITED STATES
24	BUTLER HOSPITAL (PROVIDENCE, RI)	25	$9,649,781	PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
25	CALIFORNIA PACIFIC MED CTR RES INSTITUTE	12	$7,900,910	SAN FRANCISCO	CA	UNITED STATES
26	MAINE MEDICAL CENTER	15	$7,137,159	PORTLAND	ME	UNITED STATES
27	WOMEN AND INFANTS HOSPITAL-RHODE ISLAND	16	$7,136,925	PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
28	MOUNT SINAI MEDICAL CENTER (MIAMI BEACH)	3	$7,135,585	MIAMI BEACH	FL	UNITED STATES
29	HEBREW REHABILITATION CENTER FOR AGED	16	$6,982,012	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
30	ALFRED I. DU PONT HOSP FOR CHILDREN	9	$6,898,795	WILMINGTON	DE	UNITED STATES
31	ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL CENTER	9	$4,839,544	PHOENIX	AZ	UNITED STATES
32	LURIE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF CHICAGO	14	$4,748,800	CHICAGO	IL	UNITED STATES
33	CHILDREN'S MERCY HOSP (KANSAS CITY, MO)	11	$4,088,596	KANSAS CITY	MO	UNITED STATES
34	SWEDISH MEDICAL CENTER, FIRST HILL	5	$3,052,500	SEATTLE	WA	UNITED STATES
35	CAROLINAS MEDICAL CENTER	7	$3,025,010	CHARLOTTE	NC	UNITED STATES
36	DECATUR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL	1	$2,771,246	DECATUR	IL	UNITED STATES
37	CHRISTIANA CARE HEALTH SERVICES, INC.	2	$1,948,631	NEWARK	DE	UNITED STATES
38	HARTFORD HOSPITAL	4	$1,740,131	HARTFORD	CT	UNITED STATES
39	BAYSTATE MEDICAL CENTER	7	$1,726,674	SPRINGFIELD	MA	UNITED STATES
40	VIA CHRISTI REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER	2	$1,717,500	WICHITA	KS	UNITED STATES
41	EMMA PENDLETON BRADLEY HOSPITAL	5	$1,449,019	EAST PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
42	SPAULDING REHABILITATION HOSPITAL	5	$1,376,858	CHARLESTOWN	MA	UNITED STATES
43	EMANUEL HOSPITAL AND HEALTH CENTER	3	$1,332,838	PORTLAND	OR	UNITED STATES
44	CONNECTICUT CHILDREN'S MEDICAL CENTER	1	$1,332,762	HARTFORD	CT	UNITED STATES
45	MONTEFIORE MEDICAL CENTER (BRONX, NY)	2	$1,321,017	NEW YORK	NY	UNITED STATES
46	RADY PEDIATRIC GENOMICS & SYSTEMS MEDICINE INSTITUTE	2	$1,269,300	SAN DIEGO	CA	UNITED STATES
47	PROVIDENCE PORTLAND MEDICAL CENTER	5	$1,215,055	PORTLAND	OR	UNITED STATES
48	NORTHSIDE HOSPITAL ATLANTA	2	$1,145,887	ATLANTA	GA	UNITED STATES
49	ROGER WILLIAMS MEDICAL CENTER	4	$1,062,502	PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
50	MEMORIAL HOSPITAL OF RHODE ISLAND	2	$924,697	PAWTUCKET	RI	UNITED STATES

Note. From "NIH Awards by Location and Organization," by National Institutes of Health, n.d. (https://www.report.nih.gov/award/index.cfm?ot=IH&fy=2016&state=US,USS,AL,AK,AZ,AR,C A,CO,CT,DE,DC,FL,GA,HI,ID,IL,IN,IA,KS,KY,LA,ME,MD,MA,MI,MN,MS,MO,MT,NE,NV, NH,NJ,NM,NY,NC,ND,OH,OK,OR,PA,RI,SC,SD,TN,TX,UT,VT,VA,WA,WV,WI,WY,UST,A S,GU,PR,VI&ic=&fm=&orgid=&distr=&rfa=&om=n&pid=&view=statedetail).

Table 2

A List of NIH-Funded Hospitals in Fiscal Year 2017

RANKING	ORGANIZATION	AWARDS	FUNDING	CITY	STATE	COUNTRY
FISCAL YEAR 2017: OCTOBER 1, 2016- SEPTEMBER 30, 2017					
1	MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL	812	$394,465,880	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
2	BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S HOSPITAL	571	$390,450,002	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
3	VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER	463	$259,711,413	NASHVILLE	TN	UNITED STATES
4	BOSTON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL	345	$157,591,678	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
5	DANA-FARBER CANCER INST	219	$144,653,313	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
6	BETH ISRAEL DEACONESS MEDICAL CENTER	240	$130,821,684	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
7	CHILDREN'S HOSP OF PHILADELPHIA	224	$126,040,263	PHILADELPHIA	PA	UNITED STATES
8	CINCINNATI CHILDRENS HOSP MED CTR	290	$121,343,846	CINCINNATI	OH	UNITED STATES
9	ST. JUDE CHILDREN'S RESEARCH HOSPITAL	105	$76,186,324	MEMPHIS	TN	UNITED STATES
10	CEDARS-SINAI MEDICAL CENTER	123	$55,740,921	LOS ANGELES	CA	UNITED STATES
11	NEW YORK STATE PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE	104	$49,171,819	NEW YORK	NY	UNITED STATES
12	SEATTLE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL	101	$43,676,764	SEATTLE	WA	UNITED STATES
13	NATIONAL JEWISH HEALTH	58	$33,057,950	DENVER	CO	UNITED STATES
14	RHODE ISLAND HOSPITAL	81	$29,540,878	PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
15	BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER	60	$28,258,629	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
16	MASSACHUSETTS EYE AND EAR INFIRMARY	55	$24,747,234	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
17	MCLEAN HOSPITAL	70	$24,048,862	BELMONT	MA	UNITED STATES
18	ROSWELL PARK CANCER INSTITUTE CORP	55	$22,820,055	BUFFALO	NY	UNITED STATES
19	Henry Ford Health System	38	$22,709,684	DETROIT	MI	UNITED STATES
20	CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF LOS ANGELES	43	$21,868,818	LOS ANGELES	CA	UNITED STATES
21	TUFTS MEDICAL CENTER	38	$18,365,897	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
22	MAINE MEDICAL CENTER	19	$12,640,732	PORTLAND	ME	UNITED STATES
23	WOMEN AND INFANTS HOSPITAL-RHODE ISLAND	16	$11,008,149	PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
24	MIRIAM HOSPITAL	31	$10,592,353	PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
25	MOUNT SINAI MEDICAL CENTER (MIAMI BEACH)	3	$8,967,858	MIAMI BEACH	FL	UNITED STATES
26	BUTLER HOSPITAL (PROVIDENCE, RI)	24	$8,875,887	PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
27	CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL & RES CTR AT OAKLAND	13	$7,760,323	OAKLAND	CA	UNITED STATES
28	HEBREW REHABILITATION CENTER FOR AGED	21	$7,222,299	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
29	LURIE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF CHICAGO	20	$6,318,770	CHICAGO	IL	UNITED STATES
30	MEMORIAL HOSPITAL OF RHODE ISLAND	3	$5,936,849	PAWTUCKET	RI	UNITED STATES
31	CALIFORNIA PACIFIC MED CTR RES INSTITUTE	9	$5,768,159	SAN FRANCISCO	CA	UNITED STATES
32	WINTHROP-UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL	3	$5,000,222	MINEOLA	NY	UNITED STATES
33	CHILDREN'S MERCY HOSP (KANSAS CITY, MO)	13	$4,653,681	KANSAS CITY	MO	UNITED STATES
34	ALFRED I. DU PONT HOSP FOR CHILDREN	7	$4,165,193	WILMINGTON	DE	UNITED STATES
35	ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL CENTER	11	$4,110,025	PHOENIX	AZ	UNITED STATES
36	EMMA PENDLETON BRADLEY HOSPITAL	8	$3,332,904	EAST PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
37	BAYSTATE MEDICAL CENTER	9	$3,295,669	SPRINGFIELD	MA	UNITED STATES
38	DECATUR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL	1	$2,948,688	DECATUR	IL	UNITED STATES
39	SWEDISH MEDICAL CENTER, FIRST HILL	5	$2,786,880	SEATTLE	WA	UNITED STATES
40	VIA CHRISTI REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER	1	$1,835,874	WICHITA	KS	UNITED STATES
41	EMANUEL HOSPITAL AND HEALTH CENTER	3	$1,579,067	Portland	OR	UNITED STATES
42	CAROLINAS MEDICAL CENTER	3	$1,516,176	CHARLOTTE	NC	UNITED STATES
43	NORTHSIDE HOSPITAL ATLANTA	2	$1,454,729	ATLANTA	GA	UNITED STATES
44	HARTFORD HOSPITAL	3	$1,435,460	HARTFORD	CT	UNITED STATES
45	MONTEFIORE MEDICAL CENTER (BRONX, NY)	2	$1,335,313	NEW YORK	NY	UNITED STATES
46	RADY PEDIATRIC GENOMICS & SYSTEMS MEDICINE INSTITUTE	1	$1,250,000	SAN DIEGO	CA	UNITED STATES
47	CHRISTIANA CARE HEALTH SERVICES, INC.	1	$1,149,675	NEWARK	DE	UNITED STATES
48	TACOMA GENERAL HOSPITAL	1	$1,000,730	TACOMA	WA	UNITED STATES
49	PROVIDENCE PORTLAND MEDICAL CENTER	3	$905,313	PORTLAND	OR	UNITED STATES
50	HACKENSACK UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER	2	$739,920	HACKENSACK	NJ	UNITED STATES

Note. From "NIH Awards by Location and Organization," by National Institutes of Health, n.d. (https://www.report.nih.gov/award/index.cfm?ot=IH&fy=2016&state=US,USS,AL,AK,AZ,AR,CA,CO,CT,DE,DC,FL,GA,HI,ID,IL,IN,IA,KS,KY,LA,ME,MD,MA,MI,MN,MS,MO,MT,NE,NV,NH,NJ,NM,NY,NC,ND,OH,OK,OR,PA,RI,SC,SD,TN,TX,UT,VT,VA,WA,WV,WI,WY,UST,AS,GU,PR,VI&ic=&fm=&orgid=&distr=&rfa=&om=n&pid=&view=statedetail).

Table 3

A List of NIH-Funded Hospitals in Fiscal Year 2018

FISCAL YEAR 2018: OCTOBER 1, 2017- SEPTEMBER 30, 2018					
RANKING	ORGANIZATION	AWARDS	FUNDING	CITY	STATE	COUNTRY
1	MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL	906	$465,776,958	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
2	BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S HOSPITAL	560	$388,928,321	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
3	VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER	491	$269,892,304	NASHVILLE	TN	UNITED STATES
4	DANA-FARBER CANCER INST	228	$172,449,395	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
5	BOSTON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL	344	$167,075,825	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
6	CHILDREN'S HOSP OF PHILADELPHIA	236	$145,610,804	PHILADELPHIA	PA	UNITED STATES
7	BETH ISRAEL DEACONESS MEDICAL CENTER	240	$128,148,819	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
8	CINCINNATI CHILDRENS HOSP MED CTR	290	$120,876,156	CINCINNATI	OH	UNITED STATES
9	ST. JUDE CHILDREN'S RESEARCH HOSPITAL	117	$92,105,597	MEMPHIS	TN	UNITED STATES
10	NEW YORK STATE PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE	113	$63,361,395	NEW YORK	NY	UNITED STATES
11	CEDARS-SINAI MEDICAL CENTER	143	$63,195,585	LOS ANGELES	CA	UNITED STATES
12	SEATTLE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL	112	$47,077,137	SEATTLE	WA	UNITED STATES
13	NATIONAL JEWISH HEALTH	60	$41,511,120	DENVER	CO	UNITED STATES
14	ROSWELL PARK CANCER INSTITUTE CORP	66	$37,884,585	BUFFALO	NY	UNITED STATES
15	BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER	79	$34,824,666	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
16	RHODE ISLAND HOSPITAL	67	$29,973,204	PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
17	MCLEAN HOSPITAL	71	$29,212,777	BELMONT	MA	UNITED STATES
18	Henry Ford Health System	44	$28,807,855	DETROIT	MI	UNITED STATES
19	CALIFORNIA PACIFIC MED CTR RES INSTITUTE	12	$28,580,332	SAN FRANCISCO	CA	UNITED STATES
20	MASSACHUSETTS EYE AND EAR INFIRMARY	52	$24,738,160	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
21	CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF LOS ANGELES	41	$22,295,828	LOS ANGELES	CA	UNITED STATES
22	TUFTS MEDICAL CENTER	41	$20,654,118	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
23	MIRIAM HOSPITAL	35	$14,961,052	PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
24	WOMEN AND INFANTS HOSPITAL-RHODE ISLAND	11	$13,959,536	PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
25	MAINE MEDICAL CENTER	19	$12,771,786	PORTLAND	ME	UNITED STATES
26	LURIE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF CHICAGO	36	$10,974,430	CHICAGO	IL	UNITED STATES
27	HEBREW REHABILITATION CENTER FOR AGED	16	$10,764,222	BOSTON	MA	UNITED STATES
28	CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL & RES CTR AT OAKLAND	15	$8,791,336	OAKLAND	CA	UNITED STATES
29	BUTLER HOSPITAL (PROVIDENCE, RI)	21	$7,557,364	PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
30	MOUNT SINAI MEDICAL CENTER (MIAMI BEACH)	2	$7,556,930	MIAMI BEACH	FL	UNITED STATES
31	CHILDREN'S MERCY HOSP (KANSAS CITY, MO)	16	$5,797,233	KANSAS CITY	MO	UNITED STATES
32	ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL CENTER	10	$5,230,609	PHOENIX	AZ	UNITED STATES
33	EMMA PENDLETON BRADLEY HOSPITAL	11	$4,443,765	EAST PROVIDENCE	RI	UNITED STATES
34	HACKENSACK UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER	11	$4,438,714	HACKENSACK	NJ	UNITED STATES
35	ALFRED I. DU PONT HOSP FOR CHILDREN	7	$4,211,959	WILMINGTON	DE	UNITED STATES
36	BAYSTATE MEDICAL CENTER	11	$4,085,495	SPRINGFIELD	MA	UNITED STATES
37	AVERA MCKENNAN	2	$3,714,210	SIOUX FALLS	SD	UNITED STATES
38	CAROLINAS MEDICAL CENTER	5	$3,095,551	CHARLOTTE	NC	UNITED STATES
39	DECATUR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL	1	$2,990,806	DECATUR	IL	UNITED STATES
40	EMANUEL HOSPITAL AND HEALTH CENTER	6	$2,709,377	Portland	OR	UNITED STATES
41	SWEDISH MEDICAL CENTER, FIRST HILL	3	$2,333,196	SEATTLE	WA	UNITED STATES
42	FLORIDA HOSPITAL	3	$2,067,385	ORLANDO	FL	UNITED STATES
43	MONTEFIORE MEDICAL CENTER (BRONX, NY)	4	$1,999,009	NEW YORK	NY	UNITED STATES
44	HARTFORD HOSPITAL	4	$1,857,456	HARTFORD	CT	UNITED STATES
45	NORTHSIDE HOSPITAL ATLANTA	2	$1,670,634	ATLANTA	GA	UNITED STATES
46	VIA CHRISTI REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER	1	$1,527,000	WICHITA	KS	UNITED STATES
47	SPAULDING REHABILITATION HOSPITAL	4	$1,345,076	CHARLESTOWN	MA	UNITED STATES
48	CHRISTIANA CARE HEALTH SERVICES, INC.	1	$1,307,691	NEWARK	DE	UNITED STATES
49	SHARP MEMORIAL HOSPITAL	2	$1,242,180	SAN DIEGO	CA	UNITED STATES
50	BAPTIST MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - TIPTON	2	$1,097,101	COVINGTON	TN	UNITED STATES

Note. From "NIH Awards by Location and Organization," by National Institutes of Health, n.d. (https://www.report.nih.gov/award/index.cfm?ot=IH&fy=2016&state=US,USS,AL,AK,AZ,AR,CA,CO,CT,DE,DC,FL,GA,HI,ID,IL,IN,IA,KS,KY,LA,ME,MD,MA,MI,MN,MS,MO,MT,NE,NV,NH,NJ,NM,NY,NC,ND,OH,OK,OR,PA,RI,SC,SD,TN,TX,UT,VT,VA,WA,WV,WI,WY,UST,AS,GU,PR,VI&ic=&fm=&orgid=&distr=&rfa=&om=n&pid=&view=statedetail).

As illustrated in Tables 1, 2, and 3, five of the top 10 highest funded hospitals in Massachusetts include Massachusetts General Hospital, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston Children's Hospital, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital have been the top two most awarded hospitals in 3 consecutive fiscal years, which illustrates the high volume of grants those institutions handle. The intent of this qualitative study was to conduct interviews from the five hospitals located in Massachusetts. However, one of the five hospitals was nonresponsive to the researcher's solicitation for research participants; thus, this qualitative study was conducted from four of the five hospitals located in Massachusetts. NIH statistics demonstrate these hospitals handle high volumes of NIH grants and have oversight over millions of dollars in federal monies. Thus, these institutions have offices of research administration that provide institutional oversight of federal grants and contracts, which makes them appropriate sites for interviews.

There can be anywhere from five to 30 GCOs in an office of research administration (ORA) per hospital, depending on the size of the department and organization. There were four GCOs at O1, eight GCOs at O4, and 27 GCOs who serviced O3 and O5, which provided a total population of 39 individuals. First, the researcher identified the managers and/or directors of the offices of research administration of each organization by visiting each hospital's website. The researcher noted all the names and contract information for managers and/or directors at each site. The researcher attempted to gather a list of GCOs at each site, but not all of the hospitals listed staff information on their Internet page. The researcher selected participants based

on their professional role. The researcher's intent was to recruit participants who currently held professional positions such as GCO, grant administrator, grant officer, and research administrator. These positions are all equivalent to an authorized organization representative role defined by NIH and vary in titles and nomenclature because different organizations label these positions differently. The researcher recruited participants at all levels of the position, which included junior and senior levels. It was important to include participants in all levels of the position to ensure all the GCO population was represented. Employees tend to have different perceptions of their work depending on the years of experience and service they have in a particular field. Therefore, the intent of the researcher was to recruit GCO participants with varying levels of experience.

Once the researcher identified the respective supervisors and potential participants for each site, she reached out to the manager and/or director of research administration at each of the five organizations to request permission to contact their staff. The researcher contacted each supervisor individually via e-mail communication. In the e-mail, the researcher introduced herself and informed them of the research study being conducted. The e-mails were sent from the researcher's California Baptist University (CBU) account. The researcher attached the IRB approval for reference and also attached the research agreement. In the e-mail, the researcher asked the supervisor to sign and return the signed research agreement if he or she granted permission to contact the GCOs in his or her organization. In the e-mail, the researcher requested that if the supervisor granted permission to contact his or her staff, to kindly provide the names and contact information for each GCO in his or her research administration office. The researcher e-mailed the managers and/or directors at each organization on the same date and the

same time (see Appendix A). The researcher waited for a response for 5 business days and sent a follow-up e-mail 5 days after the initial e-mail had been sent. The researcher also called each supervisor and left messages. The researcher contacted the director at O4 who informed the researcher she had reached out to her staff about participating in the study and would get back to the researcher within 1 week. The director indicated she did not want to provide the names of her staff without obtaining their consent first. The researcher sent a second follow-up e-mail to all the managers and/or directors 5 days after the first follow-up e-mail. The director for O3 and O5 expressed great interest in the study and requested a conference call to discuss the study further. The researcher participated in a conference call with the director for O3 and O5 and provided further details about the background, intent, and goal of the study. The director indicated he would return the signed research agreement (Appendix B) and asked the researcher to send him all the documentation that would be sent to the potential participants. The director said he would check with his staff to see who would want to participate in the study. After the second follow-up e-mail, the managers and/or directors for four sites returned the signed research agreements and provided the names and e-mail addresses of staff who expressed interest in the study and agreed to participate in the study. The director at O3 and O5 offered to reserve a conference room in his office in order to facilitate the interview process for his staff and for the researcher. The researcher made numerous attempts to contact the director at O1. The researcher sent a third follow-up e-mail to the director at O1 and offered a Starbucks gift card for her response in attempt to encourage her to respond to the e-mail. When the researcher tried calling the director at O1, the line would get forwarded to the office receptionist; the researcher left four

messages with the receptionist. The researcher sent the director at O1 five e-mails over

the course of a month and a half and never heard back. The researcher moved forward

with the four sites that had agreed to participate.

Once the researcher received the signed research agreements, the researcher

reached out to each individual potential participant via e-mail. The e-mails were sent

from the researcher's CBU account. The researcher e-mailed each potential participant

individually to ensure complete confidentiality and privacy. The body of the e-mail

included an introduction of the researcher and the study and referenced a set of

attachments that were included in the e-mail. The attachments included an informational

flyer (Appendix C), which contained general information regarding the study, a formal

letter of introduction (Appendix D), the participant informed consent (Appendix E),

which also provided consent to audio record the interview, the confidentiality statement

(Appendix F), and finally, the research participants' bill of rights (Appendix G). Once a

GCO agreed to participate, he or she signed the participant informed consent (either

digitally or ink signature) and e-mailed the informed consent form back to the

researcher's CBU account.

Potential participants had up to 7 days to respond to the initial e-mail before a

follow-up e-mail was sent. Eight participants responded to the initial e-mail and returned

the signed informed consent form to the researcher. Once 7 days had passed since the

initial communication, the researcher sent a follow-up e-mail to the remaining potential

participants. One potential participant called the researcher and indicated she was not

interested in participating in the study and did not have time for such things. The

researcher tried to encourage this potential participant by providing background on the

study and by highlighting the opportunity to contribute to scholarship on research administration and the potential participant repeated she simply had too much work and did not care for this study. The researcher told the potential participant she was more than happy to cater to the participant's schedule and was open to an interview date and time convenient for the potential participant. The potential participant again repeated she did not have time to waste and indicated reading the researcher's e-mails and speaking to the researcher on the phone took too much of her time. The researcher apologized and thanked the potential participant for her time. The follow-up e-mail resulted in responses from six outstanding participants who returned their signed informed consent forms. This yielded 14 participants, which made up 35% of the total population who agreed to participate in the study and returned the signed informed consent forms.

The researcher scheduled a maximum of four interviews per day over 5 weekdays. The researcher allotted 90 minutes to each interview and offered the following time slots: 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 1:00 p.m., and 2:30 p.m. In order to conduct one-on-one interviews, the researcher flew out to Boston, Massachusetts for a period of 5 weekdays. Thirteen participants agreed to participate in in-person interviews and scheduled an interview date and time with the researcher. One participant indicated she worked remotely 100% of the time and requested a virtual interview via Zoom. Zoom is a software that offers remote video conferencing services, and provides remote conferencing services, online meetings, chat, and mobile collaboration. The researcher conducted the virtual interview once she had returned to Los Angeles, California. Once all 14 interviews were conducted, the researcher determined data saturation had been met. Participation in the study was completely voluntary, and the selected participants agreed

to share their perceptions and answers to the 14 open-ended interview questions. Participants had the option to decline from participating, to skip any questions they did not feel comfortable answering, and to withdraw from participation at any time without fear of repercussions.

Data Collection

The goal of this study was to reach saturation based on content; not quantity. Data saturation is not about the numbers per se but about the depth of the data (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained and when further coding is no longer feasible. Data saturation is reached when there are no new data, no new themes, no new coding (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

This qualitative study conducted one-on-one interviews to obtain personal and firsthand interview content. One-on-one interviews are more personal than virtual interviews and allow for direct contact between the researcher and participant. The researcher contacted all participants who returned their digitally signed informed consent form. The researcher reached out to each participant individually with potential dates and times for an interview. The researcher proposed to meet at the reserved conference room for participants in O3 and O5, who all agreed. The researcher proposed to meet at a local coffee shop for participants in O2 and O4. Once a designated date, time, and location had been setup with each participant, the researcher compiled an interview schedule. The researcher arrived at Boston, Massachusetts the morning of the first day of interviews. The researcher arrived at Boston, Massachusetts at 5:45 a.m., and the first interview was

scheduled at 10:30 a.m., which provided time for the researcher to settle in and gather all the necessary materials for the interviews. The researcher arrived at each designated interview location 15-30 minutes before the start time of each interview. Interviews were conducted within a 90-minute timeframe. All the participants arrived at the interviews on time; there were no delays. The researcher recorded the in-person interviews by using a digital voice recorder. The virtual interview was also conducted within a 90-minute timeframe. The researcher recorded the virtual interview by using the recording functionality in Zoom. The researcher recorded the virtual interview to analyze the data at a later time. The researcher e-mailed the virtual interviewee and provided a meeting request, which contained the link and access code for the participant to use when joining the meeting via Zoom. The researcher was online five minutes before the start of the scheduled meeting. The participant logged into Zoom at the scheduled time; there was no delay.

The researcher began the interview meetings by greeting the participants and thanking them for their time. The researcher informed the participants that at the conclusion of the interview, they would receive a $10 Starbucks gift card as a token of the researcher's appreciation. The researcher reminded the participants of their consent to audiotape the meeting and let them know the meeting was being recorded for analysis purposes. The researcher briefly explained the background and purpose of the study. The researcher then went through the interview script (Appendix H). The researcher explained the ground rules and asked the participants whether they had any questions before beginning the interview questions. The researcher began the interview process by asking the participants what their current title was, how long they had been in that role,

how long they have been in the organization, and also asked their age for logistical

purposes. The researcher then asked participants to describe their experiences as a GCO

in research administration. These conversational questions allowed the researcher to

transition into the semistructured interview questions. The researcher made the interview

seem informal to encourage participants to speak freely and honestly. The researcher

asked the participants each of the interview questions and provided them adequate time to

give a meaningful and thoughtful response. Throughout the duration of the interviews,

the researcher clarified questions as needed and used probes to encourage participants to

elaborate on specific points or thoughts. The researcher demonstrated emotionally

neutral body language, which included nodding, smiling, looking interested, and making

encouraging noises to make the participants feel comfortable when they were speaking.

The researcher actively listened to the participants' responses and took notes to capture

body language and facial expressions. Finally, at the conclusion of the interview

questions, the researcher debriefed the participants and again thanked them for their

participation. The researcher e-mailed each participant the $10 Starbucks gift card at the

conclusion of the interview meeting. Once all the interviews had been completed, the

researcher transcribed all the interview responses by uploading each audio file into

TranscribeMe, a professional transcription service. The transcribed files were made

available to the researcher within 48 hours of having uploaded the audio files.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation for this research study included 14 open-ended questions (see

Appendix I). According to Yin (2014), the researcher serves as the data collection

instrument in a qualitative research study. According to Starks and Trinidad (2007), the

researcher is the instrument for analysis through all phases of a qualitative research project. Further, Creswell (2014) posited that qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants. The researcher was the main instrument for collecting data. The researcher used an approved protocol and a digital recorder to record the interviews as instruments during the interview process. However, the researcher was the one to gather the information and interpret it. The researcher reached out to potential participants, conducted the interviews, took notes, and analyzed the data. Field notes allow the researcher to maintain and comment upon impressions, environmental contexts, behaviors, and nonverbal cues that may not be adequately captured through audio recording (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The researcher brought a small notebook to each interview and took notes throughout the duration of each interview.

The interview questions were based on a previously approved instrumentation in the dissertation by Myers (2015) entitled *A Narrative Inquiry Into Factors That Affect Professional Academic Advisors' Work Engagement*. Myers's semistructured interview is composed of 14 open-ended questions aimed at collecting data about engagement in academic advisors. The interview questions were formulated into three sections because Myers conducted a series of three interview sessions with each academic advisor. The researcher modified the research questions to collect data about engagement in GCOs. The researcher, like Myers, conducted semistructured interviews and initially formulated 15 interview questions. A pilot study was conducted on the 15 interview questions, and based on the feedback received, one question was modified, and one question was removed, which led to 14 interview questions. The researcher conducted a single

interview session with each GCO within 90 minutes. All 14 interview questions were asked during a single interview session with each GCO. The interview questions served as the basis for collecting data to provide insight into the research questions. The interview questions were as follows:

1. What have been your experiences as a grant and contract officer in research administration?

2. What factors (both personally and professionally) influence your engagement level at work?

3. How long have you been in your profession? Do you notice a difference in your level of engagement based on the number of years you have been a grant and contract officer? If so, what do you feel are the causes?

4. Describe your professional relationships with faculty and department research administrators. Please explain.

5. Describe the organizational culture of your workplace. Please explain.

6. Do you feel you have adequate interactions with faculty and department research administrators to most effectively carry out your duties as a grant and contract officer and provide the best service to department research administrators and faculty? Why or why not?

7. Do you feel you have adequate confidence in your abilities to perform the required functions and responsibilities as a grant and contract officer? Why or why not?

8. Do you feel you receive adequate support in maintaining a positive motivational state for accomplishing goals as a grant and contract officer? Why or why not?

9. Do you feel you receive adequate support in maintaining optimism to most effectively carry out your duties as a grant and contract officer and provide the best service to faculty and department research administrators? Why or why not?

10. Do you feel you receive adequate support in learning how to overcome positive and negative challenges in your work as a grant and contract officer? Why or why not?

11. Do you feel your workplace aesthetics affect your engagement level as a grant and contract officer? Why or why not?

12. Have there been any investigators or department research administrators that you have advised during your tenure as a grant and contract officer who have left an unforgettable mark and inspired you to continue as a grant and contract officer? If so, why?

13. What do you think is important for faculty and department research administrators to understand about the role of grant and contract officers that you feel they may not understand and in what ways can they help you to be successful in your job?

14. What do you think is the most important thing for new grant and contract officers to understand before entering the field?

Interview Question 1 begins by exploring the experiences participants have had with engagement in the research administration field. Interview Question 2 explores the understandings participants have on the factors that affect engagement in the workplace. Interview Question 3 explores the individual experiences of each participant regarding engagement and examines if engagement has been altered by the number of years in the research administration field. Interview Questions 4, 6, 12, and 13 explore the dynamics of the professional relationship between the participants and faculty and their department

research administrators (DRAs). Interview Questions 5 and 11 explore the workspace aesthetics of participants. Interview Questions 7 through 10 allowed the researcher to evaluate how participants felt regarding the four positive psychological capacities that constitute POB. These questions allowed the researcher to evaluate the emotionality of participants and helped evaluate whether emotionality affected engagement in any way. Interview Question 11 allowed the researcher to evaluate whether participants felt work aesthetics affected engagement in any way. Interview Question 14 was added to allow participants to add any additional thoughts they may not have previously expressed.

The 14 interview questions addressed the four research questions of the study. Interview Questions 1 through 3 provided an overview of the participants' perception on engagement in the workplace and address Research Question 1. Interview Questions 4, 6, 12, and 13 addressed the professional relationships between participants and faculty and DRAs and address Research Question 2. Interview Questions 7 through 10 addressed participants' perception of emotionality in the workplace and address Research Question 3. Finally, Interview Questions 5 and 11 addressed workplace aesthetics and helped the researcher evaluate how workplace aesthetics affected engagement in GCOs; these questions address Research Question 4.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted on the initial 15 interview questions to evaluate the feasibility of the questions. A pilot study is a preliminary small-scale study that researchers conduct to help them decide how best to conduct a large-scale research project (Crossman, 2020). By using a pilot study, a researcher can identify or refine research questions, determine what methods are best, and estimate how much time and

resources will be necessary to complete the larger version, among other things (Crossman, 2020). The pilot study was conducted by sending the 15 interview questions via e-mail to four grants managers at CBU. Only one grants manager responded and provided feedback. The respondent expressed not understanding the relevance of one question and suggested to combine two of the 15 interview questions. Based on this feedback, the researcher modified the question, which originally read, "Describe your workspace. Please explain" to read, "Describe the organizational culture of your workplace. Please explain." The researcher also removed the question that asked, "Do you feel you have adequate workspace to most effectively carry out your duties as a grant and contract officer and provide the best service to faculty and department research administrators? Why or why not?" This question was removed because the concept of examining workplace aesthetics was covered by a different existing question that asked, "Do you feel your workplace aesthetics affect your engagement level as a grant and contract officer? Why or why not?" The rest of the interview questions remained the same. The feedback from the pilot study helped the researcher modify and reduce the interview questions to 14 open-ended questions aimed at answering the four research questions of the study.

Materials

The materials required for this research study included: preinterview materials, interview materials, and postinterview materials. The preinterview materials included the IRB approval and interview protocol to conduct interviews, invitation letters for participants, participant information sheet, consent forms, interview schedules, and interview questions. Materials needed during the interviews included a digital voice

recorder and a notebook and pen for notetaking. Handwritten notes were used to capture information on body language during the interview process. Body language refers to the nonverbal signs that people use to communicate. According to experts, these nonverbal signals make up a huge part of daily communication (Cherry, 2019). Similarly, facial expressions may reveal a person's true feelings about a particular situation (Cherry, 2019). Facial expressions and body movements convey the things that are not said out loud, which is why in-person interviews were integral to collecting interview data. Finally, the postinterview materials included Microsoft Office Word, Microsoft Office Excel, and NVivo 12, which was used to transcribe the data from the interviews.

Data Analysis

The analysis of this research study involved analyzing data that were subjective and rich and consisted of in-depth information. This entailed reviewing a large number of transcripts, looking for similarities and/or differences, and subsequently finding themes and developing categories. According to Sutton and Austin (2015), transcribing data entails converting the spoken word to the written word, which facilitates data analysis. All audio recordings were transcribed using a professional transcription service in order to ensure reliability. In general, analyzing qualitative research focuses on the exploration of values, meanings, beliefs, thoughts, experiences, and feelings toward a specific event or phenomenon. The data analysis for the interview content included the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts. This process involved coding or categorizing the data. The researcher identified significant patterns and drew meaning from the collected data to build a logical chain of evidence.

Once all the data had been transcribed, they were coded. Coding refers to the identification of topics, issues, similarities, and differences that are revealed through the participants' narratives and interpreted by the researcher (Sutton & Austin, 2015). To facilitate this process, the researcher used NVivo 12 and Microsoft Excel software. NVivo 12 is a qualitative and mixed-methods data analysis software tool that provides researchers with a place to organize, store, and retrieve data (NVivo, n.d.). This software allows for qualitative inquiry beyond coding, sorting, and retrieval of data. This software is also designed to integrate coding with qualitative linking, shaping, and modelling. The researcher created the categories and codes and decided what to collate in the NVivo program. The researcher created codes for each of the four research questions and deposited relevant interview data to each research question code. The researcher also examined each interview question individually to note themes, concepts, and ideas. The researcher synthesized the data and interpreted the meanings extracted from the data, which helped explore potential ways to improve engagement levels in GCOs working in nonprofit hospitals.

Informed Consent

Informed consent refers to the process by which human participants agree or consent to participate in a research study. The goal of participant consent is to document the fact that participants know and understand the relevant elements of the research study prior to their participation. Informed consent is essential before enrolling a participant in a study because it evidences their voluntary agreement to participate in research. Participants were educated on the steps involved in participating in a research project that involves human participants. They were also informed that every precaution would be

taken to protect their privacy. The informed consent indicated that participants agreed to having the interviews audiotaped. The informed consent also informed participants they had the right to end the interview or refuse to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable answering. If a participant chose to terminate an interview at any time, the researcher would do so immediately, and their responses would not be part of the study.

The information package that was sent to the target population included a research participants' bill of rights document. This document provided a comprehensive list of a participant's rights and responsibilities and the responsibilities of the researcher or PI. The informed consent and the confidentiality statement required a digital signature from the participant before an interview could be scheduled. A signature indicated that the participant understood the documents and willingly agreed to participate in the study. The researcher printed out the signed documents and kept them in a secured locked cabinet file that was only accessible to the researcher.

Confidentiality

The researcher ensured participant privacy by ensuring their names were not identified in the study. Alphanumeric codes such as P01, P02, P03, and so forth were used to protect participant identity. The researcher also used alphanumeric codes such as O1, O2, O3, and so forth to identify each organization. Information that appeared to identify a particular participant or organization was removed and remained confidential. The researcher analyzed the interview content and identified common themes. The researcher gathered all the information and used it to answer the four research questions of the study.

Protection of Human Subjects

The purpose of institutional review boards (IRBs) or research ethics committees is to provide a core protection for human research participants through advance and periodic independent review of the ethical acceptability of proposals for human research (Grady, 2015). IRBs are charged with providing an independent evaluation that proposed research is ethically acceptable, checking clinical investigators' potential biases, and evaluating compliance with regulations and laws designed to protect human subjects (Grady, 2015). IRBs are responsible for assessing the proposed research as related to potential risks and benefits to participants, the extent to which risks have been mitigated/participants are fully informed, and the scientific merit of the research (CBU, 2017). The goal of the IRB is to minimize risks to participants by using procedures that are consistent and with sound research design (CBU, 2017). Essentially, the fundamental purpose of IRB review of informed consent is to assure that the rights and welfare of subjects are protected. A signed informed consent document is evidence that the document has been provided to a prospective subject (and presumably, explained) and that the subject has agreed to participate in the research (Food and Drug Administration, 2019). The researcher submitted an Expedited Research IRB application to the CBU IRB department and received the IRB approval within 3 weeks.

Validity and Reliability

The researcher ensured validity in the study by taking steps to maintain the highest standards of conduct throughout the interview process. According to Neuman (2016), validity includes strictly following guidelines or an interview protocol throughout the research process. To ensure validity in a study, the researcher used precise

terminology when phrasing questions. The researcher ensured she followed the protocol approved by the school's IRB. The questions avoided making unwarranted assumptions about participants, about the position, and about organizations. The researcher ensured reliability by asking all the participants the exact same set of questions. The researcher conducted a pilot study to test reliability and validity of the interview questions. The pilot study allowed the researcher to determine whether the questions were clear and understandable. The pilot study also helped the researcher evaluate whether the interview questions yield responses that were appropriate for answering the research questions. The researcher modified the initial set of interview questions based on the feedback received. The researcher modified the questions and wording of the questions as necessary to ensure reliability. Interview participants were encouraged to speak openly and honestly with the knowledge that the researcher would protect their identity, their organization, and all the information that was shared during the interview process. To ensure the credibility of the interview responses, the interviews were recorded. In-person interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, and the Zoom interview was recorded using the recording feature offered by the Zoom application. The researcher also took notes during all the interviews.

Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology that was used in this study. Transcendental phenomenology focuses on people's meaning of a lived experience of a concept of phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). An exploratory qualitative phenomenological research design was chosen for this study to explore and evaluate the perceptions GCOs have on engagement. The participants are professionals in nonprofit hospitals who are

currently GCOs and hold either a junior, senior, or principal title. The participants were

asked 14 open-ended semistructured in-depth interview questions, which helped the

researcher examine the factors that affect engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals by

exploring the effects of professional relationships, the effects of emotionality in the

workplace, and the aesthetics of the workplace. The researcher conducted a pilot study

on the interview questions to ensure reliability before using the questions with interview

participants. The only instrument that was used in this qualitative study was the

researcher in the collections of participant responses to the open-ended interview

questions. Thirteen interviews were conducted in-person over a period of 5 weekdays.

One interview was conducted via Zoom once the researcher had returned to Los Angeles,

California. Data were analyzed and coded using NVivo 12 software and Microsoft

Excel. Appropriate measures were taken to ensure participant and organization

confidentiality. The IRB protocol was strictly followed to ensure integrity, reliability,

and validity of the research study. Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive review of the

findings of this research study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Chapter 4 presents the detailed analysis of interviews with grant and contract officers (GCOs) in four nonprofit hospitals located in Boston, Massachusetts. The data were analyzed for themes based on the experiences of GCOs. The analyzed data determined the emerging themes based on the experiences of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals located in Boston, Massachusetts. The analysis presented in Chapter 4 includes an explanation of the data analysis method used and how the results relate directly to the research questions of the study. Chapter 4 examines how the research questions provided the structure for the study conducted and were the foundation for the research and results. Chapter 4 also explains the bracketing process, the interview process, the sample demographics, data collection procedures, and the qualitative findings.

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative study was to examine the factors that affect engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals by exploring the effects of professional relationships, the effects of emotionality in the workplace, and workplace aesthetics. This study included the following four research questions, which sought to obtain an understanding of how GCOs define employee engagement.

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of employee engagement among GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

Research Question 2: What perceived effects do professional relationships in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

Research Question 3: What perceived effect does emotionality in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

Research Question 4: What perceived effects do aesthetics in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

The following 14 open-ended interview questions were used to address the four research questions of this study:

1. What have been your experiences as a grant and contract officer in research administration?

2. What factors (both personally and professionally) influence your engagement level at work?

3. How long have you been in your profession? Do you notice a difference in your level of engagement based on the number of years you have been a grant and contract officer? If so, what do you feel are the causes?

4. Describe your professional relationships with faculty and department research administrators. Please explain.

5. Describe the organizational culture of your workplace. Please explain.

6. Do you feel you have adequate interactions with faculty and department research administrators to most effectively carry out your duties as a grant and contract officer and provide the best service to department research administrators and faculty? Why or why not?

7. Do you feel you have adequate confidence in your abilities to perform the required functions and responsibilities as a grant and contract officer? Why or why not?

8. Do you feel you receive adequate support in maintaining a positive motivational state for accomplishing goals as a grant and contract officer? Why or why not?

9. Do you feel you receive adequate support in maintaining optimism to most effectively carry out your duties as a grant and contract officer and provide the best service to faculty and department research administrators? Why or why not?

10. Do you feel you receive adequate support in learning how to overcome positive and negative challenges in your work as a grant and contract officer? Why or why not?

11. Do you feel your workplace aesthetics affect your engagement level as a grant and contract officer? Why or Why not?

12. Have there been any investigators or department research administrators that you have advised during your tenure as a grant and contract officer who have left an unforgettable mark and inspired you to continue as a grant and contract officer? If so, why?

13. What do you think is important for faculty and department research administrators to understand about the role of grant and contract officers that you feel they may not understand and in what ways can they help you to be successful in your job?

14. What do you think is the most important thing for new grant and contract officers to understand before entering the field?

A qualitative method was appropriate for the study because this method is dependent on the perspective of the lived experiences and insights of GCOs with engagement. The research design of this study utilized an exploratory qualitative phenomenological research design. Open-ended questions allowed participants to answer in an open format based on their knowledge, feeling, and understanding. Open-ended questions allowed the researcher to probe into the respondents' answers, which helped gain valuable information about the subject at hand. Answers to the open-ended

questions were obtained through in-depth interviews, which allowed the researcher to gather participants' detailed description of their experience. According to Simon and Goes (2011), in-depth feelings and attitudes about a particular phenomenon can be revealed through interviews. Analysis of the data obtained from the interviews provided meaning and understanding through the collections and analysis of words, phrases, and themes, which helped the researcher understand how GCOs perceive engagement and the factors that affect engagement.

A phenomenological design was appropriate for the study because it allowed the researcher to obtain valuable information regarding the essence of the lived experiences of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals. The primary objective of a phenomenological study is to explicate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences of a person or a group of people about a specific phenomenon (Simon & Goes, 2011). Through a phenomenological design, the researcher attempts to understand human behavior through the eyes of the participants in the study (Simon & Goes, 2011). Further, a phenomenological design attempts to obtain information about a particular phenomenon. The phenomenon explored in the study was engagement in GCOs working in nonprofit hospitals.

The intent of this research was to provide GCOs working in nonprofit hospitals with an opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions on employee engagement based on their lived experiences. The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that affect engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals by exploring the effects of professional relationships, the effects of emotionality in the workplace, and workplace aesthetics. The objective of this research study was to explore the perceived factors that

affect engagement in GCOs and explore potential ways positive engagement can be achieved. This study contributes to the currently minimal literature available on the research administration field. This study sheds light on an underresearched role in research administration—the GCO role. This study aimed to provide research administration leadership with information on how to potentially improve engagement levels in GCOs. This study sought to provide an understanding of how GCOs view employee engagement through their lived experiences, working in nonprofit hospitals.

Bracketing Process

Bracketing is a methodological device of phenomenological inquiry that requires deliberate putting aside one's own belief about the phenomenon under investigation or what one already knows about the subject prior to and throughout the phenomenological investigation (Carpenter, 2007). Through the fundamental methodology of bracketing the researcher's own experiences, the researcher does not influence the participant's understanding of the phenomenon (Chan et al., 2013). The researcher is a GCO herself and utilized bracketing to mitigate any potential effects of presumptions. According to Tufford and Newman (2010), bracketing is a method used by some researchers to mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby to increase the rigor of the project.

To achieve bracketing, the researcher exercised reflexivity. Reflexivity involves the realization of an honest examination of the values and interests of the researcher that may impinge upon research work (Primeau, 2003). The intent of the researcher was to provide useful information regarding engagement that would potentially help organizations and leadership improve the engagement levels of GCOs. The researcher

aimed at providing an opportunity for GCOs to voice their thoughts and opinions on the factors that affect their engagement. The researcher aimed at gathering information that could help provide potential solutions to improving the engagement of GCOs by examining the effects of professional relationships, emotionality in the workplace, and workplace aesthetics. To achieve bracketing, the researcher adopted an attitude of conscious ignorance about the issue being studied. Finally, the researcher was mindful not to draw conclusions based on her experiences, thoughts, or opinions.

Description of the Sample

The target population of the study was GCOs at any experience level working in nonprofit hospitals located in Massachusetts who were full-time permanent employees and were over the age of 18. The total population was 39 GCOS working in the four participating nonprofit hospitals. The primary method of recruiting participants was purposive sample. The researcher reached out to the leadership of five of the top 10 highest-ranking nonprofit hospitals in federal funding. Four out of the five managers granted the researcher permission to reach out to their respective employees. The fifth site did not respond to phone calls, messages, or e-mails soliciting participation. Once the researcher had collected all four signed research agreements, the researcher sent out two e-mails to potential participants soliciting their participation. The first round of e-mails generated eight participants, and the second round of e-mails generated six more participants, bringing the total number of participants to 14. While conducting the in-depth interviews, it became evident that no new themes were arising; thus, data saturation had been met, and additional interviews were not necessary.

Participant Demographics

Demographic data include participant age, gender, current position within the organization, and years of service. Participants ranged in age, positions, and years of service within the institution. Demographic data of participants were divided into four categories: age, gender, current position, years of service, and years in current position.

Age

The first demographic category was age. The 14 participants ranged from 29 years of age, the youngest participant, to 66 years of age, the oldest participant. The average participant was 43 years old (see Figure 4).

Gender

The second demographic category was gender. Of the 14 participants, there were nine females and five males who were interviewed (see Figure 5).

Current Position

The third demographic was current position within the organization. Participant roles included a research administrative director, a senior research administrative director, senior grant officers, grant administrator II, and senior grant administrators. Participants represented the offices of research administration in their respective organizations (see Figure 6).
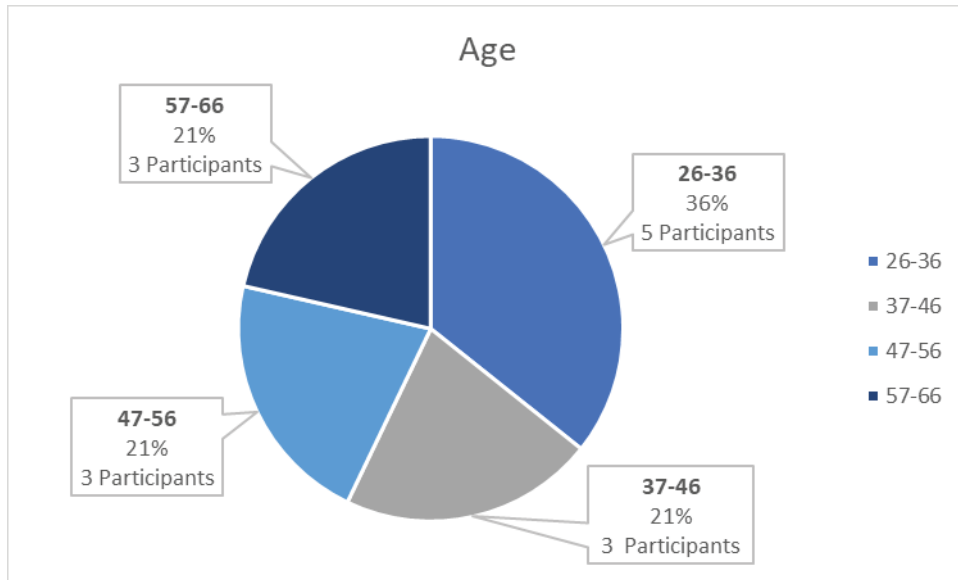
Figure 4. Age of study participants.
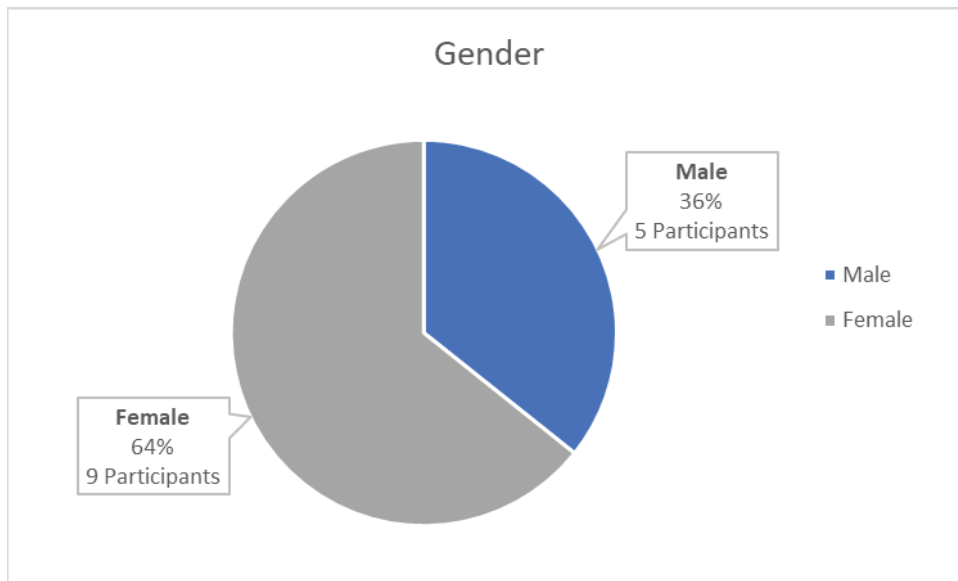
Figure 5. Gender of study participants.
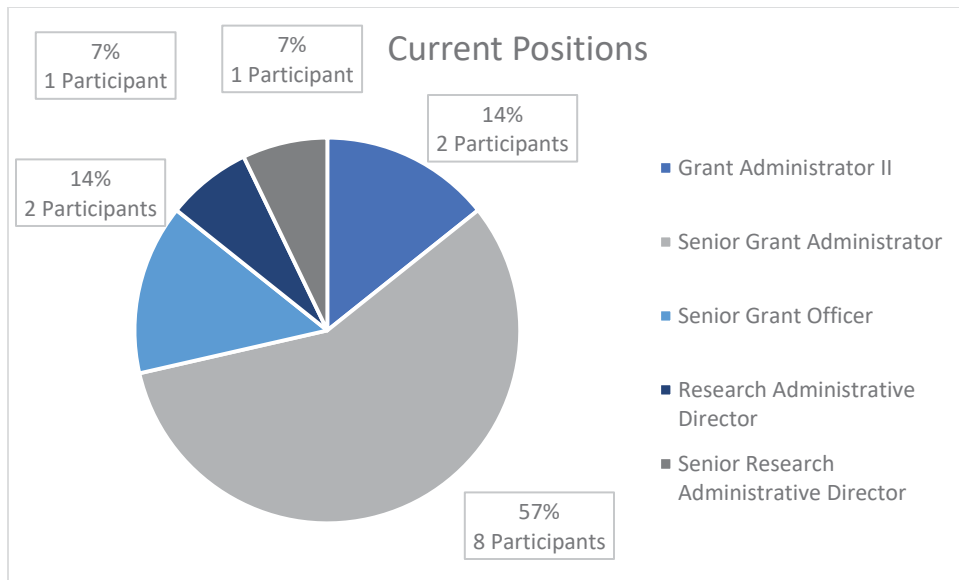
Figure 6. Current positions of study participants.

Years of Service

The fourth demographic category was years of service within the participants' respective organizations. The 14 participants ranged in the years of service. The least years of service was 3 years, and the most years of service was 21 years. The average years of service was 10 years (see Figure 7).

Years in Current Position

The number of years in the current positions ranged from 5 months to 21 years; 5 months was the least amount of time in a current position, and 21 years was the most amount of time in a current position. The average amount of time in participants' current position was 7.6 years (see Figure 8).
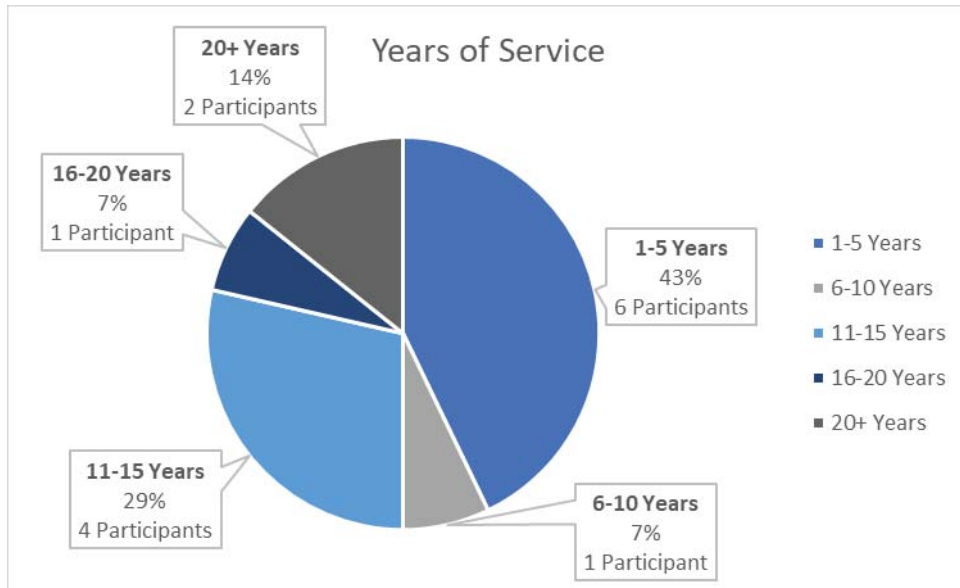
Figure 7. Years of service of study participants.
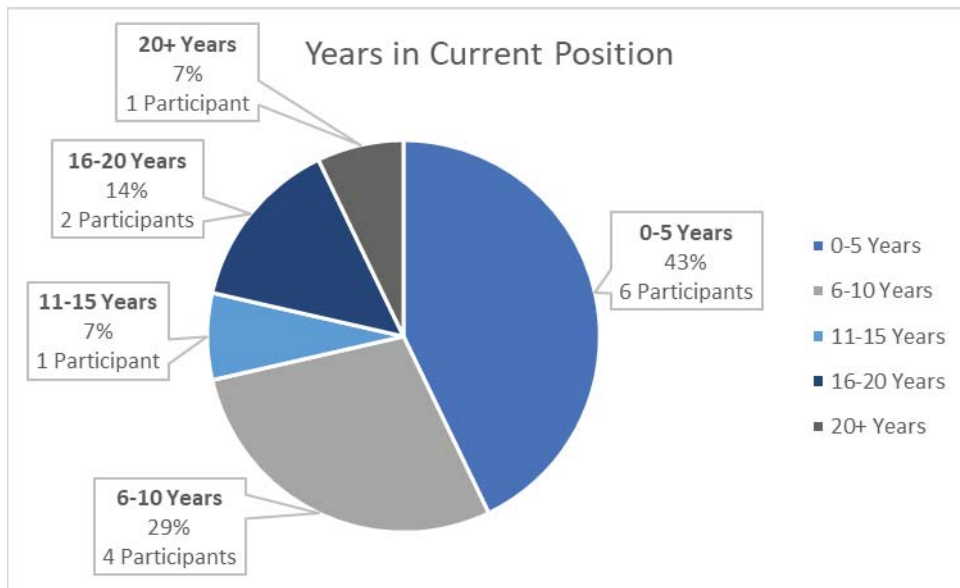
Figure 8. Years in current position of study participants.

Participant and organization names were omitted to ensure the confidential nature of the study. The researcher assigned alphanumeric code to participants and organizations. Simon and Goes (2011) indicated that to ensure that a participant will not be identified, the use of pseudonyms is often given to the participants, enabling responses

in their own words while maintaining confidentiality, which is what the researcher in this study did.

Data Collection and Interview Procedures

The department directors for each of the four sites returned a signed research agreement for their respective site along with the names and contact information for each potential participant. Once the researcher had the names and contact information for all the potential participants, the researcher sent out an initial e-mail soliciting their participation. The e-mail included the recruitment flyer, a letter of introduction, a research participants' bill of rights, a confidentiality statement, and a participant informed consent. Fourteen participants agreed to participate in the research study, which was scheduled to last between 60-90 minutes. However, the average length of interview was 36 minutes with 28 seconds. Thirteen interviews were conducted in person at a mutually agreed upon date and time, and one interview was conducted virtually via the Zoom application at a mutually agreed upon date and time.

At the start of every interview, the researcher gave an official introduction and an overview of the study. The researcher went over the interview protocol and script. The researcher reminded participants that their participation was strictly voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without fear of penalty to them. The researcher assured the participants that their responses, identities, and organizations would remain confidential. The researcher assured the participants that any information linking the data to the participants or to their organization would be removed. The researcher also reminded each participant that the interview would be recorded for data analysis purposes. Finally, the researcher reminded each participant that a $10 Starbucks

gift card would be e-mailed to them at the conclusion of the interview as a token of appreciation for having participated.

Data Analysis Procedures

In order to analyze the data, the researcher recorded each of the 13 in-person interviews with a digital recorder. The researcher recorded the virtual interview through the recording functionality. The participant downloaded and saved each interview audio file and assigned an alphanumeric code. Once the audio files for all 14 participants had been downloaded and saved, the researcher uploaded them to TranscribeMe to be professionally transcribed. The transcribed Word files were received within 48 hours from submission. The researcher validated each Word file against the audio file to ensure for accuracy. The researcher ensured she did not remove any context from any responses and only removed nondescript words and unclear comments. Some words on the Word documents were listed as "inaudible," which the researcher corrected and filled in upon listening to the audio file. Once all the Word files had been reviewed, validated, and corrected, the researcher imported them into NVivo 12 Pro and copied to Microsoft Excel for thematic coding and analysis of keywords, phrases, and statements. Individual participant responses were grouped by interview questions. *Codes* or *nodes* were identified for each question based on themes that arose from similar responses, experiences, and opinions. Individual participant responses were also grouped by research question. Participant responses that addressed a specific research question were also grouped together and assigned codes or nodes. This helped validate against the coding from grouping the data by interview question. All codes were reviewed and analyzed for reoccurrence and usage.

The findings were arranged by interview and research questions and utilized a storytelling approach to share participants' personal stories, thoughts, opinions, and experiences. This approach helped provide honest feedback regarding participants' perception on employee engagement. Quotes were utilized from participant interviews to illustrate responses to each interview question. Each participant was assigned an alphanumeric code; each quote was identified only by the assigned alphanumeric code.

Findings

Data collected from the interviews helped the researcher explore how GCOs in nonprofit hospitals perceive engagement and the factors that affect engagement. The interviews conducted provided the researcher with an understanding of how GCOs feel about engagement and provided information on the factors that affect engagement by collecting data on professional relationships, emotionality in the workplace, and aesthetics of the workplace.

Interview Question 1

Interview Question 1, "What have been your experiences as a grant and contract officer in research administration?" addresses Research Question 1: "What are the perceptions of employee engagement among GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?" Interview Question 1 explored the participants' perceptions of engagement based on their experiences in the field. Responses demonstrated varied experiences based on the years of experience, organization, and background. As shown in Table 4, the primary emerging themes included professional relationships (five out of 14), heavily tasked role (five out of 14), and unstructured training (four out of 14).

Table 4

Interview Question 1 Participant Interview Results

Interview Question 1 theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Professional relationships	5	36	P003, P008, P009, P012, P013
Heavily tasked role	5	36	P001, P002, P003, P004, P006
Unstructured training	4	29	P005, P006, P007, P012
Role justification	2	14	P011, P012
Challenging work	2	14	P003, P009
Stressful role	1	7	P007

Significant statements that illustrate the participants' perceptions of engagement based on their experiences have been provided and quoted to provide a deeper insight to their responses. When asked to describe their experiences as a GCO in research administration, P003, P008, P009, P012, and P013 highlighted their interactions with faculty and department research administrators (DRAs). P013 shared, "My experience is it is a very interesting job, it can be complicated, it can be difficult dealing with a lot of different personalities since we're in a central role."

Similarly, P008 expressed that her role was demanding because she had to deal with different personalities when working with different department administrators and described those interactions as "juggling between networks." P012 expressed,

But it's communicating with all different kinds of people, all different kinds of commonsense levels, all kinds of different ways to be able to communicate with different people. You have to learn how to communicate to get your point across.

And sometimes, it's going to be different from one person than is it going to be for another.

P009 shared,

I think it is very challenging. It requires a lot of critical thinking, a lot of interactions with everyone at every level. So I'm a very people person, which I like it that way. I love the challenge. I don't complain, "This work is boring," because it's always complicated.

P003, P008, P009, P012, and P013 emphasized their constant communication with faculty and department administrators and described the different types of communication depending on the different personalities at hand. Based on this feedback, the researcher determined professional relationships was a recurring theme that arose in responses for Interview Question 1.

In describing their personal experiences in research administration, P001, P002, P003, and P004 described the wide range of responsibilities they handled as a GCO. P001 shared that his group did what they called "soup-to-nuts" and handled the pre-award, post-award, and close-out processes. P002 shared,

Well, our institution, I think, is unique in that we have staff that manage grants from pre-award to post-award and everything in between.

P003 expressed he "ran the gamut" at his current organization. P003 used this figure of speech to illustrate he drove various processes and provided directions to faculty and DRAs to get the work done. "Run the gamut" is an expression used to include the whole range of possible things within a group or type. P003 used this figure of speech to illustrate the wide range of responsibilities he was responsible for.

Similarly, P004 expressed having been a department administrator before becoming a GCO and learning the "nitty gritty" of the job, creating budgets, and helping faculty with tasks that ranged from drafting a proposal application to post-award issues.

P005, P006, and P007 highlighted their learning experiences in research administration. These participants described the challenge in having to absorb a lot of information in a small amount of time. P005 shared,

> As a department administrator, it was kind of difficult because we had to learn on the fly. So you came in, you had to learn immediately. There wasn't so much a ramp-up period where you were able to kind of understand, kind of collect yourself, collect your basics, your information.

P006 expressed not knowing anything about the research administration field prior to joining the filed. P006 indicated she had to gather all the puzzle pieces and build her way up. P012 described her learning curve as a "very painful learning experience." Similarly, P007 shared,

> So there's a lot of post-award work and I had to pick it up very quickly. And that was sort of stressful.

P005, P006, P007, and P012 focused on their experiences in their learning and training as a research administrator. They described the challenges in becoming acclimated to their role and provided data that determined unstructured training was a recurring theme for Interview Question 1.

When describing their experiences, P011 and P012 expressed finding ways to explain and/or justify their role as a GCO. P012 described the difficulty she experiences when trying to describe her work. P012 shared,

It's amazing at how much out there, people in the outside world, when you're

trying to explain to them what you do, they have a doe-in-the-headlight look.

They go, "What?" So trying to explain that to people as to what you do is

interesting.

P011 described taking on extra duties in the office in order to help demonstrate that the

pre-award team does more than "push a button." P011 described taking on an additional

task of negotiating contracts because the contracts team was short-staffed. These

participants expressed experiencing a form of role justification in their roles as a GCO.

P003 described his experiences in research administration by sharing some of the

challenges he had experienced throughout his career. P003 expressed that "the most

detrimental ones were last-minute applications" and "managing difficult personalities in

medical professionals." P003 referred to "the most detrimental ones" as the "ugly"

experiences encountered and used this metaphor to describe the challenges in working

with faculty.

Finally, when describing the experiences as a GCO in research administration,

P007 shared, "I wasn't doing anything like invoice and stuff; just effort changes for PIs

and fund setup and I've blocked it out. Too traumatic." P007 looked a little flustered

when describing his experiences and the work involved in his role. The participant's

responses illustrated the stress component that he felt was associated with the work.

Interview Question 2

Interview Question 2, "What factors (both personally and professionally)

influence your engagement level at work?" addresses Research Question 1: "What are the

perceptions of employee engagement among GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?" Interview

Question 2 explored the perceived factors that affect engagement in GCOs based on their lived experiences. As shown in Table 5, the primary emerging themes included camaraderie (six out of 14) and passion (four out of 14).

Table 5

Interview Question 2 Participant Interview Results

Interview Question 2 theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Camaraderie	6	43	P004, P005, P006, P007, P008, P010
Passion	4	29	P002, P003, P004, P007
Workload	2	14	P012, P014
Work-life balance	2	14	P013, P014
Respect/acknowledgement	1	7	P010
Workplace aesthetics	1	7	P011

Significant statements that illustrate the participants' perceptions of the factors that affect engagement based on their experiences have been provided and quoted to provide a deeper insight to their responses. Six of the 14 participants described the existing camaraderie among colleagues within their teams and in the departments, which helped them feel engaged in the workplace. P005 shared,

> I think that if you have team chemistry coming into work is a lot easier than if you didn't, right? I think that fosters a good environment. It fosters an environment where you can learn, where you can kind of be yourself, where you know that if you have a situation, if you have a problem, people are able to look at it and look at you and say, "Okay. Yes."

When describing the factors that affect engagement, P004 described her team as "the best thing together." P004 compared her team to a family and indicated they all enjoy each other's company and are concerned about someone when he or she is out sick. P004 expressed gratitude in working with such a team. Similarly, P008 shared,

> I think the fact that my colleagues are very friendly and are very open. So that definitely helps, and it makes work easier, a lot more fun and easier for me because I think I've come into situations in other organizations I've worked where I kind of feel, "Okay, I might not be able to ask these questions because I feel they might be stupid." But everyone is so open and more than willing to help.

In describing the factors that affect engagement, P006 happily indicated that the people she worked with made/her want to come to work every day. P006 expressed that the personalities in the departments made her love her job. Similarly, P007 responded, "I value my relationship with the department. And I like my colleagues" when asked to describe the factors that affect engagement. Additionally, P010 shared,

> On the central side, I think they do a very good job here of kind of making everyone feel very collective. It's a very, very collegial, cohesive environment here, and I noticed that almost as soon as I got here, that everyone's sort of in it together, and it's just a good overall environment, where you feel supported here, and you feel like people have your back, and people understand just the frustrations that we have to go through day to day.

When describing the factors that affect engagement, P004, P005, P006, P007, P008, P010 emphasized their relationships with colleagues within their office and in the departments. The participants highlighted their positive experiences with colleagues and described how

these positive interactions helped them be engaged. Thus, the researcher determined camaraderie was a recurring them in responses to Interview Question 2.

P002, P003, P004, and P007 described experiences that illustrated their level of passion for the work they did. P002 shared,

I mean, I'm the type of person that, when I'm over my vacation, I look forward to coming back to work because I enjoy the work. I enjoy the people.

P004 described feeling passionate about the work she did because she felt that the work contributed to the greater good. P004 shared,

Every single day I wake up, and it's like, yes, I'm going to do this because I put in my little grain in this huge field, that is helping, contributing to help people saving lives.

Similarly, P003 alluded to his passion in the greater good. P003 shared,

What pushes me to be engaged, what pushes me to go beyond, pushes me to be there until 8:30 at night sometimes is the fact that regardless of how organized or disorganized a researcher is, no matter what they personally are, good or bad, if my interactions with them, they save lives.

Conversely, P007 described a decrease in passion for the work and alluded to a decrease in engagement because of it. When describing the factors that affect engagement, P007 hesitantly responded "Well, I mean, at this point it's kind of old hats. I have to admit that I get bored with it from time-to-time. And so, that's why I've always done a lot of these side gigs." This response demonstrates that the repetitive work led to a state of boredom, which resulted in a decrease of passion, thus a decrease in engagement. Although P002, P003, and P004 described experiences that led to a passion for the work done, which

affected their engagement in a positive way, P007 described experiences that led to a decrease in passion for the work done, which affected engagement in a negative way. Thus, passion was a recurring them in responses to Interview Question 2.

P012 and P014 expressed frustration in describing the volume of work as a factor that affects engagement. P012 shared,

> You're constantly overloaded. It's constant. And so sometimes, I have to work on weekends. I work really late, and I think that comes with the quality of work. I have a sense of high standards, and it stems from my previous jobs that I had which it was always high-level, high-quality work was expected and had to be maintained. And so when I do my work, I'm always making sure that it is of the highest level and it's correct.

Similarly, P014 shared,

> I mean, for a while my portfolio was so busy, so I was working nights and weekends. And my husband works the overnight shift, so he'd get up to go to work at 11:00 and I'd still be working. And he'd be thinking that I'm crazy, but I'm like, "I need to do it." And I do a lot on Sunday nights, because I'm like, "I don't like going into Monday mornings not knowing what's going to be on my plate."

Both P012 and P014 described the tremendous amount of work they handle as a GCO. P012 and P014 indicated that in order to keep up with the work, it was necessary for them to work late into the evenings and on the weekends. These participants expressed feeling overwhelmed by the workload and alluded to a decrease in engagement because of it.

Thus, these responses determined workload was a theme that arose in responses to Interview Question 2.

In describing the factors that affect engagement, P013 and P014 expressed gratitude in being able to work remotely. P013 shared, "This is the first time I've experienced being able to work from home, which has been a huge benefit to the flexibility."

P013 described her experience in recently becoming a parent and shared that being able to work from home was an advantage in balancing her responsibilities of being an employee and those of being a parent. Similarly, P014 shared she worked from home full-time because she lived almost 2 hours from the office, which constituted to a busy commute. P014 expressed gratitude in being able to work remotely 100% of the time and alluded to how this benefit affected her engagement in a positive way. P013 and P014 alluded to having work-life balance in the workplace; thus, this was determined to be a recurring theme in responses to Interview Question 2.

When describing the factors that affected engagement, P010 expressed experiencing a lack of respect and acknowledgment from his counterparts. P010 shared,

> I feel like on the department side, I feel like I was in a better situation. I was in a good situation, and not everyone, I think, is in that situation, where that I think because I had been around and the PIs knew me even before I was full time doing grants, I had a good relationship with them. So there was sort of that respect and appreciation of the work that I was doing but also an understanding that if I'm asking you to do XYZ, I'm doing it because I'm giving you a hard time.

P010 expressed feeling he did not receive intrinsic motivation from his counterparts. P010 indicated the appreciation for the work done was better when he was a DRA, then when he transitioned into a GCO role. These feelings of neglect alluded to a decrease in engagement, thus respect/acknowledgement were determined to be a theme in Interview Question 2.

P011 described the current workplace aesthetics led to a decrease in engagement. P011 shared,

> Here, they've tried to split everybody up so that the pre-people are near their post-people and near their finance people. And it doesn't work because most people shoot an e-mail off. They're not going to get up and walk three rows down to talk to their post-person who may not even be there. So their idea of that kind of grouping has not worked at all, at all. I find, also, that the open floor plan, it's a nice idea but there's quite a few people that are sensitive to noise.

P011 described the recent change in sitting arrangements and indicated it was not working well. P011 described feeling disconnected to her team and clearly expressed experiencing a decrease in engagement because of it. Thus, workplace aesthetics is an important theme in Interview Question 2.

Interview Question 3

Interview Question 3, "How long have you been in your profession? Do you notice a difference in your level of engagement based on the number of years you have been a grant and contract officer? If so, what do you feel are the causes?" addresses Research Question 1: "What are the perceptions of employee engagement among GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?" Interview Question 3 explored whether engagement has

decreased, increased, or remained the same through the participants' career as a GCO. This interview question also explored the perceived causes of any kind of change in engagement throughout the course of the participant's career as a GCO. As shown in Table 6, the primary emerging theme included knowledge growth (eight out of 14).

Table 6

Interview Question 3 Participant Interview Results

Interview Question 3 theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Knowledge growth	8	57	P004, P005, P006, P008, P009, P010, P012, P014
Paradigm shift	2	14	P003, P013
Neglect	1	7	P011
Disinterest	1	7	P007
Frustration	1	7	P002
Professional growth	1	7	P002

Significant statements that illustrate changes in participants' engagement levels throughout their career as a GCO have been provided and quoted to provide a deeper insight to their responses. Eight of the 14 participants indicated experiencing a growth in knowledge throughout their development as a research administrator, which has affected their engagement in a positive manner. P008 shared,

I'd definitely say I'm more engaged now because I guess, I didn't know too much of the entire research maturation worlds. And I think now that I'm getting more comfortable and relaxed, it's like, "Okay, yeah." Things are clicking a lot easier.

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Similarly, P004 indicated having learned a lot in the 23 years in the research

administration field. P004 indicated she was willing to compromise more now because

she understood her role better than when she started. P004 described having an epiphany

in doing the same tasks over time and thinking "Oh! this is why we do this and that."

Additionally, P014 expressed feeling engaged because the complexity and volume of her

portfolio had grown throughout her career as a GCO. P014 shared,

> I think I'm engaged on a different level, because I feel like I have so much to
>
> manage now. Because my portfolio is so big, and my boss kind of leans on some
>
> of the seniors to kind of be her backup and help with stuff. So I think I'm just
>
> engaged on a different level, where in the beginning I was still learning the ropes
>
> and everything, where now I feel like I know the ropes.

In describing the difference in engagement based on the numbers of years as a GCO,

P012 expressed feeling more engaged now because now she had a better understanding

of the work, which helped build confidence in asking questions to faculty and department

administrators. Similarly, P010 expressed learning the duties and responsibilities of the

role and as a result developed more confidence, which affected engagement in a positive

way. P010 shared,

> I think in different ways because I think when you first start something, you never
>
> really know what you're getting into until you do it, so I think after I got over the
>
> initial, "Oh, this is new. I'm going to learn this. I'm going to learn that," now it's
>
> a different type of engagement because now, knowing more, it's not necessarily
>
> that new, shiny excitement, but now it's more like, "Oh, I feel like I'm starting to

understand this a little bit," so it's more of an engagement in terms of, "All right,

I'm building up my confidence."

Similarly, P009 expressed feeling more engaged now than when she was a department

administrator because now she had to learn information about grants, how to memorize

things, and read and interpret them. P009 described having to learn to ask more

questions and who to contact for assistance in specific issues. P009 alluded to the fact

that learning the different components of the job increased her engagement levels. When

describing the change in engagement, P005 indicated knowing the areas that he needed to

improve on helped increase his engagement levels. P005 indicated a growth in

knowledge about the job, but also about himself. P005 shared,

> I've been lucky to at least be able to then self-reflect and say, "Okay. This is
>
> what I have difficulties with, and I need to put more attention in this area than this
>
> area, right?" So I've learned that, and I've applied that here, and I think that
>
> that's helped my level of engagement as well because I'm able to understand what
>
> my strengths are and what my weaknesses are.

P006 indicated having learned a lot over 10 years of being a GCO and also pin-pointed

the growth in knowledge in the entire research community. P006 shared that better

training was being offered to both central and DRAs, which led to a better understanding

of policies and procedures. P006 described the effort in streamlining processed in order

to be more consistent, which resulted in positive engagement.

P003 and P013 described events in their personal lives that changed their

perspectives and priorities in life and thus altered their engagement levels. P013 describe

her experience of being a parent and expressed that some of the focus previously addressed to her work was now addressed to her child. P013 shared,

> When my child was born, it became my daughter, then work. I still have to give 100% to work, but I can't give 150%. When they talk about effort, the PI has effort, and they put it on their sheet, 100% doesn't even cover everything that we have to do, right? So I definitely feel like my passion is a lot less because that passion that I had has gone elsewhere.

P013 shared that being a parent changed her perspective on what she considered important and also made her more passionate about research administration work. P013 expressed that having a child emphasized the importance of life and thus made her more patient with faculty and DRAs. Similarly, P003 shared,

> I have a 9-year-old son. When he was born, the outlook on just how important it was, saving lives and making life better for people, was so much more intense because of putting myself in this position of all these parents who have children that are in extremely dire consequences and experience. It pushed me to be more patient, I think.

In describing how her engagement levels had changed over time, P011 indicated her engagement levels had decreased. P011 shared,

> I feel like sometimes they don't utilize my experience. I've never mentored anybody. I've helped mentor. And I feel really kind of like, "Why not? Why wouldn't you?" I feel kind of left out.

Feeling like her talents were not utilized led P011 to feeling neglected. Feeling neglected was the driving factor in P011's decreased engagement; thus, neglect was determined to be a theme in responses to Interview Question 3.

When describing the changes in engagement, P007 expressed experiencing a decrease in engagement because of the repetitiveness of the job. The participant expressed feeling less engaged now than when he started because he felt that the job was not doing anything for him personally. P007 shared that the job wasn't very difficult for him and that he could easily breeze through a grant. Because P007 had been reviewing grants for several years and felt he was doing the same thing over and over and expressed a loss in interest in the job. This constituted to disinterest being a significant theme in Interview Question 3.

P002 described experiences that caused /her engagement to increase as well as experiences that caused her engagement to decrease. P002 expressed her organization offered opportunities for professional growth, which has kept her feeling interested and engaged throughout the years as a GCO. P002 shared, "My role has evolved and grown over the years, which has certainly helped keep my interest. No day is the same, for sure."

P002 also expressed the challenging workload she handled, which caused frustration and affected engagement in a negative way. P002 shared,

> We need more bodies. The volume is tremendous, and so there's never
> downtime. Everyone is behind work all the time, so there's constantly that
> feeling of I'm failing and I'm letting somebody down, whether it's my staff
> feeling that way or I'm feeling that way towards my staff or faculty. And I feel

like we're always apologizing. So I think that is a huge factor in the engagement,

100%, just feeling frustrated.

P002 described experiences that caused an increase and a decrease in engagement. P002

experienced an increase in engagement based on the opportunities she has had to grow

professionally. P002 also alluded to experiencing a decrease in disengagement based on

the overwhelming workload she handles on a daily basis.

Interview Question 4

Interview Question 4, "Describe your professional relationships with faculty and

department research administrators. Please explain" addresses Research Question 2:

"What perceived effects do professional relationships in the workplace have on

engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?" Interview Question 4 explored the

different interactions GCOs have with DRAs and investigators in their assigned portfolio.

This interview question also explored the effects professional relationships have on

engagement levels of GCOs. As shown in Table 7, the primary emerging themes

included relationship building (eight out of 14) and resistance (five out of 14).

Significant statements that illustrate the participants' perceptions of engagement

based on their experiences have been provided and quoted to provide a deeper insight to

their responses. Eight of the 14 participants expressed a form of relationship building

with colleagues, which has resulted in positive engagement. In describing his

relationships with faculty, P001 expressed he and her faculty were a "a pretty close-knit

group." P001 indicated that even though he and his colleagues were always busy, they

always found time to help each other. P001 described activities he did with colleagues

that resulted in having good relationships and as a result led to positive engagement.

Table 7

Interview Question 4 Participant Interview Results

Interview Question 4 theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Relationship building	8	57	P001, P002, P003, P004, P006, P008, P009, P010
Resistance	5	36	P004, P005, P006, P007, P014
Lack of accountability	1	7	P005
Turnover	1	7	P011
Disconnectedness	1	7	P007

Similarly, P004 expressed having positive relationships with her department administrators because she was understanding of their situation. P004 shared,

> I have a very good relationship with my research administrators. Because I understand what they're coming from. I came from there, from the department, so I know the struggles.

P004 indicated she built relationships with her department administrators by sharing her own personal experiences as a department administrator and by providing them with tips.

P002 shared that she built relationships with her counterparts by reaching out to her departments and networking. P002 shared,

> Certainly, over time, we've had new faces in research administration, but I'm one of those people that I'm out there, and so I want to know people and I want them to know me. And I want people to be able to feel comfortable coming to me and asking questions. So I'm very engaged with them. I'm very involved with them.

In describing his relationships with faculty and department administrators, P003 shared that the department administrators were the first line of everything. P003 expressed that he was very collegial and always very professional and polite even with those department administrators he did not have stellar relationships with. P003 alluded to building relationships with his counterparts through professional and polite behavior, which resulted in positive engagement. In addition, P010 shared building relationships with his colleagues by being understanding. P010 described having worked in the department before becoming a GCO, which made him more understanding of department administrators. P010 shared,

> I think that's really where having worked on the department side helps because I get where they're coming from, and when I send certain e-mails, I know how a junior faculty working on a K for the first time. I know how, in general, what they're going to be confused about or how they're going to take things and sort of how to frame messages in a way that's better received.

P006 described having very good relationships with faculty and DRAs, which was the result of working with them for many years. P006 indicated working with the same department administrators for years, which helped them in feeling comfortable with each other and helped build their relationships. Having positive relationships affected P006's experience as a GCO in a positive way.

P008 described a tactic she used in order to build a good relationship with /her DRAs was by accommodating to the different personalities:

I think as I mentioned before, it's definitely easier coming from the department

and knowing different personalities and being able to accommodate those

personalities.

Catering to her department administrators helped build good relationships, which in turn

resulted in positive engagement.

Five of the 14 participants described encountering resistance from faculty and

department administrators in describing the relationships with them. P014 expressed

getting "snarky e-mails" from her department that they submitted something she

questioned. P005 described similar experiences as P014 and shared,

What I figured out here or what I've not figured out, but what I've come to find

out is that some DAs and some departments, they are very reluctant. They like

the battle. They like to say, "No. That's not it."

P005 described receiving resistance when he questioned documentation that was out of

compliance. P007 shared,

There's the occasional person that just feels like we're this bureaucrat who has to

sign off on everything that they're perfectly capable of explaining themselves.

Similarly, P004 described some of the resistance she encountered was because the faculty

or DRA did not understand institutional policies and procedures. P004 shared,

Well, in every institution it's totally different. You work for a hospital, and you

understand that everybody has their own mindset and they want what they want,

when they want it.

Similarly, P006 indicated having an investigator who was used to always getting what they wanted and was resistant when P006 did not tell the investigator what he wanted to hear. P006 shared,

> Every group or every person, I think, has that PI who . . . you just hear the name came up and you're like, "Oh, gosh." They're usually a bigwig, someone who has a lot of funding, they get what they want.

Although participants P004, P005, P006, P007, and P014 all described experiencing resistance from their faculty and DRAs, they all indicated this did not affect their overall engagement in a negative way. These participants indicated that the resistance they received was minimal compared to the majority of positive relationships they had with other faculty and DRAs. Thus, their overall experiences with faculty and department administrators affected their engagement levels positively.

In describing his relationships with faculty and department administrators P005 described a lack of accountability on the department side, which resulted in frustration and therefore affected engagement in a negative way. P005 shared,

> I think that we had a little bit of a bark but no bite because you're supposed to get submittals in by 15 days or up to 15 days up until the submittal date. And we would say, "Okay. You don't get it in 15 days" but there was never a consequence for the PIs.

Additionally, P011 noted the constant turnover in the departments when describing her relationships with faculty and department administrators. P011 shared,

> Unfortunately, what happens is a lot of department grant administrators, they leave and you're always dealing with someone new, who never gets the training

they're supposed to. We urge them to come over and get the training and they do

that. But they're kind of floundering on their own in the office. So I feel like a

broken record sometimes because the information isn't always retained.

P011 expressed frustration in describing the results of the lack of training with her

department administrators, which affected engagement in a negative way. Finally, P007

described feeling disconnected from faculty and department administrators when

describing his relationships with them. P007 described feeling "twice removed from the

faculty." P007 described having met his faculty, only because he had been working with

them for a long time. P007 expressed frustration in the disconnect he felt toward his

counterparts and alluded to this affecting engagement negatively. This response

constituted disconnectedness as a theme in Interview Question 4.

Interview Question 5

Interview Question 5, "Describe the organizational culture of your workplace.

Please explain" addresses Research Question 4: "What perceived effects do aesthetics in

the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?" Interview

Question 5 explored the aesthetic component of the workplace for GCOs. However, the

responses to Interview Question 5 resulted in responses regarding the environment of the

workplace. As shown in Table 8, the primary emerging themes included team building

(four out of 14) and collegiality (three out of 14).

Significant statements that illustrate the participants' perceptions of the

organization culture at their respective organizations have been provided and quoted to

provide a deeper insight to their responses. In describing the organizational culture of the

workplace, four of 14 participants indicated their organizations fostered team building.

Table 8

Interview Question 5 Participant Interview Results

Interview Question 5 theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Team building	4	29	P005, P006, P007, P014
Collegiality	3	21	P003, P004, P010
Investment in employees	2	14	P002, P010
Workload	1	7	P001
Distrust	1	7	P011
Disconnectedness	1	7	P012

P005 shared that his organization was a team building one that nurtured teamwork. P005 indicated his organizations hosted team building events during and after work hours, which helped employees get to know each other better. Similarly, P006 indicated/her research department had a "really great office culture" and talked about how everyone in the office takes time to know each other. P006 described activities her team participated in outside of work in order to get to know each other on a personal level, which resulted in stronger professional relationships. P007 described some of the events his office management hosted in attempt to boost team building. P007 shared,

> We have cultural events which are nice. People who've immigrated from various
>
> other countries have presented on where they're from. Just really nice.

P014 shared that although she was not physically in the office because of her work-from-home schedule, she was aware of the social activities that took place in the office. P014 shared,

So it's kind of hard for me because I'm not there, but just from the vibes I get

from the e-mails and all the social groups that they have, they really try to keep

everybody . . . they want everyone to feel like we're all one group. We may be a

finance person, a pre-award, a post-award, but that is the idea. So they try to

make us feel like one family. And they do events and stuff like that.

Another theme that emerged in responses to Interview Question 5 was collegiality. Three

participants highlighted the collegial environment they worked in. P004 shared,

I really love it. It's just interaction. Other teams don't have the same relationship

we have. But everybody's really open to conversations. Every team member is

very open to sharing information, which is excellent, compared to other

institutions.

Similarly, when describing the organizational culture of the workplace, P003 shared,

Phenomenal, to be honest. I like the other places that I've worked. I've had

fantastic teams. I once had nine people working under me and now, I'm a single

contributor. I'm happier as a single contributor here just because of the

environment. There is a respect here that I rarely seen anywhere else; people can

be formal and things but there's a true collegiality among the people here.

Like P003, P010 described working in an environment that fostered unity within the

office of research administration (ORA). P010 shared,

I think here in the central office, it's a very collegial . . . everybody's sort of in it

together, just really encouraged to ask around and feel free to bounce anything off

anybody.

These participants indicated they were positively engaged in their work and indicated a driving factor for that was the collegiality in their workplace. The positive work environment fostered collegiality among the GCOs and affected their engagement in a positive way.

In describing the organizational culture of their workplace, P002 and P010 shared experiences on how their organizations invested in employees. P002 described the training opportunities her organization offered employees. P002 shared,

Over the years we've worked really hard to provide training opportunities for people, educational opportunities for people. We have a travel and training budget. We do a lot of things homegrown internally.

Similarly, P010 described the mentoring program his department ran in order to provide appropriate training to new GCOs. P010 described having been part of the mentoring program himself. P010 shared,

When I started, like I still do, they have a mentoring program, so I have a senior GA who, as I do more and more grants on this side and prove that I'm doing it adequately, I'll gain more just pure autonomy, but for now, I'll do things, and if it's a PPG or something complicated, then my mentor will review it.

Working in a department that invested in employees by offering training and mentoring programs affected the engagement levels of P002 and P010 in a positive way.

Conversely, when describing the organizational culture of the workplace, P001 seemed flustered and described the overwhelming workload he handled. P001 shared,

There's way too much work for people to handle so we're always behind the gun. You could work 10, 12 hours a day and still not keep up with the work.

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P001 shared that the workload was too much and that despite the number of hours he would work in a day, he was still behind. P001 indicated the workload was frustrating and also shared that this led to a decrease in his engagement levels, thus workload was determined to be a significant theme in Interview Question 5.

P011 expressed disappointment when describing the organizational culture of her workplace. P011 described negative experiences she had had throughout her career as a GCOs. P011 shared,

> I've heard stories from people that say that even though HR says, "Your conversation is secret, and you can come to us for help," and all that, I don't believe that for a minute.

P011 expressed feelings of distrust toward her organization and indicated this feeling of distrust affected engagement in a negative way. Thus, distrust was determined to be a significant theme in responses to Interview Question 5.

In responding to Interview Question 5, P012 described disconnectedness within her department and across different departments in the organization. P012 indicated his department was not in unison, but was divided into different little groups and alluded to how this caused disconnectedness within the department. P012 shared,

> But I find it's like being in a high school, that you have those cliques. And you're going to have some people engaged and you're going to have others that don't. It's just the way it is.

P012 also indicated she felt as if the department was siloed from the other departments in the organization. P012 shared,

In my mind, we're siloed. It is sometimes one department doesn't know what the

other department's doing. I don't know how you're ever going to fix it. But it is,

I think for an organization like this, it would be hard to do this but I think

anybody that new comes into the grants world should start in pre-award first so

they see the beginnings.

P012 shared that a way to create common ground with other departments would be to

have research administrators begin their careers by being GCOs first. This would allow

them to understand research administration and would also bridge any gaps of knowledge

and communication between different departments in research administration. P012

indicated the disconnectedness was pervasive in the department but did not affect the

overall engagement level for her. P012 still felt positively engaged despite the observed

disconnectedness.

Interview Question 6

Interview Question 6, "Do you feel you have adequate interactions with faculty

and department research administrators to most effectively carry out your duties as a

grant and contract officer and provide the best service to department research

administrators and faculty? Why or why not?" addresses Research Question 2: "What

perceived effects do professional relationships in the workplace have on engagement

levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?" Interview Question 6 explored the kinds of

interactions GCOs have with DRAs and with principal investigators (PIs). Further,

Interview Question 6 explored how these professional interactions affect engagement

levels in GCOs. As shown in Table 9, the primary emerging themes included

communication (six out of 14) and distant (three out of 14).

Table 9

Interview Question 6 Interview Results

Interview Question 6 theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Communication	6	43	P001, P002, P003, P006, P011, P014
Distant	3	21	P007, P009, P010
Collaboration	1	7	P007
Lack of respect	1	7	P001

Significant statements that illustrate the participants' experiences in interacting with DRAs and faculty have been provided and quoted to provide a deeper insight to their responses. Six of the 14 participants highlighted the importance of communication in their interactions with faculty and DRAs. P002 indicated her organization did not have department research administration, thus she communication with the investigator directly. P002 shared that communicating with faculty directly was a time-saver as it made things move faster because there was not an "in-between person or middle man" to communicate through. Communicating directly with the investigator affected the engagement of P002 in a positive way. Similarly, P001 shared having effective communication with investigators. P001 expressed he was able to communicate well with faculty in order to get things done in a timely manner. On the other hand, P011 shared her institution had DRAs and shared that she communicated mostly with the department administrator than with faculty. P011 appreciated this setup and shared,

> I can pick up my phone and get hold of the department administrator. They call me all the time, "Let me run this by you." Yes. I have a very good rapport.

Similarly, P003 shared,

> I've gotten to a point with my relationship with all the people that I work with in
> my portfolio that they're not bashful to say anything. It's not in a confrontational
> way, but they will bring something up if there's an issue. If it's either a working
> style issue, something where they didn't think something came back fast enough,
> or I was thinking they weren't getting something in fast enough. We constantly
> are in communication about that and that's not off limits.

P011 and P003 expressed having good communication with their respective department administrators, which facilitated many processes. P003 shared having open communication with her department administrators and being able to talk to them about anything that was not working and vice versa. This communication was effective and affected engagement in a positive way.

When describing if she had adequate interactions with faculty and department administrators, P006 highlighted communication. However, unlike the other participants, P006 shared experiences of a lack of communication. P006 shared,

> There are people who just won't communicate. And then things show up on
> people's desk and it's stressful.

P006 shared that the lack of communication led to last-minute and unforeseen grant submissions that she was not prepared for. This led to stress and frustration which affected engagement in a negative way.

In response to Interview Question 6, P010 shared,

> I think it's adequate. I do think that it's a little distant. And this is one of the
> things I don't know yet. I think it'll take more time for me in the central office

and more experience to really feel comfortable, in my opinion. But there's part of

me that does feel as if there should be some increased interaction. And I think it's

hard because everybody's busy, and you're split between different groups and

trying to get people on the same page.

P010 indicated feeling a little distant from the faculty and department administrators.

Although P010 did not feel like this distance affected engagement in a negative way, he

did express wishing there was more constant communication with faculty and department

administrators; thus, distant was determined to be a significant theme in Interview

Question 6.

P007 highlighted the collaborative interactions he has with department

administrators, which affects engagement in a positive way. P007 shared,

So with my department person I worked with for a long time, we sort of trouble

shoot together. She calls on the phone all the time. Inevitably, we end up having

to kind of do it that way. So in sum it's kind of like, "Oh, you need to do this."

And then others it's like, "Well, here's the situation. We remember the last time.

Do we do it differently? Do we do it this way?" And it's more of a collaboration.

Finally, in response to Interview Question 6, P001 expressed experiencing a lack of

respect. P001 shared that although he worked well with investigators and division chiefs,

he felt he did not receive the respect he would like. P001 shared,

I think the lack of respect comes from the PI's confidence in the research

administrator.

P001 indicated that faculty tend to want more experienced GCOs to handle their grants. P001 was hesitant in sharing his frustration to the lack of respect he experienced and alluded to how this affected engagement in a negative way.

Interview Question 7

Interview Question 7, "Do you feel you have adequate confidence in your abilities to perform the required functions and responsibilities as a grant and contract officer? Why or why not?" addresses Research Question 3: "What perceived effect does emotionality in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?" Interview Question 7 explored participants' perception of their abilities to adequately perform their jobs, which also provided information about how participants felt about their skillsets. This interview question resulted in the emergence of common themes in the majority of participants. As shown in Table 10, the primary emerging themes included adequate training (seven out of 14) and experience (four out of 14).

Table 10

Interview Question 7 Participant Interview Results

Interview Question 7 theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Adequate training	7	50	P001, P002, P005, P006, P008, P009, P014
Experience	4	29	P001, P003, P011, P013, P014
Supportive environment	3	21	P004, P009, P010
Unstructured foundation	2	14	P001, P003

Significant statements that illustrate the participants' confidence in their abilities to perform the functions and duties of a GCO have been provided and quoted to provide a deeper insight to their responses. Seven of 14 participants, that is 50% of participants shared that their organizations offer the training necessary for the GCO role. In describing whether she felt she had adequate confidence in her abilities to perform the required responsibilities of the job, P002 immediately responded "Yeah, I do 100% because I've received training on the job." P002 did not hesitate to share she felt confident in performing her job because she had had training. Similarly, P008 shared she had also received appropriate training on the job. P008 shared,

> When I first started there was a mentorship program, so I'm assigned with a senior, or I guess more senior, administrator. A person that, I had someone that's been here for 10 years that I was assigned with. So as I was coming, as I first started, we went through each proposal together, and I was able to do my notes, and he gave me comments and things like that.

In answering Interview Question 7, P005 said,

> I do. I do. And the reason why is because I think the training that I am able or am getting should prepare me for work.

P008 and P005 indicated having received appropriate training to perform their jobs adequately and alluded to the training affecting their engagement level in a positive way as it helped build their confidence.

P001 shared that his department had travel funds that they utilized to send staff to conferences, which helped enhance their skillsets. P001 alluded to these learning opportunities affecting his engagement in a positive way. Similarly, P009 shared,

So here we have a lot of many different types of training. I have to say, a good

company hire you. They should provide you the good resources. We have good

resources and training for the new employees.

In answering Interview Question 7, P006 indicated her department offered training to

new GCOs and new DRAs. P006 was excited to share she participated in running these

trainings and indicated this made her feel more engaged as she helped in making the

trainings interactive and fun. In addition, P014 shared feeling confident in her abilities as

a GCO because she had the opportunity to attend conferences and trainings. P014

indicated she would be traveling to attend an SRA conference hosted at a different state

and alluded to how this helped keep her engaged.

Four of the 14 participants expressed feeling confident in their abilities to perform

the duties as a GCO because of their experience. P014 shared,

I guess the years of experience, and also just the weird situations that have had

thrown at me . . . now, I'm at a point where I know how far I can push things, and

I know how much wiggle room I have, and then I know where I need to get my

manager involved and be like, "I need your help," or "Stuff's going south, quick."

Similarly, P013 shared,

So I'd say yes, definitely. I think that just based on my experience that I feel

comfortable and confident that I have the experience. I have a wide range of

knowledge when it comes to the different grants and contracts, the different

mechanisms, foundations, government, industry, foreign. I've been doing it for

quite some time, and I think it's helped that I've had so many different portfolios

and departments.

P012 shared feeling confident in performing her functions as a GCO based on her experience in handling portfolios of high volume and high complexity. P012 shared,

> I've seen a lot of things. And so I've always had big portfolios and big complex portfolios. So I see probably more things than what most of the grant administrators do.

In addition, P01 indicated being confident as a GCO because he "had been doing it for a while." P014, P013, P012, and P01 shared their experience as a GCO has helped them succeed in research administration. This experience facilitates the functions involved and thus affects their engagement levels in a positive way.

In responding to Interview Question 7, P004 described working in a supportive environment. P004 shared,

> I feel that if I don't understand something, I feel that I have the backup. I have supervisors that I can go and ask questions, that is always there for me, that I don't feel alone. I don't feel that I have to encounter every challenge by myself. And that's the best part.

Similarly, P010 shared,

> I think part of is the support here, and just the general atmosphere has been good. For me, I think a big part of confidence is feeling comfortable making mistakes, that it's not necessarily about, "Oh, I feel like I do everything 100% right" because I know that that's never going to be the case.

P009 indicated working in a department where other team members and/or the manager were willing to teach her whatever she was not understanding. P009 shared her department provided the right resources, which helped P009 remain engaged.

In describing whether they felt they had confidence in performing their duties as a GCO, P003 and P001 recalled how they had come a long way since they joined the profession and did not have adequate training. P003 shared,

Before we had to kind of make it up as we went along. You're sort of like a survivalist out in the woods. You have to make all your own stuff and filter your own water. But now with the different tracks people can take, there's kids actually engaged in wanting to do this specifically.

Similarly, P001 shared,

I mean, frankly, when I started back in 2001, we didn't have an onboarding or training structure that we do now. It was very different. It was sort of fend-for-yourself, and then, when I got promoted, there was no, "This is how you do the job." I figured it out, but I had support. I had people to call to help me figure things out.

Although their learning experiences were challenging, P003 and P001 relayed feeling engaged because now they understood all the different components of the job.

Interview Question 8

Interview Question 8, "Do you feel you receive adequate support in maintaining a positive motivational state for accomplishing goals as a grant and contract officer? Why or why not?" addresses Research Question 3: "What perceived effect does emotionality in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?" Interview

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Question 8 explored participants' experiences in receiving adequate support in the workplace and explored whether and how this support affected engagement. As shown in Table 11, the primary emerging themes included leadership (six out of 14) and organizational support (five out of 14).

Table 11

Interview Question 8 Participant Interview Results

Interview Question 8 theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Leadership	6	50	P002, P003, P008, P010, P013, P014
Organizational support	5	36	P001, P006, P007, P009, P012
Financial compensation	1	7	P005
Work-life balance	1	7	P005

Significant statements that illustrate the participants' perceptions of receiving adequate support to maintain a positive motivational state have been provided and quoted to provide a deeper insight to their responses. Six of 14 participants described experiences with their respective leadership when indicating if they felt they received adequate support in maintaining a positive motivational state for accomplishing goals as a GCO. P003 shared,

> My managers actually go out of their way to make sure that we have the budget to attend multiple trainings a year that we're constantly given any resources that we need. If we have a run-in with the department not providing something or something like that beyond the reasonable amount of tries, resolving ourselves,

they have absolutely no problem mediating things and they'll jump on it. They

spend spades of their time ensuring our time is well-spent.

P003 described the phenomenal support he received from the leadership of his

department. The way in which management interacted with P003 made him feel

appreciated and valued. Similarly, P014 shared her boss was great and was always

available to discuss any issues or challenges. P014 shared being able to call her boss at

any time and "let it all out." P014 expressed feeling really comfortable going to her boss

for anything and did not feel like there was any type of issue she would not feel

comfortable discussing with her boss, which helped maintain motivation and engagement

in the workplace.

P002 shared that her boss was available whenever she needed anything or was

having issues. P002 indicated her boss gave her autonomy to make decisions and trusted

her to get the job done. This helped P002 maintain motivation and engagement in the

workplace. P010 expressed feeling like he had the support from management in all

aspects of the job and never feeling alone or "out on a limb." P010 shared that if he ever

had any difficulties with faculty or department administrators, management would step in

and intervene. P010 shared,

I know that within reason, as long as I'm doing my job in a professional manner,

that I'm not going to get thrown under the bus by my manager or somebody else.

P013 expressed gratitude for management and said the leadership in the department did a

good job of making staff feel as comfortable as possible, even when the organization was

going through changes, which helped maintain motivation and engagement in the

workplace. P013 shared,

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We have gone through some changes but I think they've done a really good job of

trying to make us as comfortable as possible and to be able to work through those

changes and be effective in the job that we can do.

In addition, P013 indicated feeling motivated and engaged to come to work because she

knew leadership was supportive of her. P008 shared,

My manager's extremely supportive. I mean, there was one time that I had 15

proposals do in 1 day. And she noticed, and asked "do you need any help?"

P002, P003, P008, P010, P013, and P014 indicated the leadership in their

department helped them be successful in their role and were always available to offer

support. To these participants, leadership helped them maintain a motivational state and

work and also helped keep them engaged.

Five of 14 participants expressed organizational support affected their

motivational state, which in turn affected engagement. P006 shared,

I feel like we have such a good support network between our colleagues but

managers as well, that you're never flying solo on something.

P006 expressed feeling like she had good organizational support. Similarly, P009

indicated her organization offered the support she needed if she were struggling at

something or felt like more training was necessary. P009 indicated having opportunities

to enhance her skillset through specialized training sessions that were offered by the

organization. P007 shared his organization was supportive and fostered an open

environment where employees felt comfortable sharing information and seeking

assistance.

Conversely, P012 expressed wishing she had more organizational support. P012 shared,

> I wish there was more support from the higher-ups to enforce deadline dates
> because I can submit 20 on a deadline date. And I can't submit it with bad
> information in, so that application may get—it gets a preliminary review when it
> comes in the day before. And then that day that it gets submitted, there could be
> three more reviews before it's correct. And I could do that on 20 proposals in
> 1 day.

P012 expressed feeling like the organizational did not support her in dealing with last-minute applications. P012 shared she felt stressed when faculty sent her last-minute applications that she had to review and correct the same day they were due. This caused high stress levels and decreased engagement. Similarly, P001 expressed frustration in describing the workload his department handled on a daily basis. P001 shared,

> I think a lot of senior administration doesn't see that. They can get the workload
> reports and it has a lot of numbers on it but you can see one grant that looks like
> one grant and then you can see another grant but not the size of them and the
> complexity

P001 expressed feeling like he did not have organizational support. P001 indicated senior leadership focused on the quantity of the work but failed to realize the complexity and time involved with each grant.

P005 shared feeling like the pay for his current role was not compatible with the amount of work involved. P005 shared this was the one factor that affected his motivation in a negative way. P005 indicated that although he felt financial

compensation could be better, his overall motivation and engagement levels were mostly positive because of other perks of the job such as work-life balance. P005 shared being able to balance his familial responsibilities with his professional responsibilities. P005 shared,

> I can work from home as well. So I can always just get home, do what I have to do and jump right back on and I can continue working until 5:30, 6:00. So those have been great. Those are great motivational perks like working from home, like those little things.

Interview Question 9

Interview Question 9, "Do you feel you receive adequate support in maintaining optimism to most effectively carry out your duties as a grant and contract officer and provide the best service to faculty and department research administrators? Why or why not?" addresses Research Question 3: "What perceived effect does emotionality in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?" Interview Question 9 explored whether participants feel they receive support in maintaining optimism, which helps them carry out their role responsibilities that include providing great service to their DRAs and PIs. As shown in Table 12, the primary emerging theme included management support (five out of 14). Significant statements that illustrate the participants' perceptions of receiving support to maintain optimism to successfully carry out duties and responsibilities have been quoted to provide a deeper insight to their responses.

Table 12

Interview Question 9 Participant Interview Results

Interview Question 9 theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Management support	5	36	P003, P008, P009, P011, P014
Financial compensation	1	7	P001
Late submissions	1	7	P007
Outdated information	1	7	P012
Supportive environment	1	7	P010

Five of 14 participants referenced management support when describing whether or not they felt they received adequate support in maintaining optimism to most effectively carry out the duties of a GCO. P011 said she was confident in being able to talk to management about any issues she was experiencing and shared that management makes themselves available to staff "at the drop of a hat," which helps staff maintain optimism in the workplace. In answering Interview Question 9, P008 shared,

> I would say yes, because my manager checks in on me regularly. We sit near each other, so she'll literally just pop up, are you okay? Is everything good? Is everything good with you? So I definitely feel optimistic, because there have been times that I'm kind of worried that maybe I'm not grasping things. And I have that support, and be like, okay, it's not that bad.

P008 expressed having management support helped her feel comfortable and confident in her abilities to perform the duties of a GCO, which in turn led to motivation and engagement. Similarly, P014 expressed gratitude in the support that management offered to the staff. P014 indicated that during stressful deadline season, her manager motivated

her by being positive and reminding her that once the deadline passes "the ship will sail" and that there is "light at the end of the tunnel." This positivity fosters motivation and engagement in the workplace. In addition, P003 expressed having great management support and compared his management to his childhood dentist who would continuously ask him whether the pain was tolerable and whether he was doing okay. P003 shared,

> They're always asking me things. Do I need relief? After a while, I thought about when I had a dentist who I would always go to when I was younger and halfway through, he'd always be like, "You all right? You doing good?"

In answering Interview Question 9, P009 indicated that although the volume of work was high, management was supportive and ensured the workload was very fair and balanced. This helped P009 maintain positive motivation and engagement.

In describing whether or not he felt he received adequate support in maintaining optimism to most effectively carryout his duties, P001 shared,

> We're not competitive in our pay for this area and we've done studies on it and we know that's the case. We're about 75% of what everybody else pays. And so if you take a little bit lower pay and then a very high workload it just puts a lot of stress on people. So I think that's the big issue is, trying to be competitive in this area.

P001 expressed that the financial compensation was not compatible with the stress and workload of the job. P001 shared this decreased his motivation and engagement.

P007 expressed a lack of optimism that resulted from last-minute grant submissions. P007 shared,

I think the lack of optimism comes with the perennial pre-award problem which is

that the proposals are always really late.

P012 also noted a decrease in optimism that was the result of having to deal with

outdated information. In answering Interview Question 9, P012 shared,

I think it could be better. Some of the documentation that's out on the web, that's

the web, on the internal, could have better updated information. And that could

help us a little bit more. And so that can be challenging when you're trying to

give them some information and it's a little outdated.

P012 expressed that having outdated information made talking to her counterparts more

difficult because she was not able to reference accurate information. P012 shared that

having updated and accurate information would help her perform her job better and

would thus improve optimism and engagement.

P010 shared being optimistic at work because of the supportive environment he

worked in. P010 shared,

It's not as discouraging if you've got a big workload when the person in front of

you's like, "I'm in the same boat." You just feel like, "Okay, I'm fine.

Everybody's dealing with this stuff."

Being able to relate to colleagues in terms of the work and situations P010 encounters

made work more enjoyable. P010 shared being able to relate to others created a

supportive environment where staff could approach each other and easily share their

unique situations. This led to feeling optimistic and engaged at work.

Interview Question 10

Interview Question 10, "Do you feel you receive adequate support in learning how to overcome positive and negative challenges in your work as a grant and contract officer? Why or why not?" addresses Research Question 3: "What perceived effect does emotionality in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?" Interview Question 10 explored how participants feel in terms of the support they receive in overcoming challenges in the workplace. As shown in Table 13, the primary emerging themes included management support (eight out of 14) and venting (three out of 14).

Table 13

Interview Question 10 Participant Interview Results

Interview Question 10 theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Management support	8	57	P002, P006, P009, P010, P011, P012, P013, P014
Venting	3	21	P001, P004, P008
Collaboration	1	7	P002
Independence	1	7	P007

Significant statements that illustrate the participants' perceptions of receiving support to help overcome challenges in their workplace have been quoted to provide a deeper insight to their responses. Fifty percent of the participants mentioned management support when describing whether they felt they received adequate support in learning how to overcome positive and negative challenges in their work as a GCO. P013 shared,

And again, I think very highly of my manager, and her personality, I think, has

made it very possible for me as a team member to manage the positive and the

negative, especially the negative, that comes along with the role. She is

accessible for us to talk to. If we have a problem, we can go to her.

P013 explained that she was able to overcome the challenges in her role through the

support offered her management. Similarly, P002 shared that the negative challenges she

encountered in her role related to negative interactions with faculty and indicated her

boss was always available to assist. P002 shared that in addressing those situations, she

would ask her boss for input and guidance on how to handle the situation and would help

escalate the situation if need be. Similarly, P014 indicated the challenges that she

encountered involved dealing with "tough" department administrators. P014 expressed

gratitude in having such a great boss who was always willing to help diffuse the situation.

P014 shared, "She kind of talks me off the ledge and gets me back on the straight and

narrow."

In answering Interview Question 10, P006 indicated some of the challenges

experienced related to changes in the organization but highlighted how management did a

great job in helping overcome this challenge. P006 shared that management did "a good

job just trying to calm everybody's fears." P006 indicated a recent change within her

team that made a lot of team members nervous and management stepped in and reassured

them everything was going to be okay.

Moreover, P011 described a previous situation where her boss provided great

advice that helped overcome that particular challenge. P011 described inheriting a

department her boss previously handled. In that department, there was a particular

department administrator who was very difficult to work with. P011 said that this

department administrator was not very responsive to e-mails and that if P011 would use

the "important" feature in outlook, the department administrator would call her and yell

at her for doing so. P011 indicated taking this to her boss and shared,

> I went to my boss who said, "I know. She can be difficult. "I got some
>
> background on how she handled the department. So I feel very confident that
>
> with her as manager, we can tackle anything because you just feel like you can go
>
> to her and talk and get some feedback that you're thinking the right way.
>
> P012 expressed a similar sentiment and said she had management's support when

it came to dealing with difficult situations. P012 shared being able to walk over to

management, explain the situation, and explain how she intended to handle it. P012

gratefully expressed she had plenty of support in that regard. Similarly, P010 shared,

> I feel comfortable going to my boss, and we can jump in a room, and she can say,
>
> "Oh, I've dealt with this before. Usually, this is how I would handle it,"

P010 shared that he was comfortable approaching his boss for advice on how to

overcome challenges. P010 indicated he received support from management when

dealing with someone difficult or an obscure thing not normally seen. P010 expressed

gratitude in working with supportive management. In addition, P009 shared her

management team was constantly trying to improve things. P009 shared management did

a good job in having staff take the right kinds of training and was very encouraging of the

staff.

P001, P004, and P008 expressed being able to vent about difficult situations as a way of overcoming challenges. P001 indicated colleagues and staff would call him to vent about difficult people and shared,

> I tend to be someone who listens to venting a lot. I mean, people will come in and either vent or they call me up on the phone. And after they've said it, they think, "Okay, I was just venting." So we do a lot of the listening,

P001 also shared that he would contact his boss and vent about all the ongoing issues and his boss would listen and help workout solutions. P001 expressed venting was an important outlet in helping overcome some of the challenges the work entailed. Similarly, P004 shared,

> We have psychology sessions every single time. Because there's challenges.
>
> And I mean, there's always difficult people.

P004 indicated she would express her frustration with her teammates and with management. This allowed them to talk things through and come up with viable solutions. In addition, P008 also shared that one of the biggest challenges was late applications. P008 shared she and her colleagues would "complain to each other about some of our DAs or faculty, of how last minute they are, because we all come across last-minute proposals."

Responses to Interview Question 10 indicated that despite the challenge that participants encountered, a way of overcoming the challenges was to vent to colleagues and management. This served as an outlet to express frustration and provided the opportunity to be able to talk things through with others. Thus, venting was determined to be a significant them in Interview Question 10.

P002 expressed some of the biggest challenges she encountered related to

negative faculty interactions. P002 indicated faculty could be unkind or unprofessional,

which could be caused by the pressure they were under, which trickles down. P002

expressed a way of overcoming this was through collaboration. P002 shared,

> Occasionally I need input from other leaders and my boss about bringing the issue
>
> to someone's attention, talking about what steps I have taken to defuse it, to
>
> address it, and potentially other steps that need to be taken at a higher level.

P002 indicated she would reach out to colleagues or her boss to talk about the situation at

hand, the way to diffuse it, and potential solutions. Thus, collaboration was a significant

theme in Interview Question 10.

In answering Interview Question 10, P007 expressed being independent when it

came to overcoming challenges. When asked whether he received adequate support in

overcoming challenges P007 shared,

> No. I mean for the most part I would always want to try to do it myself anyway,
>
> so.

P007 indicated he relied on his own years of experience and knowledge of the job. P007

expressed he would try to overcome challenges on his own and would not bring it up to

management unless it was a major issue. Thus, independence was determined to be a

significant theme in Interview Question 10.

Interview Question 11

Interview Question 11, "Do you feel your workplace aesthetics affect your

engagement level as a grant and contract officer? Why or why not?" addresses Research

Question 4: "What perceived effects do aesthetics in the workplace have on engagement

levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?" Interview Question 11 explored the perceptions of participants regarding aesthetics in the workplace and its effect on engagement. As shown in Table 14, the primary emerging themes included increased communication (four out of 14), decreased engagement (three out of 14), and increased engagement (three out of 14).

Table 14

Interview Question 11 Participant Interview Results

Interview Question 11 theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Increased communication	4	29	P003, P006, P008, P013
Decreased engagement	3	21	P002, P007, P011
Increased engagement	3	21	P001, P005, P009
Lack of privacy	2	14	P010, P014
Team separation	2	14	P006, P011

Significant statements that illustrate the participants' perceptions of their workplace aesthetics in relation to their engagement have been quoted to provide a deeper insight to their responses. Twenty-nine percent of participants indicated their workplace aesthetics fostered increased communication, which affected engagement in a positive way. P006 described her office setup had a lot of open space, which created an environment that fostered communication. P006 shared,

> We're all very open and close. You can't avoid it. You talk to your neighbors
> every day and share stories and questions.

P006 shared that this open space helped colleagues interact with each other and made it easier for them to discuss issues and tell stories. P006 expressed that this made her feel more engaged. P003 described that his team sat close together, which fostered positive engagement. P003 shared

>We're constantly engaged. We're always around each other. The aesthetics makes a huge difference.

P003 indicated that having his team sit together fostered communication among the team and made a big difference in engagement. P003 expressed this fostered positive engagement for him. P013 shared she works from home 4 days out of the week and shared that based on her experience, workplace aesthetics definitely affected her engagement levels. P013 shared,

>Based on my previous experience when I was a full-time employee inside the office, it definitely mattered how comfortable my office environment was, how the temperature was. If it was loud, if it was smelly, if someone cooked fish in the kitchen.

In addition, P008 shared that her current workplace aesthetics made it easier to talk to colleagues, which helped maintain engagement. P008 indicated her manager did not have an office but a cubicle, which made her boss more approachable. P008 indicated she could "just pop up and ask her questions." The open workspace made P008 more comfortable approaching her colleagues and manager with questions, which fostered communication and engagement.

P002, P007, and P011 also expressed their workplace aesthetics affected their personal engagement levels; however, workplace aesthetics affected their engagement

levels in a negative way. P002 indicated she was off campus, so her interactions with

colleagues were minimal, which decreased engagement. P002 shared,

> Being off campus, we see people less and we're physically engaged less. We're
>
> still doing the work. We're still working hard. We're talking to people on the
>
> phone. We're e-mailing them, but we're not seeing them as often. And that's
>
> important, that piece.

P002 expressed that personal interaction was important for her and was something she

did not get much of. P002 explained that personal interaction was important in

maintaining engagement and because she did not get a lot of in-person interactions, it

caused a decrease in engagement for her. P007 also expressed that his workplace

aesthetics led to decreased engagement. P007 indicated his team was spread throughout

the office, which was strange and made it difficult to interact with them. P007 indicated

the reasoning behind the current floorplan was to encourage collaboration with other

groups such as finance, contracts, and post-award, which actually led to decreased

collaboration among the pre-award team.

In addition, P011 expressed that her workplace aesthetics did not encourage

interactions with others, which led to a decrease in engagement. P011 shared,

> The aesthetics here just don't lend it to group conversation and interaction at all
>
> so it is difficult.

P011 shared her workplace aesthetics was open and discouraged communication. P011

shared that if she had conversations aloud in the office, others would complain about the

noise, which led to decreased engagement.

P001, P005, and P009 expressed that the current workplace aesthetics led to increased engagement for them. P001 expressed,

> My present situation is pretty good. I've had a lot of smaller offices before and it gets kind of crowded. I think people like to have their own little space rather than be sitting in an open space with a lot of desks.

P001 described he had a personal office, which worked well for him because it allowed him to focus and get the work done. P001 indicated his colleagues also had offices and preferred it that way because it allowed them to focus and get the work done. Having a personal office led to positive engagement for P001.

P005 indicated working in an environment that offered comfortable workplace aesthetics, which affected engagement in a positive way. P005 described having several amenities in the office, which he found beneficial. P005 indicated having a standing desk and being able to work either sitting or standing. P005 also indicated the option of working at his desk or going to the patio to work or even going a floor below to sit on the couches and work. P005 described having these different options increased engagement for him. Similarly, P009 expressed her current workspace worked well. P009 indicated that working in open space worked for her because it allowed her to approach teammates to ask questions. P001, P005, and P009 expressed workplace aesthetics did affect engagement and in their particular case, it affected engagement in a positive way.

In contrast, P010 and P014 indicated the current aesthetics of their workplace led to a lack of privacy and a decrease in engagement. P010 shared the current workplace aesthetics was meant to encourage communication but actually did the opposite. P010 shared,

They're cubes, but they're smaller and very open, and I feel like it sort of has a

reverse effect because the idea would be that, "Oh, it's more open, and you're

more likely to converse and do whatever," but because it's more open, for me

personally, I feel like if I reach out and say something to the person who sits in

front of me, now everyone can hear everything. So it actually makes me more

cautious in a sense and less open just because I don't want to be bothering other

people. And it feels like there's a little less privacy in that sense.

Similarly, P014 compared the current workplace aesthetics to that of the previous office
and shared,

Where we used to work, we also had cubes, but they were higher. And you could

have a conversation with someone, and it's not like everyone would hear. In the

current setting, even if you're just having a quiet conversation, people just look up

and over.

P014 described feeling restricted from openly communicating with others; P014 indicated

the current office setting constituted to a lack of privacy, which in turn decreased

engagement. Thus, lack of privacy was a significant theme in responses to Interview

Question 11.

P006 and P011 indicated workspace aesthetics did affect engagement and

expressed that the current workspace fostered team separation and decreased

engagement. P006 indicated the pre-award team was spread throughout the office, which

made it difficult to talk to team members. P006 shared the current office setting was hard

because her team was used to sitting together and "talking and sharing things that were

coming up." Similarly, P011 shared the current office setting of her workplace was "not

a great thing" because it separated the team and made it difficult to talk to them. Thus,

team separation was determined to be a significant theme in Interview Question 11.

Interview Question 12

Interview Question 12, "Have there been any investigators or department research

administrators that you have advised during your tenure as a grant and contract officer

who have left an unforgettable mark and inspired you to continue as a grant and contract

officer? If so, why?" addresses Research Question 2: "What perceived effects do

professional relationships in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in

nonprofit hospitals?" Interview Question 12 explored the interactions between GCOs

and research department administrators and faculty. This interview question explored the

types of interactions GCOs have had in their careers in the central office. As shown in

Table 15, the primary emerging themes included mentorship (five out of 14) and

inspiration (two out of 14).

Table 15

Interview Question 12 Participant Interview Results

Interview Question 12 theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Mentorship	5	36	P001, P005, P006, P007, P008
Inspiration	2	14	P003, P010
Paradigm shift	1	7	P004
Lack of appreciation	1	7	P011
Encouragement	1	7	P006
Appreciation	1	7	P014

Significant statements that illustrate participants' experiences regarding significant interactions with faculty and DRAs have been quoted to provide a deeper insight to their responses. Thirty-six percent of participants mentioned experiences in which they were mentored when describing faculty or department administrators who had left an unforgettable mark and inspired them to continue as a GCO. P001 shared,

I didn't know if I'd make it here a year. And having that person to go to and she had a very good relationship with all the PIs. So she was a very strong mentor and that really helped ease me into the world.

P001 indicated that during his first 6 months on the job, he wanted to quit, but having a mentor who was patient and showed him how to do the job convinced him to stay. Similarly, P005 indicated having someone who was always willing to help him during stressful and confusing times. P005 shared that a previous supervisor taught him the different functions of the job and served as a great mentor who encouraged him. P006 shared a similar sentiment and shared her manager has had the biggest impact on her in her career as a GCO. P006 shared,

She was my mentor when I first started this. They're people that could see that I had potential and they were encouraging to me.

P006 expressed that her mentor was supportive and encouraging, which motivated P006 to continue her career as a GCO. P008 also shared that her mentor was the individual to make the biggest impact on her as a GCO. P008 indicated her mentor helped her "get into the groove" and taught her "the ropes of grant administration." The mentor made sure P008 fully understood the duties and responsibilities of the job and encouraged her to not give up.

In answering Interview Question 12, P007 indicated he had not encountered anyone in his career who had left an unforgettable mark on him, but that he had mentored himself. P007 shared,

> My path here was different than everybody else's. I didn't have a mentor either. They just said sink or swim. They just threw me in so I've just always kind of done things my way.

Whereas other participants described mentors that had helped them transition into the role of a GCO, P007 shared he did not have a mentor but mentored him. P007 expressed being self-taught and learning to do things his way. Whether participants had a mentor to guide them or not, mentorship was a significant theme in responses to Interview Question 12.

P003 and P010 described experiences that served as inspirations to them, which encouraged them to continue their careers as GCOs. P003 shared working with an investigator who was working on finding a cure to a specific illness and was so passionate about the work that the investigator invested personal time and money on the project. P003 shared,

> He donated 6 months of his salary. He just worked for free for this one project while doing his other duties for 6 months. He risked probably $300,000 or $400,000 of money if something went wrong to develop the treatment for this and for what he developed.

P003 indicated this particular investigator risked thousands of dollars to find a cure for a dying child. In the end, the investigator was successful, and the child is still alive and getting better. P003 indicated this investigator was phenomenal and has inspired him to

continue on as a GCO in order to participate in the process of securing funds for clinical trials that may result in cures to illnesses and diseases.

Similarly, P010 described having worked with an investigator who had an extraordinary work ethic. P010 shared,

> Having worked directly with a PI who had such a ferocious work ethic, it sort of kind of gave me an appreciation for just how much work they're doing and how involved and how seriously they take it.

P010 shared that his particular investigator inspired him to continue as a GCO. P010 indicated that this investigator was extremely involved in the work, which served as an inspiration to P010. Thus, responses from P003 and P010 constituted inspiration as a significant theme in Interview Question 12.

P004 indicates having worked with a PI who changed her personal way of thinking. P004 shared,

> He changed my life and the way I see things. Because it's not black and white. It's always the colors in between, and you have to be open to see things that other people cannot.

P004 shared having worked with an investigator who was different than the other investigators and changed her own way of thinking. This investigator taught her to think "outside the box" which made her more aware and mindful of situations. This investigator changed her perspective on life and taught her to analyze situations fully before acting on them; thus, paradigm shift was determined to be a significant theme in Interview Question 12.

In answering Interview Question 12, P011 indicated experiencing a lack of appreciation. P011 shared,

> We don't get thank yous very much. They promise you the world but they don't deliver. There have been a couple of PIs that have left a really bad taste in my mouth. But I really can't say that there has been anyone that I've really felt like I was appreciated.

P011 expressed that there had not been anybody during her tenure as a GCO who had left an unforgettable mark on her and encouraged her to continue as a GCO. On the contrary, P011 expressed a lack of appreciation during her tenure as a GCO; thus, lack of appreciation was a significant theme in responses to Interview Question 12.

Furthermore, P006 shared experiences that were encouraging and inspired her to continue as a GCO. P006 indicated that her manager saw a lot of potential in her and would encourage her by saying things like "you can do this" and "I believe in you." These words of encouragement motivated P006 to continue the work and inspired her to do her best as a GCO. Thus, inspiration was a significant theme in responses to Interview Question 12.

Finally, P014 shared experiences where she felt appreciated and served as encouragement. P014 shared,

> I have a bunch of people who are just appreciative. This one guy that I have, he wants to quit his job so bad. He's a DA and he just wants any other job but the one he has. And when I help him get something done, he's super appreciative.

P014 indicated that she serves as the encouraging voice to her colleagues. P014 helps her department administrators when she can and in return they express gratitude and

appreciation. P0014 indicated this exchange makes her feel appreciated and makes her realize that the work she does pays off and is worth it. Thus, appreciation was determined to be a significant theme in Interview Question 12.

Interview Question 13

Interview Question 13, "What do you think is important for faculty and department research administrators to understand about the role of grant and contract officers that you feel they may not understand and in what ways can they help you to be successful in your job?" addresses Research Question 2: "What perceived effects do professional relationships in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?" Interview Question 13 explored what GCOs feel their customers in the department should understand about their role in central administration. As shown in Table 16, the primary emerging themes included common goal (four out of 14), policies and procedures (three out of 14), and time management (three of 14).

Table 16

Interview Question 13 Participant Interview Results

Interview Question 13 theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Common goal	4	29	P001, P005, P007, P009
Policies and procedures	3	21	P004, P010, P012
Time management	3	21	P008, P013, P014
Complexity of work	2	14	P002, P003
Multiple customers	2	14	P006, P014

Significant statements that illustrate participants' perceptions on what DRAs and faculty should understand about the GCO role have been quoted to provide a deeper insight to their responses. Four of 14 participants expressed they felt like faculty and department administrators sometimes did not understand they were all working toward a common goal. P007 indicated that sometimes faculty thought the ORA was an obstacle to getting things done and shared,

> What I find difficult is them thinking we were just going to get in their way of having things done. I think that sometimes department people are in a bad spot because they have a PI who is putting pressure on them to do the thing and then we're an obstacle to them.

> P007 shared that he has to ensure faculty are following federal guidelines and policies and in doing so, he has to question documentation, which faculty does not like. P007 shared that he hoped faculty would understand they are on the same team and are working toward a common goal. In addition, P001 shared,

> I mean, we're really here to help them, help them to get through whatever it is. Requests from NIH or getting a grant out.

P001 indicated he was really there to help faculty submit appropriate documentation to NIH and said he did not think faculty understood that they were all working together to achieve a common goal. Similarly, P005 shared,

> So I think that some just look at us as, "Just review this. Sign off, and let it go," instead of being like, "Okay. He's part of our team. He's an extension of our department team."

P005 expressed that if faculty saw the ORA as being part of the same thing instead of as an impediment, they would help them be more successful. In addition, P009 shared,

>It's very important that we protect them. We protect the institution, and that's very important. We are on the same team, not to prevent them not getting things done.

P009 indicated her purpose was to protect the faculty and the institution and said that if the faculty and department administrators understood this, it would help her be more successful.

In addition, P004 indicated that if faculty and DRAs understood the policies and procedures involved in research administration, it would help GCOs be more successful. P004 compared GCOs to police officers and to traffic lights and indicated both are needed to ensure order. P004 expressed that just like there is a reason for police officers and traffic lights, there is also a reason for research administrators, which is to ensure sponsor guidelines are followed. P004 shared,

>I have to make sure that the terms and conditions of the sponsor and the institution that I work for are implemented. But in some cases, they want to oversee it. They want to do their own thing. But it's not just being part of one institution and doing whatever you want. It's being part of an institution and following the rules and regulations.

P004 shared having to explain sponsor policies when speaking to faculty and department administrators and indicated that if her colleagues understood this, her job would be easier. Similarly, P010 shared,

I think them understanding why we do what we do in the central office, that I'm

not trying to hassle you, and quite frankly, the opposite.

P010 shared that if faculty and department administrators understood the policies and

procedures that govern research administration, it would facilitate his job. In addition,

P012 shared,

I've felt that once they understand what you're trying to say to them, and that

you're here to help them and not hinder them, and you can put it in a way that

works out for them, they're most grateful.

P012 shared experiences where she explained why she needed specific documentation

and once the faculty understood, they were thankful of her. P004, P010, and P012

expressed that if faculty and department administrators truly understood the policies and

procedures, it would help them be more successful; thus, policies and procedures was a

significant theme in responses to Interview Question 13.

Three of 14 participants indicated time management was an important component

of research administration they would like faculty and department administrators to

understand. P013 shared,

If there's anything I could tell a PI, it would be why we need as much time as we

need to review the grants before they get submitted, and what value we can bring

to that.

P013 expressed that faculty should understand the importance of submitting grant

applications in a timely manner, which would provide enough time to perform a

comprehensive review of the application. Similarly, P008 expressed she received a lot of

last-minute applications, which prevented her from performing a full comprehensive

review of the application. P008 shared that if faculty and department administrators understood the importance of time management, it would facilitate her job. Similarly, P014 shared,

> I could be more successful if I had things earlier and had more time to work on them. Sometimes I'll get stuff the day it's due and reviewing a DOD proposal that day is just crazy.

P008, P013, and P014 expressed the importance of timeliness in terms of grant application and documentation submission and indicated that if faculty understood this, they would submit things ahead of time, which would help them be more successful in their jobs as this would provide enough time to perform comprehensive and valuable reviews.

> P002 and P003 expressed that they would be more successful in their roles if faculty and department administrators understood the complexity of their work. P002 shared,

> So I think that for them to know that things can be very complex, that we would need to involve other parties, and therefore things will take more time than they might anticipate, and to give us a pass and know that people are working hard to move business along.

Similarly, P003 shared,

> It's more than pushing a button. It's more than looking down at a column of words.

P002 and P003 indicated faculty and department administrators do not fully understand the complexity of the role, which is why oftentimes they want things done immediately.

These participants indicated that if faculty understood the complexity of the work, it would help them be more successful; thus, complexity of work was a significant theme in responses to Interview Question 13.

Finally, P006 and P014 expressed having multiple departments, multiple faculty, and multiple department administrators and expressed they would like faculty to understand this. P006 shared,

> I think it's important for them to understand that they're not our only customer.
> It's like we all have different workloads; we all have other grants going out. It's
> not just their department, their PIs. We have five or six more of those groups.

P006 indicated that a single investigator "was not the only star in her galaxy" and hoped investigators and department administrators would understand that. Similarly, P014 shared,

> I think if they realize that they're not the only fish in the sea and there are other
> people I have to support, that if they got it to me earlier it would just be better for
> everybody.

P006 and P014 expressed having multiple customers they support and if their department administrators and faculty understood this, it would be better for everyone; thus, multiple customers was a significant theme in responses to Interview Question 13.

Interview Question 14

Interview Question 14: "What do you think is the most important thing for new grant and contract officers to understand before entering the field?" was designed to allow participants to express any other thoughts, opinions, and experiences not previously addressed by the interview questions. This interview question allowed participants to

share anything they believed would add value to the topic of engagement and the factors that affect engagement in GCOs. As shown in Table 17, the primary emerging themes included patience (five out of 14) and communication (three out of 14).

Table 17

Interview Question 14 Participant Interview Results

Interview Question 14 theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Patience	5	36	P001, P003, P005, P008, P012
Communication	3	21	P007, P010, P014
Knowing resources	1	7	P011
Critical thinking	1	7	P009
Intrinsically rewarding	1	7	P014
Adaptability	1	7	P006

Significant statements that illustrate participants' perceptions on what they perceive to be most important about the GCO role have been quoted to provide a deeper insight to their responses. These statements illustrate the kind of information they would relay to a new GCO in the field. Five of 14 participants indicated they would highlight the importance of being patient to new GCOs. P001 shared,

> They have to be patient. It's not a job you can learn in a month and think you're
>
> good at it.

Similarly, P003 shared,

> It's not all going to come at once and it doesn't have to. With this you have a
>
> base, you have talents that you were hired for. You will have to develop them.

P005 shared a similar thought and shared,

So the most important thing that I would say is understanding that you're not

going to know it all, right, but getting a good foundation. Understanding that

there's going to be a lot of moving parts.

P008 shared,

Just knowing to have patience, because you're definitely not going to get it the

first time around, or the second time around.

In answering Interview Question 14, P012 indicated new GCOs should know they would

go through a "painful learning experience." P012 shared,

You have to stick with it because, if you do, you will never be unemployed,

number one. It is a field that is so narrow that not a lot of people know about it,

but the skillset that you learn from being a grant administrator transfers over to

any other job that's out in the world.

These participants shared their personal experiences of when they first started in research

administration and shared they would stress the importance of being patient to any new

GCOs joining the field.

P007, P010, and P014 indicated new GCOs should understand the importance of

communication. P007 indicated having to be clear in communicating with faculty and

department administrators to ensure clarity. P007 shared that "communication skills are

an important part to the job. Similarly, P010 shared,

I would say the most important thing to know is that your communication with the

people you deal with is what's most important because your technical knowledge

will come with time.

P014 shared learning how to communicate with faculty and department administrator was really important. P014 shared that learning how to draft an e-mail with the appropriate tone and appropriate level of professionalism was important for new GCOs to know. Thus, communication was a significant theme in responses to Interview Question 14.

Furthermore, P011 noted that knowing where to find the necessary resources would be really good for new GCOs to know. P011 shared,

Know your resources. You should always know where to find the information. I think that is crucial. if you don't know something, you don't know where to find it, you're lost.

In addition, P009 indicated new GCOs should know and should learn how to think critically because the GCO role requires a lot of thinking and analyzing. P009 shared, "I think they should just want to learn how to read, look at things, and think about it."

In answering Interview Question 14, P014 shared that the GCO role offered intrinsic rewards. P014 shared,

You're working for a nonprofit, and you're doing great things. Scientists are doing great things. You're making a difference. It may not be a difference in your bank account, and the pay may take forever to grow, and you're probably not going to get the huge bonuses, but there are other benefits and other enriching things for doing the work.

P014 indicated that the GCO role might not provide the financial benefits desired, but that it did offer a lot of intrinsic rewards. P014 expressed she would tell new GCOs that

the work is fulfilling because this role allows one to contribute to making a difference and achieving the greater good.

Finally, P006 expressed the importance of adaptability. P006 shared,

It's ever changing. Everything changes. Don't be afraid of the change, don't be resistant to change, I've learned. It doesn't help you. It hinders you. Keep an open mind about things. You always adapt and you grow. And change is what helps you grow.

P006 expressed the importance of being able to adapt to new changes, which in turn help achieve professional growth. P006 indicated it was really important for GCOs to not fight change but to be flexible and open to change. Thus, adaptability was a significant theme in Interview Question 14.

Interpretation and Emergence of Universal Themes

Six universal themes emerged from the responses collected from the in-depth semistructured interview questions. The themes served as guidance and direction for translating meaningful answers to the research questions. The following are the universal themes:

Theme 1: GCOs want to be engaged in their workplace

Theme 2: Three factors that affect the engagement of GCOs are professional relationships with colleagues, emotionality in the workplace, and aesthetics in the workplace.

Theme 3: Employee engagement is enhanced when GCOs have their manager's support and when management fosters a supportive and collegial environment.

Theme 4: GCOs want to work collaboratively with DRAs and investigators; they want to be seen as part of the team and not as an impediment.

Theme 5: GCOs want to work in an office environment that allows for privacy and encourages team communication and collaboration.

Theme 6: GCOs have heavy workloads that lead to stress; more employees are needed to distribute the work and make the volume of work more manageable.

In the following sections, each theme is discussed according to the context related to the research questions.

Theme 1

GCOs want to be engaged in their workplace

In response to Research Question 1, it was evident that GCOs in nonprofit hospitals want to be engaged. Although some participants indicated falling into the position and not knowing anything about research administration prior to joining the field, they have developed a passion for research administration. The interview responses illustrated that participants enjoy the work but are faced with various challenges that affect engagement in a negative way. Participants find their role as a GCO fulfilling and enriching. P003 shared, "That's why every single day I wake up, and it's like, yes, I'm going to do this because I put in my little grain in this huge field, that is helping, contributing to help people saving lives." Similarly, P014 shared that this position was enriching to her and shared that one of her investigators had won the Nobel Prize and expressed, "You're working for a nonprofit, and you're doing great things. Scientists are doing great things- you're making a difference." Participants expressed being passionate about the work and expressed the value they found in the work. The interview data

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indicated GCOs found their work to be enriching and fulfilling to them and was intrinsically rewarding. The data illustrate that GCOs want to be engaged because they are passionate about the work and want to contribute to achieving the greater good. GCOs want to make a difference in the world by contributing to scientific advancement that can potentially lead to finding cures to diseases and illnesses.

Theme 2

Factors that affect the engagement of GCOs include professional relationships with colleagues, emotionality in the workplace, and aesthetics in the workplace.

In response to Research Question 2, Research Question 3, and Research Question 4, participants indicated that professional relationships with colleagues, emotionality in the workplace, and aesthetics in the workplace affect the engagement levels of GCOs working in nonprofit hospitals. Positive professional relationships affect engagement in a positive way whereas negative relationships with colleagues affect engagement in a negative way. Positive emotionality in the workplace affects engagement in a positive way whereas negative emotionality in the workplace affects engagement in a negative way. Workplace aesthetics that create an environment of close proximity to colleagues and promotes open communication affects engagement in a positive way whereas workplace aesthetics that make GCOs feel separated from their teams and renders a lack of privacy hinders them from communicating openly and affects engagement in a negative way. Although some participants expressed positive experiences in all three factors and felt engaged, other participants expressed negative experiences in one or two areas but still felt positively engaged overall.

Participants expressed that professional relationships with colleagues play a significant role in their jobs and can make the work either easier or more difficult. P011 described a difficult department administrator who was nonresponsive and would get upset when P011 checked "very important" on any e-mail communication. These interactions made it very difficult to get work done and affected engagement negatively. P007 described a positive professional relationship with a department administrator and expressed he would not only provide guidance to the department administrator but would collaborate with him. This kind of interaction affected engagement positively.

Participants expressed that management support is crucial in the workplace. Participants expressed that having the support of their manager builds their confidence and makes them feel comfortable about making decisions and handling difficult situations. Having support from management also eliminates the fear of making mistakes. P011 described how she felt confident in approaching management with any questions or issues. P012 also expressed feeling comfortable approaching management with any issues and knowing that management would offer the support needed. Having management support was significant in the engagement of GCOs and affected their engagement positively.

Participants expressed office aesthetics were significant in terms of engagement. Participants expressed the importance of having privacy in the workplace to address sensitive issues. Workplace aesthetics that created a lack of privacy hindered communication and affected engagement in a negative way. Conversely, workplace aesthetics that fostered teamwork and communication with team mates affected engagement in a positive way. GCOs expressed wanting to sit close to teammates.

Sitting in close proximity to colleagues allows GCOs to easily reach out to one another with questions and encourages problem-solving, discussions, and communication.

Theme 3

Employee engagement is enhanced when GCOs are part of an organization that fosters a supportive and collegial environment.

In response to Research Question 1, participants expressed the importance of working in a supportive and collegial environment. Working in a supportive and collegial environment fosters engagement whereas working in an environment that does not foster support and collegiality decreases engagement. P010 shared he worked in a good cohesive environment that made him feel supported. P010 indicated he felt he could approach colleagues and discuss any ongoing issues with them. These communications offer support as GCOs sympathize with each other and express having encountered a similar situation. This encourages collaboration and helps diffuse feelings of frustration and stress. P001 shared that the camaraderie in his institution was very strong, which helped increase engagement. P001 shared being able to relate to colleagues who were "all in the same boat" and because of it would help each other and would "bounce" ideas back and forth. Conversely, P011 shared her engagement in the workplace had decreased because of her distrust in leadership. P011 indicated not trusting management, which prevented her from expressing opinions and led her to feeling less engaged. Participants highlighted the importance of working in a supportive and collegial environment. Participants who worked in a supportive and collegial environment felt confident about asking questions and communicating with others, which affected engagement in a positive way. However, participants who worked in

environments that were not supportive or collegial felt restricted and affected engagement in a negative way.

Theme 4

GCOs want to work collaboratively with DRAs and investigators; they want to be seen as part of the team and not as an impediment.

In response to Research Question 2, participants expressed that they constantly experience resistance from the departments and expressed their desire to be seen as collaborators rather than as a hindrance to them. P005 indicated he did not understand the "constant fight" with the departments. P005 shared that when he would review and question documentation, the department administrators would get defensive instead of wanting to work together to revise the documentation. P010 also shared that the departments would sometimes become "adversarial" and would view the central office as a nuisance, making things difficult on them. Participants expressed repeated efforts to try and change these argumentative dynamics by reassuring the department administrators and faculty that they are on the same team and are working toward a common goal. GCOs indicated that a big part of their job was to ensure grant applications and documentation adhered to sponsor guidelines and policies, which is why they often request revisions are made. GCOs want the department administrators and faculty to know they are there to provide assistance to them and not to make things more difficult than they need to be. Participants shared their attempts to make the DRAs and investigators feel they all form one team and work toward the common goal of helping with scientific advancement that will potentially enhance health and reduce illness and disability.

Theme 5

GCOs want to work in an office environment that allows for privacy and encourages team communication and collaboration.

In response to Research Question 4, participants emphasized the importance of communication and collaboration within their teams. Participants expressed the vast amount of information and knowledge that is needed in the GCO role. Participants shared that they tend to see new things every day and indicated their work is challenging and complex. Participants expressed their work is "ever-changing" and shared that sponsor agency regulations, policies, and procedures change constantly; thus, team collaboration is crucial. It is important, if not necessary, for GCOs to discuss new policies and procedures and determine how to implement them into their organizational processes. Moreover, participating GCOs shared that workplace aesthetics has a tremendous effect on team communication and team collaboration. The consensus of GCOs is that workplace aesthetics can either hinder the interactions with their teammates or can encourage interactions with their teammates. P006 shared the following thoughts on her new office location, "That was hard because we were so used to everyone sitting together and talking and sharing things that were coming up." Similarly, P011 shared that in a previous office location, the pre-award team sat together, which would allow for impromptu discussions about a hot topic or issue. The old office setup would allow for team discussions on how to handle specific situations. The new office setting took that away as the pre-award team was spread throughout the office. P011 expressed she preferred the sitting arrangements in a previous location where teams sat together and were able to engage in problem-solving through collaborative conversations. GCOs want

to collaborate with one another and want to work as a team. A way that organizations can help do this is by creating an office setting where teams are seated together.

Theme 6

GCOs have heavy workloads that lead to stress; more employees are needed to distribute the work and make the volume of work more manageable.

In response to Research Question 1, participants shared they had big portfolios that were high in complexity and volume. Several participants mentioned working until late hours of the night and on the weekend in efforts to keep up with the work, which leads to stress and frustration. It was apparent that participants enjoyed the challenge of the type of work they did but struggled with the volume of work. P002 shared,

> I'm always excited about work and I'm excited about figuring things out and servicing people. But the resources are low, meaning staff. We need more bodies. The volume is tremendous, and so there's never downtime. Everyone is behind work all the time.

P002 expressed feeling frustrated and stressed because she could not keep up with the work. Similarly, P014 shared that she works on weekends to avoid feeling stressed and overwhelmed. P014 expressed it was necessary for her to work weekends in order to be prepared for the upcoming tasks on Monday morning. Based on the data collected from the interviews, the consensus of participating GCOs was that the volume of work was extremely high. Participants also shared that the complexity of the work was high, but they did not mind this as much as the volume. Data indicated that GCOs enjoy the challenge their work brings but struggle to keep up with the innumerable tasks they are responsible for. Some participants expressed working 10 to 12 hours per day and still not

keep up with the work. Participants indicated that more GCOs are needed so that the work can be evenly distributed and the workload can be manageable.

Summary

Chapter 4 described the findings from the in-depth interviews of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals who voluntarily participated in the qualitative exploratory phenomenological study on employee engagement. Chapter 4 presented a detailed discussion of the identified themes collected from responses to the interview questions based on Kahn's (1990) theory on engagement. Direct quotes from participants were included in Chapter 4 to substantiate the data collected.

The findings from the study illustrate that employee engagement means different things to different individuals based on their individual lived experiences. Participants expressed that knowledge growth, camaraderie, and professional relationships were major drivers of engagement. Being able to gain knowledge, working in collegial environments, and having positive working relationships helped participants maintain engagement. The study findings also illustrate that neglect, workplace aesthetics, a lack of respect, and stress were the drivers that caused a decrease in engagement (see Figure 9).

Second, the findings from the study also illustrate that professional relationships in the workplace have both a positive and negative effect on the engagement levels of GCOs. Professional relationships were the major factor to engagement levels. Participants indicated that because they communicate with DRAs and faculty on a daily basis, professional relationships were crucial to their engagement levels. The findings illustrate that relationship building, communication, and mentorship affected engagement

in a positive way. The findings also illustrate disconnectedness, turnover, and lack of accountability affected engagement in a negative way (see Figure 10).
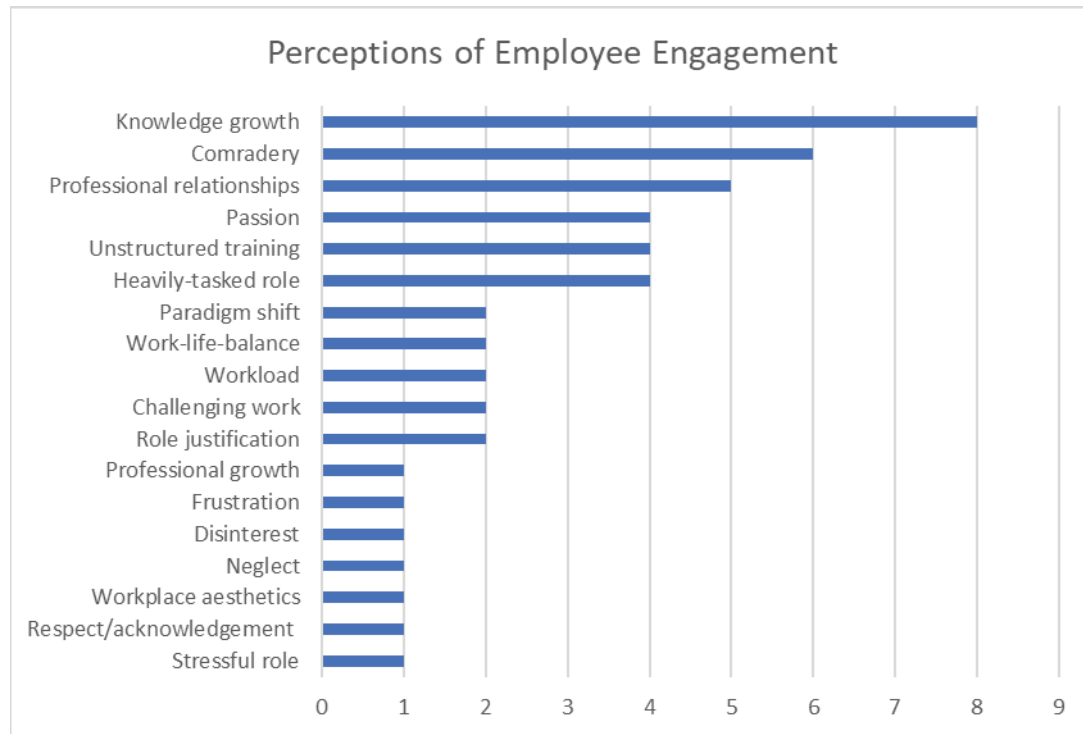
Perceptions of Employee Engagement

Category	Value
Knowledge growth	8
Comradery	6
Professional relationships	5
Passion	4
Unstructured training	4
Heavily-tasked role	4
Paradigm shift	2
Work-life-balance	2
Workload	2
Challenging work	2
Role justification	2
Professional growth	1
Frustration	1
Disinterest	1
Neglect	1
Workplace aesthetics	1
Respect/acknowledgement	1
Stressful role	1

Figure 9. Perceptions of employee engagement.

Next, the findings from the study indicate that emotionality affects engagement in a negative and positive way. The findings illustrate that management support, adequate training, and leadership affect engagement in a positive way. Conversely, outdated information and late submissions lead to negative emotionality in the workplace (see Figure 11).
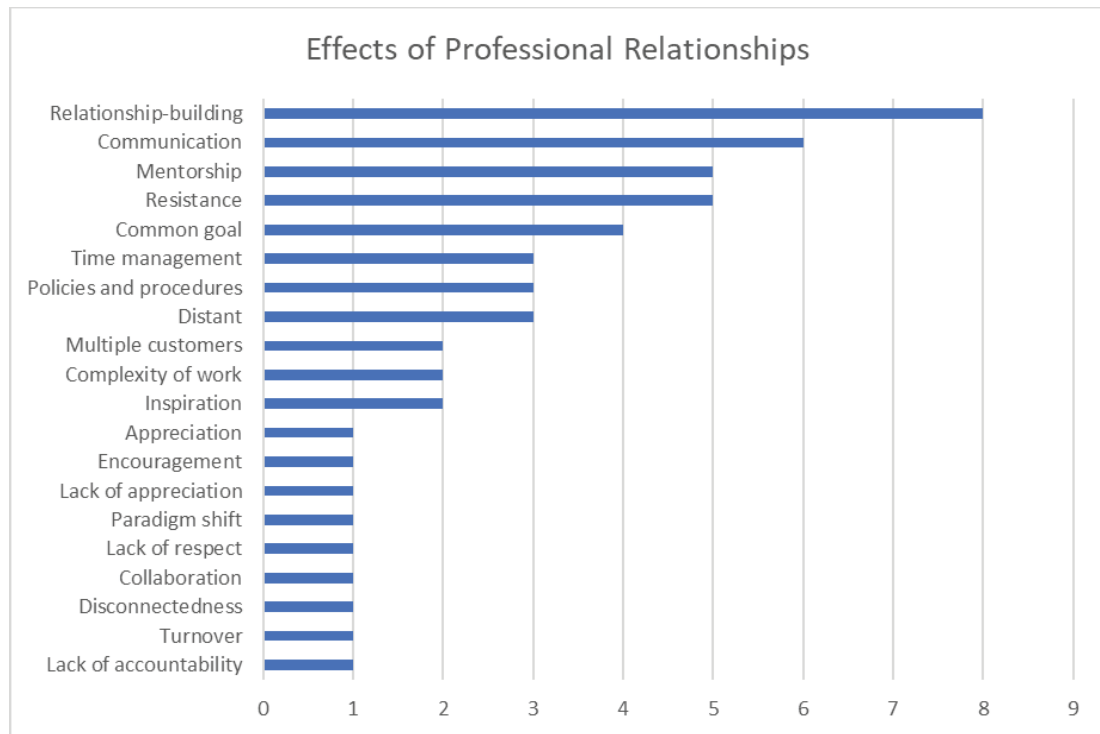
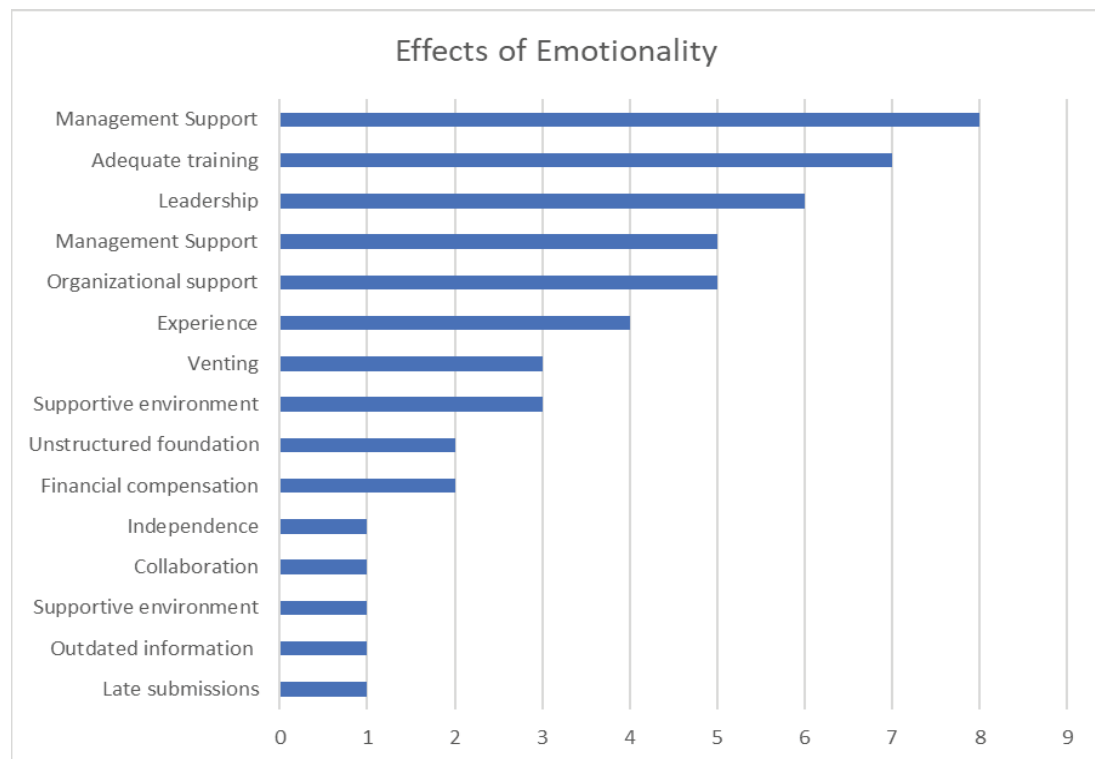*Figure 10.* Effects of professional relationships on engagement.

Figure 11. Effects of emotionality in the workplace.

Finally, the findings from the study indicate that workplace aesthetics can affect engagement levels of a GCO in a positive or negative way. The findings illustrate that aesthetics of the workplace can increase communication and foster team building, which leads to positive and increased engagement levels. Conversely, aesthetics of the workplace can lead to a lack of privacy and foster disconnectedness and distrust, which lead to negative engagement levels (see Figure 12)
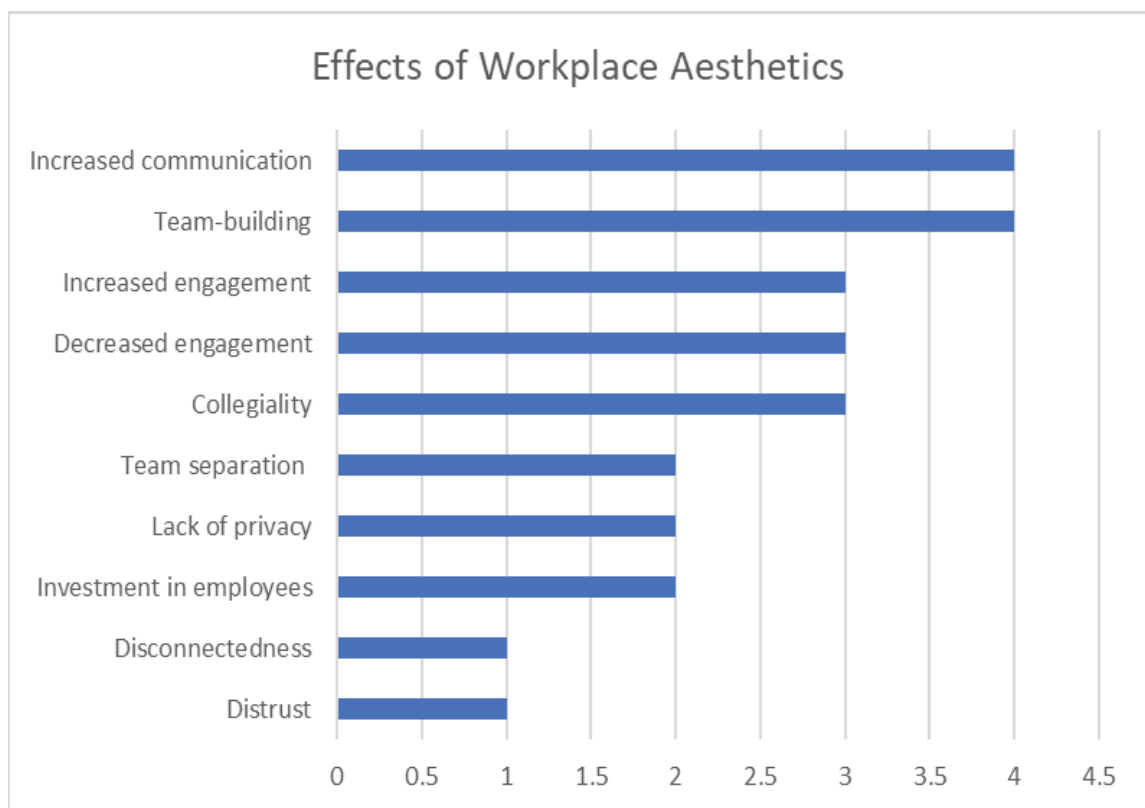

Figure 12. Effects of workplace aesthetics.

Presented in Chapter 5 are the results of the research questions, insights for organization leaders, recommendations for future research studies, and a concluding summary.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research administration is growing at an exponential rate in terms of the volume and complexity. More grant and contract officers (GCOs) are needed in concurrence with the growth of active federal and nonprofit grants, agreements, and contracts. The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that affect engagement in GCOs in nonprofit hospitals by exploring the effects of professional relationships, the effects of emotionality in the workplace, and workplace aesthetics. Chapter 4 presented a detailed review of the interview questions and participant responses as well as an analysis and presentation of findings. Themes for each interview question were also listed for each interview question. Chapter 5 includes the conclusions reached, insights gained, recommendations for additional research, and a summary of the study.

Study Conclusions

Fourteen participants responded to 14 interview questions, which were designed to answer four research questions. Participants shared their perceptions, opinions, and experiences regarding employee engagement in their workplace. They shared stories and provided concrete information and examples to illustrate their experiences and perceptions of engagement. Participants shared their thoughts and opinions on the factors they believed affected engagement. Chapter 5 provides a detailed discussion of the study results, insights reached, and recommendation for leaders in research administration. The aim of this exploratory phenomenological study was to provide information on a vital and underresearched role in the research field—grant and contract officers. The results from this study can provide research administration managers and directors with information

that can help formulate strategies and tools to increase employee engagement of GCOs in their respective organizations.

Four research questions provided the foundation for this research study. The research questions and results are as follows.

Research Question 1

What are the perceptions of employee engagement among GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

GCOs had different perceptions of engagement based on their individual experiences in the research administration field. Participants described their experiences and perceptions of engagement by describing the roles and responsibilities of their position. Participants described an array of responsibilities they handle as a GCO and indicated their job was unpredictable. Participating GCOs said they tend to see something new every day and that they usually do not complete half of the tasks they intend on completing at the start of any given day because unexpected issues usually come up.

The majority of participants mentioned not knowing anything about research administration prior to joining the field; some participants indicated they "fell" into research administration. Seven participants indicated they started their career in research administration by first working as a department research administrator (DRA), which helped them transition into a GCO role. Participants shared that a significant amount of information and knowledge is needed for the GCO role. Participants indicated the volume of work is tremendous and required more bodies to do the work. Participants

indicated the type of work was challenging and required analytic thinking. Participants welcomed the challenge but struggled with the heavy workloads.

Further, participants shared experiences of feeling overwhelmed when they first started their careers in research administration. One participant described her learning experience as a "painful learning experience." Others indicated being close to quitting when they first started and said the reason they did not quit was that they had a mentor who motivated and encouraged them by providing guidance and reassurance. Looking back at when they first started, participants noted the great amount of knowledge they had gained over the years. They expressed the job was knowledge based and felt comfortable and confident in handling issues and making decisions after gaining years of experience.

Other participants shared that camaraderie in the workplace was important in making them feel engaged. Working in an environment that is supportive and collegial goes a long way for participants. Being able to approach colleagues and managers with questions and issues has helped build confidence in participants. Most GCOs shared that camaraderie within their organizations was strong and helpful in overcoming challenging situations, which in turn helped them be engaged.

Figure 13 illustrates that 11 participants have a positive perception of engagement at their workplace, two participants have a negative perception of engagement of their workplace, and one participant is neutral regarding the engagement perception of the workplace.
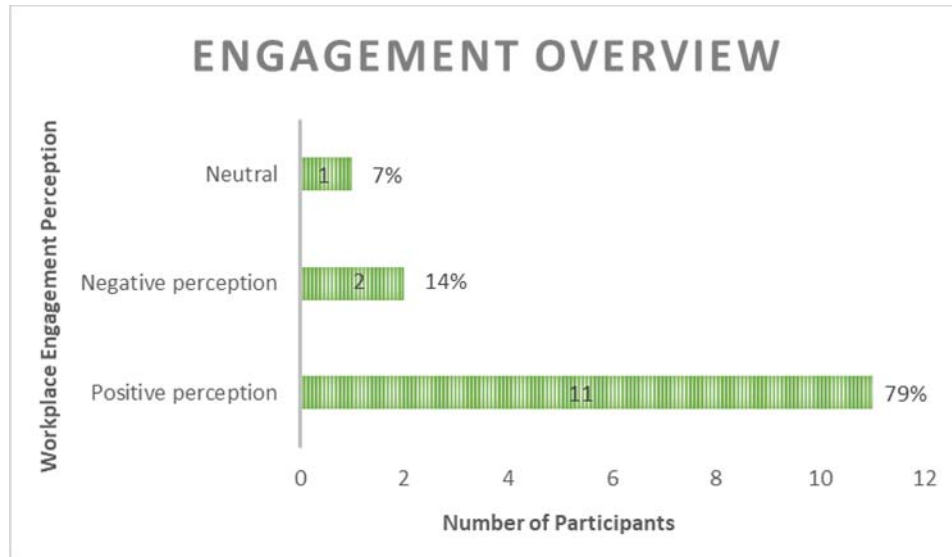
Figure 13. Engagement overview.

Research Question 2

What perceived effects do professional relationships in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

Participants indicated professional relationships were really important and constituted a significant part of their job. The data collected coincide with Harter et al. (2002) who argued that one of the factors that affect employee engagement is colleagues. Participants who had positive professional relationships with their DRAs and investigators, experienced positive engagement; whereas participants who had negative professional relationships with their DRAs and investigators, experienced decreased engagement. One participant shared he experienced a lack of respect from the principal investigator (PI), which came from the investigator's lack of confidence in him. Another participant shared a past experience in which a renowned investigator in a previous organization threatened to "behead" his colleague for not giving him the answer he expected. Yet, another participant described the "investigator mindset" as "wanting what

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they want, when they want it, and how they want it." This mindset often led to adversarial relationships between the departments and the central office. Unfortunately, department administrators and faculty often view GCOs as a hinderance to getting the work done. Participants shared that they spend a good amount of time talking to investigators and department administrators, explaining to them the organizational rules and policies. Participants explained that the most common reasons why they question documentation submitted by the departments is that it does not adhere to sponsor agency guidelines. The job of a GCO is to ensure grant applications and documentation adhere to established guidelines, which is why GCOs often request changes and revisions. Faculty and department administrators tend to see this questioning as a nuisance rather than as a tactic to ensure accuracy. The back-and-forth with the departments can be stressful and can lead to a decrease of engagement in the workplace.

Conversely, some participants shared they had relatively positive experiences with their department staff. One participant shared she worked with the "kindest, most amazing person" who was extremely accommodating and would go out of her way to get the work done. Another participant indicated she had good working relationships with the department because she had been working with them for years, which helped build trust between them. She mentioned the departments she worked with were easy going, nice, and appreciative, which gave testament to the fact that they had been working for years and had built a positive professional relationship. Positive interactions with faculty and department administrators make the job of a GCO more enjoyable and increases engagement.

Other participants mentioned feeling distant from investigators and department

staff, which was due to their office location. Being logistically separated from their

department contacts made them feel less physically engaged with their customers. The

consensus of participants was that they wanted to work collaboratively with the

departments and that personal interaction is important in doing so. In addition to wanting

to work together with the departments, GCOs also want to work together with each other.

Participants mentioned that federal rules and regulations are ever changing, which is why

discussions are necessary. Different portfolios embody different levels of complexity.

Some GCOs might handle unique situations that other GCOs might not and vice versa.

Collaboration among the pre-award team helps GCOs stay up to date with the latest

guidelines and policies. GCOs appreciate working with a team that is open to impromptu

discussions and who brainstorm together on how to resolve issues or handle difficult

situations. GCOs also appreciate being able to collaborate with management on issues

that require the interference of higher ups. Participants appreciate when management

discusses issues with them rather than only delegating and directing. Participants

highlighted the importance of having dialogues with management rather than one-way

monologues.

Figure 14 illustrates that professional relationships affect the engagement of 12

participants in a positive way, but it affects two participants in a negative way.
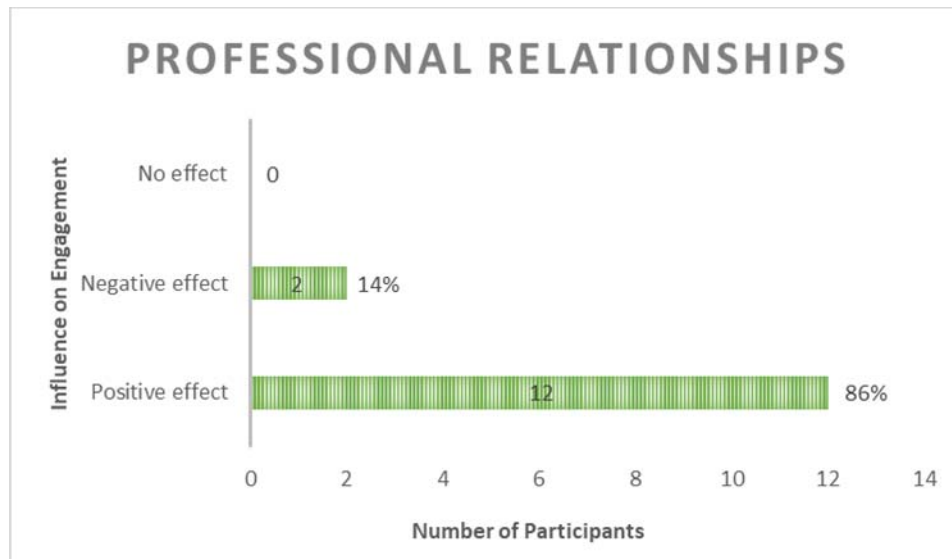
Figure 14. Professional relationships.

Research Question 3

What perceived effect does emotionality in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

Participants shared their thoughts, opinions, and experiences in regard to feeling that they had adequate abilities to perform their job, they had adequate support in maintaining a positive motivational state, and they had adequate support in learning how to overcome challenges in their role, which all alluded to the emotionality component of their job. Having management support and adequate training were the leading responses regarding emotionality in the workplace. According to the interview data, management support helps build confidence, knowledge, and profession growth. Participants shared that having their management's support helped maintain a positive motivational state, maintain optimism, and learn to overcome challenges in their work. One participant indicated his manager goes out of her way to ensure the workload is not too much and constantly checks to see if he needs relief. The participant compared his manager to a

childhood dentist who would always ask whether he was okay as the dental procedure took place. The participant described how his dentist wanted to ensure the pain was tolerable and compared his manager, who is constantly checking to see that he is not overwhelmed, to this dentist. Having management support also helps GCOs overcome the challenges of the work. Knowing that supervisors and managers are there to support makes GCOs feel confident in addressing difficult situations. Interview responses indicate there is a direct link between emotionality and engagement. Participants who felt they had management support and backup had positive emotions and feelings about their workplace, which in turn helped maintain high engagement levels. However, participants who expressed distrust toward management and toward their organizations expressed negative feelings about their workplace, which in turn led to decreased engagement levels.

Participants shared that having confidence in their abilities to perform their job correctly came from their years of experience in the field and led to a positive motivational state in the workplace. Participants shared that throughout their time as a GCO, they have been able to attend trainings, conferences, and seminars, which have helped enhance their skills. One participant indicated she felt 100% confident in her abilities to perform the duties of a GCO because she had received training on the job. Another participant shared feeling absolutely confident in performing the required functions of the role because of her experience and the wide range of knowledge gained from handling different grants, contracts, mechanisms, and sponsors. Participants who believed they had the necessary skills and training for their roles were confident in their abilities. Participants who felt confident in their abilities were comfortable asking

questions and addressing challenging situations. These participants had a positive

motivational state about work and were more engaged than those who were still learning

and were still getting acclimated to the position.

Moreover, participant responses also indicated a direct link between adequate

training and emotionality. Participants expressed training was necessary for their

personal professional development and expressed it was equally necessary in the

departments. GCOs want faculty and department administrators to have adequate

training. This would facilitate the completion of tasks and processes in research

administration. Furthermore, this would eliminate a lot of the "battling" interactions that

take place between faculty and department administrators and the GCOs. If departments

fully understood sponsor agency guidelines and policies, they would understand why

GCOs request changes on grant applications and documentation. Having an

understanding of requirements and processes would allow the departments and the central

office to work collaboratively to complete tasks as effectively and efficiently as possible.

GCOs who worked with department administrators who were cooperative and

understanding expressed higher levels of engagement than those who worked with

department administrators who questioned their recommendations and suggestions.

Figure 15 illustrates that emotionality in the workplace has a positive effect on 13

participants, but it has a negative effect on one participant.

Figure 15. Emotionality in the workplace.

Research Question 4

What perceived effects do aesthetics in the workplace have on engagement levels of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals?

The majority of participants expressed that aesthetics in the workplace affected their engagement levels in some way. Some participants felt their workplace aesthetics affected them negatively, others felt their workplace aesthetics affected them positively, and three participants shared that the workplace aesthetics did not at all affect their engagement levels. Some participants who worked in an office with an open floor plan expressed that this office design hindered communication rather than encouraged it. One participant shared that the short-walled cubicles made it difficult to have conversations with colleagues. The participant indicated that whenever he started to have a quiet conversation with someone, others quickly looked up at them, making it difficult to have a private conversation. Another participant shared that the semi-open space had a reverse effect because although the idea of such a setting was to promote conversation, it actually

hindered it because the participant felt that if he reached out to the person sitting in front, then everyone could hear everything. This led participants to feel there was less privacy. Another participant shared that the open space made it difficult to communicate with colleagues because whenever she started a conversation with a colleague, others would complain about the noise level would even put signs up saying, "Please keep quiet," which hindered open communication.

Conversely, some participants indicated their office aesthetics encouraged communication and collaboration. One participant indicated that aesthetics made a huge difference in engagement and that having colleagues close by made her more engaged. Participants shared that the office aesthetics that seated team members together worked well because it made it easy to talk to neighbors and share stories and questions, which in turn led to increased engagement.

Interview data illustrate a link between workplace aesthetics and engagement. GCOs want to work collaboratively with each other and to do so, they should be within close proximity of each other. GCOs want to sit together so that they can have impromptu discussions about pertinent topics. Participants indicated that sponsor guidelines and policies are ever changing, which is why it is important for GCOs to talk to each other and keep one another updated. The interview data also demonstrate that GCOs prefer high-walled cubicles that offer some level of privacy. GCOs want to feel free having conversations with colleagues without the pressure of being overheard. In sum, workplace settings that seat pre-award members together and have high-wall cubicles render high levels of engagement.

Figure 16 illustrates that workplace aesthetics affect the engagement of four participants in a positive way, affect the engagement of seven participants in a negative way, and have no effect on engagement of three participants.
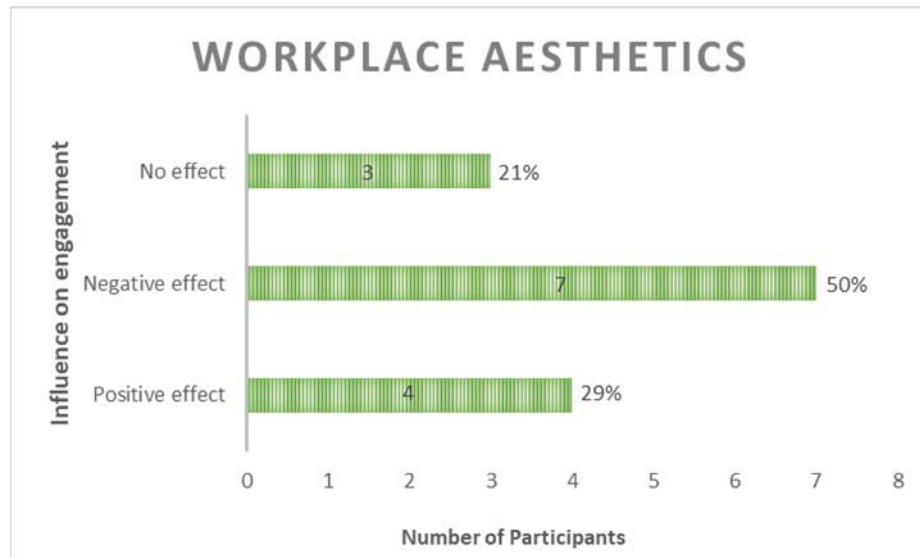

Figure 16. Workplace aesthetics.

Impacts to Organizational Leaders

Employee engagement is a multifaceted concept with various contributing factors. There is not a one-size-fits-all definition or universal concept for engagement. Employees can feel engaged in some areas of their work while simultaneously feeling disengaged in other areas of their work. It is important for organizations to invest in their employees and in employees' engagement in order to maintain optimism and retain talent. This section provides insights and opportunities for leaders to enhance the employee engagement of GCOs in their organizations.

From this study, five specific insights have emerged for public sector leaders to consider in an effort to improve the engagement levels of GCOs. The insights include the

importance of (a) creating a work environment that fosters communication, unity, and collaboration; (b) providing adequate training to DRAs and PIs; (c) enforcing grant proposal submission deadline policies; (d) creating an environment that bridges resistance and fosters appreciation; and (e) decreasing overwhelming workloads. Insights (a) and (d) are mostly behavioral and call for a change of culture or modification of culture. Insights (b) and (c) are mostly behavioral and might have a small financial impact. Insight (e) is more technical and would involve a higher financial impact.

Insight 1

Create a work environment that fosters communication, unity, and collaboration.

Communication, unity, and collaboration are of vital importance in any organization. Robinson et al. (2004) found that the major driver of employee engagement is a sense of feeling valued and involved. Feeling valued and involved can be achieved by work environments that foster communication, unity, and collaboration. It is important for employees to be in sync with the mission and vision of their organization and of their department. Participants expressed a desire to collaborate with teammates. P011 shared that interaction between the pre-award group would be better if everyone who worked together, sat together and were allowed to talk freely. Participant responses illustrate that GCOs want to work with colleagues in unison and collaboration. Research administration is growing in complexity and volume at an exponential rate. Thus, guidelines and policies for federal sponsors and nonprofit sponsors are constantly changing. It is nearly impossible to keep up with all the changes in research administration, which is why collaboration is extremely important. GCOs want to be able to discuss issues, seek advice, and ask questions to other pre-award members. In

order to do so, GCOs need to be seated within close proximity of each other. Sitting close to team members facilitates communication and encourages discussions.

Different GCOs encounter different situations and different issues based on their specific portfolios. Although some GCOs may have grant-heavy portfolios, others may have contract-heavy portfolios. GCOs want to be able to exchange stories about work and provide input on issues other colleagues might be experiencing. Participant responses indicate that working together with colleagues helps them overcome challenges as they can talk through different issues. The data illustrate that constant communication with teammates has helped resolve challenging and unique situations. GCOs expressed seeing different things every day. GCOs want to share their knowledge with each other and want to learn from one another.

Organizations should make it a priority to foster communication, unity, and collaboration. Organizations can achieve environments that foster communication, unity, and collaboration by strategically arranging office space. Leaders can facilitate team collaboration by creating workplace aesthetics that group teams together. In-person interaction is important in communicating with others and is more personal than sending e-mails. Sitting within close proximity of team members allows for in-person contact, which is important for communication and relationship building. According to Development Dimensions International ([DDI], 2005), to create a highly engaged workforce, management should align efforts with strategy, empower employees, and promote and encourage teamwork and collaboration. Thus, organizations should consider modifying workplace aesthetics in a way that allows GCOs to be close to their teammates, which will encourage communication and collaboration. Working in an

office that encourages communication and collaboration fosters high levels of engagement.

Insight 2

Provide an environment that bridges resistance by providing adequate training to DRAs and PIs.

Lack of training can lead to misunderstandings, adversarial encounters, and time-consuming conversations. The data prove that GCOs experience resistance from DRAs and PIs because PIs and DRAs do not understand organizational and sponsor policies, guidelines, and procedures. GCOs are the regulatory group who ensure grant applications and documentation adhere to sponsor agency guidelines. Thus, GCOs are responsible for ensuring all paperwork adheres to the respective administrative requirements. GCOs request revised or updated documentation from DRAs when they are out of compliance. Often, these requests for revisions are taken offensively by the departments who tend to take on a mentality of "us versus them." GCOs are often seen as a hinderance to getting the research done. Faculty and DRAs do not understand why revisions are needed and tend to become disgruntled and often challenge the requests and suggestions made by the GCOs. This constitutes a lack of training. If faculty and DRAs fully understood the guidelines and policies of research administration, they would work collaboratively with GCOs to submit documentation in a timely and efficient manner.

Therefore, organizations should focus on providing adequate training to DRAs and faculty. Organizations can work on providing training on institutional rules, regulations, and policies as well as on sponsor agency rules, regulations, and policies. If DRAs and faculty knew what the administrative requirements in managing grants and

contracts were, they would understand why GCOs make certain requests. According to HayGroup (2001), an enabling environment includes a friendly, well-designed, safe physical space; good equipment; effective communication; and good training. With today's technology, training sessions can be cost-effective and time efficient. If in-person trainings are not feasible, training webinars can be hosted. These would allow trainees to receive adequate training without the hassle of having to spend time traveling to different training sites. Training chatrooms can also be utilized to share important information and answer any administrative questions. Hosting training sessions might have a small financial impact on organizations, but organizational leadership should consider the long-term benefits of having a well-trained research community.

Insight 3

Provide a supportive environment that reduces stress and frustration caused by last-minute grant submissions.

Data collected from participant interviews illustrate that GCOs deal with stressful deadlines and tend to feel they are always "behind the gun." Federal sponsors have specific deadlines with specific cutoff times, which can lead to stress when multiple applications are due on the same day at the same time for the same sponsor. The complexity of grants applications can also increase stress in GCOs. Although some grant applications include small budgets for a minimal number of years, other grant applications can include multimillion-dollar budgets over a maximum number of years and can even involve other collaborating sites. A single grant application may require multiple revisions and back-and-forth communication with the DRA and PI. Thus, time management is of the essence when reviewing multiple grant applications.

Participants indicated that late submissions were extremely common and that although their offices had policies in place regarding internal submission deadlines, they were not followed. It is very common for GCOs to receive last-minute applications that are within hours of a submission deadline. One participant shared that his organization "had a little bit of a bark but no bite." The participant described that his organization did not have any real repercussions for late submittals. Participating GCOs shared that their organizations once contemplated having consequences for last-minute grant application submissions, but they were never implemented. Further, GCOs depicted a lack of organizational support in terms of late applications. For instance, if a well-known PI wanted to submit a last-minute application, the organization would allow it. This kind of work environment causes GCOs to feel overwhelmed, stressed, and frustrated.

Potential solutions to this problem require a culture change. In order to alleviate the burden and stress of last-minute submissions, organizations should consider enforcing repercussions for late grant application submissions. PIs and DRAs would have to become accustomed to submitting grant applications in a timely manner, which would allow a GCO to conduct a comprehensive review of the application in a timely manner. Being able to conduct full comprehensive reviews of grant applications would help ensure administrative compliance, which could help achieve successful applications that lead to research funding. A potential solution to this recurring issue would be to start charging a fee for late application submissions. The late fee could require the approval of the department chair in order to raise awareness of late submissions. This solution would discourage PIs from submitting last-minute applications and would encourage them to plan ahead of time. A second potential solution to this issue would be for organizations

to offer incentives to investigators who submit early or timely applications. Timely

submissions could be set as a recurring goal in the annual appraisals of investigators.

This would encourage them to submit applications on time as it would directly affect

their annual performance appraisals. A final and more drastic solution to this issue would

be to implement a rejection policy. Research administration leadership could implement

a policy that indicates last-minute grant applications will be rejected and will not be

submitted to the sponsor agency. This would require PIs to work with their DRAs to

draft a budget and application for internal submission in advance of the sponsor deadline.

Riggs (2013) posited that for workplace accountability to exist, leadership must

create a culture of accountability. If company leadership does not establish that culture, it

is highly unlikely that employees will do so themselves. Thus, a system that holds PIs

and DRAs accountable for their late submissions needs to be established by the

organization's leadership. This would reduce the stress and frustration GCOs constantly

experience. Further, timely submissions would allow GCOs to conduct full and

comprehensive reviews of grant applications, which would only add value to the

application submittals.

Insight 4

Create a work environment that fosters appreciation and acknowledgement.

Compliments can go a long way. Haines and St-Onge (2012) indicated that

rewards and recognition directly affect employee engagement and performance. These

findings indicate employees wish to feel appreciated and valued when performing daily

tasks. Further, Bolman and Deal (2014) posited that the need for autonomy, intrinsic

rewards, and influence are required to achieve employee engagement. Interviewing

GCOs expressed feeling a lack of appreciation and even respect from faculty and DRAs. P010 shared that he was a DRA before becoming a GCO. P010 shared that he felt more appreciated and respected when working in the department than when working in the central office. Faculty and DRAs seem to not realize the efforts and time GCOs dedicate to managing research projects. Reviewing and submitting last-minute applications is a stressful task. Participants expressed having to review a full application within extreme time constraints, which often leads to stress and frustration. Despite the stress and frustration, the job still gets done and applications are still submitted.

Thus, it is important for organizations to foster environments where GCOs feel respected, valued, and appreciated. Kahn's (1990) ethnographic study showed that camp counselors found meaningfulness diminished when the campers communicated a lack of care, respect, or appreciation for the counselors' work. Similar results were found in this research study. GCOs felt undervalued and underappreciated when faculty and department administrators questioned their requests and when they did not thank them for their help. A simple "thank you" would help GCOs feel appreciated for their hard work.

Therefore, in order to improve the engagement of GCOs, research administration leadership should focus on making GCOs feel valued and appreciated. One potential solution would be for organizations to host monthly or even quarterly meetings with the research community where they nominate one GCO for that specific period and present them with a certificate of appreciation and small gift. Leadership could give a short speech on why that specific GCO was nominated and could also highlight specific accomplishments for that period. This would help make GCOs feel appreciated and would also raise morale and engagement levels.

Another potential solution to fostering an environment of appreciation would be to host a lunch-in for GCOs on Research Administration Day. Research Administration Day is observed annually on September 25 and is a day to acknowledge and celebrate research administrators for their daily contributions. Haines and St-Onge (2012) posited that recognition fosters engagement; thus, hosting a special lunch for GCOs where research administration leaders recognize and highlight the achievements of the pre-award team could help make them feel appreciated and help improve their engagement levels.

Insight 5

Create an environment that helps maintain the physical and mental well-being of GCOs.

Participants expressed handling big portfolios and tremendous volumes of work. The data collected indicated the workload led them to work past regular business hours including late nights and weekends. According to Ireland (2018), spending long hours at work might help meet deadlines, but those long hours can affect both physical and mental health. Ireland indicated that when one spends a significant part of one's day working, there is not enough time to rest and recharge before facing the challenges of a new day, and this can lead to mental and physical problems. GCOs are overworked and often work late hours and on weekends to keep up with the work and avoid feeling overwhelmed throughout the workweek. P002 shared that the volume of work was tremendous and that her office needed more bodies to do the work. Experiencing feelings of frustration and stress affect engagement negatively, which is why it is important for organizations to focus on reducing the overwhelming workloads of GCOs.

A potential solution that organizations should consider is a business process change. GCOs often find themselves doing departmental work in order to speed up processes and submissions. Organizations could create an additional level of documentation and application review prior to being routed for GCO review. Organizations could appoint one or two people in the department to conduct the first level of review and handle all budgetary and ancillary revisions. Once the initial review was complete, it could be routed to the GCO for administrative compliance review. This would allow GCOs to focus on organizational compliance issues and would eliminate redundant communications between faculty and GCOs. This business process change could help improve time effectiveness and efficiency by eliminating redundant tasks and communications currently handled by GCOs.

Another potential solution would be for organizations to consider hiring more full-time employees. Hiring more GCOs would allow research administration leadership to distribute overwhelming workloads among two or three GCOs. This would help create balanced and more manageable workloads. Although this solution would have a financial impact on organizations because of additional salaries and benefits, organizations should consider investing in growing their workforce. Recruiting more employees could help eliminate feelings of stress and frustration caused by tremendous workloads. Creating manageable workloads could help organizations retain talent by maintaining engaged employees.

Recommendations for Future Research

Employee engagement is critical to any organization and has emerged as one of the greatest challenges in today's workplace (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Kahn (1990)

first introduced the concept of *engagement* as the way in which people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. Research studies on employee engagement for various professions have been conducted. However, research in the research administration field is scarce and the research that exists has focused on the DRA and PI roles. Findings from this study added important insights and knowledge to the existing body of literature related to the concept of employee engagement. This research study focused on a population that had not been examined before—GCOs. The research study explored employee engagement from the perspective of a GCO and yielded new data. Continued study is suggested to validate these findings.

Recommendations for future study include conducting a phenomenological study of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals located in different states of the country. The research study was conducted in four nonprofit hospitals that were listed as four of the top 10 recipients in federal grant awards and monies. Researchers could examine GCO engagement in nonprofit hospitals with lower numbers of federal awards and monies. Researchers could conduct in-depth interviews to gather data on the perceptions of engagement among participants and determine the potential factors that affect their engagement levels. Researchers could explore engagement levels of GCOs by examining the effects of professional relationships, emotionality, and workplace aesthetics in the engagement levels of GCOs in smaller nonprofit hospitals.

Another area for future research would be to examine engagement in GCOs using different frameworks. This research study examined the factors that affect engagement in GCOs by exploring the effects of professional relationships, the effects of emotionality in

the workplace, and the aesthetics of the workplace. Researchers could replicate this study and conduct an explorative phenomenological study to examine engagement by exploring different factors that can potentially affect engagement.

Another area for future research would be to explore the engagement in GCOs by focusing on their work locations. Researchers could examine the engagement levels of GCOs who work in an office and the engagement levels of GCOs who work remotely. Researchers could examine whether there is a difference in engagement levels in GCOs who work in the office environment and those who work at home and note any differences and/or similarities. Further, researchers could compare the results of this research study to those of a future study focusing on the work location.

Finally, a study could be conducted to examine the engagement of a different role in research administration. Research administration is a vast field with various roles and positions. Different roles that exist within research administration include PIs, DRAs, GCOs, post-award analysts, accountants, compliance personnel, and regulatory review board personnel. Different institutions have different infrastructures and may have different working titles for these prevalent roles that are significant in research administration. Future researchers could examine the perceptions of engagement of different roles in research administration and create a comparison between the results of their study and the results of existing studies on investigators, DRAs, and GCOs.

Summary

This study was a qualitative study using an explorative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of GCOs in nonprofit hospitals. Fourteen participants described their experiences and perceptions of engagement from the

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perspective of a GCO. Participants shared their perspectives on engagement and shared their perceptions on professional relationships, emotionality in the workplace, and workplace aesthetics. Participants indicated whether and how the afore-mentioned factors affected their engagement levels. Words commonly used by participants in describing their perceptions and experiences regarding employee engagement included think, people, know, years, different, time, award, training, grant and a lot.

The data collected prove employee engagement is important to GCOs. The data demonstrate that positive professional relationships, positive emotionality, and workplace aesthetics that foster collaboration and communication lead to employee engagement. The study findings are consistent with Kahn's (1990) concept of engagement, which indicates that engagement promotes one's physical, cognitive, and emotional connections to work and others.

The study findings illustrate the factors that affect engagement in GCOs working in nonprofit hospitals. The data collected prove (a) GCOs want to be engaged in their workplace; (b) professional relationships with colleagues, emotionality in the workplace, and workplace aesthetics affect engagement; (c) engagement increases when GCOs work in an environment that fosters support and collegiality; (d) GCOs want to work collaboratively with department administrators and faculty; (e) GCOS want to work in an environment that allows for privacy and encourages team communication and collaboration; and (f) GCOs handle tremendous workloads that lead to stress; more employees are needed to alleviate the overwhelming workloads.

Employee engagement is crucial; thus, it should be a priority for research administration leaders to work on keeping their GCOs engaged. Engagement can

potentially be improved by creating organizational cultures that foster appreciation, communication, and collaboration. Organizational leaders should (a) create work environments that foster communication, unity, and collaboration; (b) provide an environment that bridges resistance by providing adequate training to DRAs and faculty; (c) provide a supportive environment that reduces stress and frustration caused by last-minute grant submissions; (d) create a work environment that fosters appreciation and acknowledgement; and (e) create an environment that helps maintain the physical and mental well-being of GCOs.

First, it is important for GCOs to be able to discuss issues, seek advice, and ask questions to other pre-award members about pressing and/or new issues. Sitting within close proximity of teammates allows for collaborative communication. Organizational leaders can work on creating workplace aesthetics that seat pre-award members together, which will foster communication, unity, and collaboration through interactive discussions about work. Second, GCOs want to work collaboratively with DRAs and faculty and want to be seen as part of their team and not as an impediment. Organizational leaders can focus on improving these working relationships by providing adequate training to departments. Various methods of training can be used to educate department administrators and faculty on sponsor agency guidelines, policies, and procedures, which will help them better understand the role of GCOs and the reasons for their requests and recommendations. Third, the stress and frustration GCOs constantly experience because of late application submissions can be reduced by enforcing internal application submission deadlines. Organizational leaders should hold faculty accountable for last-minute submissions. Research administration leaders can devote efforts to address this

issue by offering faculty incentives, by implementing a late-submission fee, and/or by addressing submittals in faculty members' annual performance appraisals. Fourth, GCOs want to feel valued and appreciated for their hard work. Organizational leaders can focus on achieving this by hosting monthly or quarterly meetings and implementing an employee of the month/quarter program and/or by observing Research Administration Day that involves a lunch-in for GCOs. Finally, GCOs want workloads that are more manageable, which will help maintain their physical and mental well-being by reducing stress and frustration caused by overwhelming volumes of work. Organizational leaders can work on this by implementing business process changes and/or by hiring more GCOs.

Organizations should invest in their employees in order to retain years' worth of talent and experience. GCOs with appropriate experience, skillsets, and talents are crucial to providing successful oversight of research awards, grants, and contracts. Thus, organizations should make improving engagement in GCOs a priority. GCOs who experience positive emotionality in the workplace, positive professional relationships, and workplace aesthetics that foster communication and collaboration will lead to engaged employees. GCOs value their work and want to be engaged. GCOs want to contribute to the greater good and to making a difference in society by assisting PIs in securing funding that will lead to innovative research that will improve healthcare. GCOs want to assist faculty in making a difference in peoples' lives by providing expertise and administrative oversight of research work that will enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness. Engaged GCOs will lead to happy employees who oversee

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millions of dollars in federal funding and who ensure institutional compliance, which will

contribute to the institution's success.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Participant Recruitment Request

To   Non-Profit Hospital Controlling Agent   Bcc

Cc

Grant & Contract Officer- Recruitment Request

Dear Mr./Mrs [Name of Controlling Agent],

My name is Tansy N. Aguilar Palencia, and I am a doctoral candidate at California Baptist
University, Online and Professional Studies. I am working on a doctorate in public administration. I am conducting a research
study entitled: Employee Engagement: An Exploration in Engagement of Research Administration- Grant & Contract Officers

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of employee
engagement from the perspective of a Grant & Contract Officer. I am requesting your permission to contact the Grant & Contract
Officers currently employed at your organization to solicit their participation in this research study.

Your agreement in allowing me to recruit your grant & contract officers for this study is strictly voluntary. The participation of
your grant & contract officers in this study is also strictly voluntary. If your employees choose not to participate or withdraw from
the study, they can do so at any time without penalty or loss of benefit to them or to the organization. The results of this research
study may be published but the names of your employees, your organization's name, and/ or any other identifiable information
will never be disclosed to any outside party.

There are no foreseeable risks to your employees from participating in this research. Although there may be no direct benefit to
them, their involvement may contribute knowledge of grant & contract officer engagement. As a token of appreciation for their
time, they will receive a $10 gift card to Starbucks.

If you agree to allow me to recruit grant & contract officers from your organization, please digitally sign and return to me the
enclosed research agreement by e-mail. If you agree to allow me to recruit grant & contract officers from your organization, kindly
confirm if the grant & contract officers listed below are current and please confirm if their contact information is also current:

Grant & Contract Officer Name	Grant & Contract Officer Name
Grant & Contract Officer Email	Grant & Contract Officer Email
Grant & Contract Officer Name	Grant & Contract Officer Name
Grant & Contract Officer Email	Grant & Contract Officer Email
Grant & Contract Officer Name	Grant & Contract Officer Name
Grant & Contract Officer Email	Grant & Contract Officer Email

I sincerely hope that you grant me permission to recruit grant and contract officers from your organization and look forward to
hearing you!

If you have any questions on the research study, please feel free to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

Tansy N. Aguilar Palencia

APPENDIX B

Research Agreement

To: Institutional Review Board, California Baptist University

Re: Non-profit hospital controlling agent

Date:

Subject: Consent to recruit from organization

To Whom It May Concern:

I, <u>Name of controlling agent</u>, agree to allow Tansy N. Aguilar Palencia to recruit participants from [Organization] for the study entitled "Employee Engagement: An Exploration in Engagement of Research Administration- Grant & Contract Officers". I understand Ms. Aguilar Palencia will be recruiting grant & contract officer participants from non-profit hospitals in Boston, Massachusetts. I understand that individuals may be contacted to solicit their participation in this research project. I am also aware and understand the benefits, risks, and time involved in participation in this study. I understand that individual participation is contingent upon voluntary and informed consent.

Ms. Aguilar Palencia has assured me that no participant names and/or organizations will ever be made public and all identities will remain confidential. I am fully aware of the procedure and agree to allow interviews to be conducted in the manner approved by CBU's IRB (as described in the protocol).

Please contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

[Signature and date]

APPENDIX C

Recruitment E-Mail/Flyer

Participants are needed in a Research Study:

Employee Engagement: An Exploration in Engagement of Research Administration- Grant & Contract Officers

I am a doctoral student at California Baptist University and conducting a study of Grant & Contract Officer Employee Engagement

I am seeking employees of Boston Non-profit hospitals who are:

- *Full-Time Permanent Employees*
- *Who are over the age of 18*
- *Who are Grant & Contract Officers at any experience level*

What: My dissertation research involves exploring the lived experiences of grant & contract officers working in non-profit hospitals.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to understand from your perspective the factors that cause you to feel engaged in your current role and duties as a grant & contract officer.

How: During the month of November 2019 I will fly out to Boston to meet Participants who will be involved in an in-person interview at a local coffee shop of your choice!

All participants will receive a $10 Starbucks gift card as a token of my appreciation for your time and contribution to my research study.

Please see attachments for more information. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me

Thank you in advance for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you soon!

APPENDIX D

Initial Letter of Introduction

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Tansy N. Aguilar Palencia, and I am a doctoral candidate at California Baptist University, Online and Professional Studies. I am working on a doctorate in public administration. I am conducting a research study entitled: Employee Engagement: An Exploration in Engagement of Research Administration- Grant & Contract Officers.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of employee engagement from the perspective of a Grant & Contract Officer. I am soliciting your participation in a 90-minute interview that will involve answering 15 questions about employee engagement.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, you can do so without penalty or loss of benefit to yourself. The results of this research study may be published but your name, your organization's name or any other identifiable information will never be disclosed to any outside party.

There are no foreseeable risks to you from participating in this research. Although there may be no direct benefit to you, your involvement may contribute knowledge of grant & contract officer engagement. As a token of appreciation for your time, you will receive a $10 gift card to Starbucks.

If you choose to participate, please digitally sign and email back the attached Informed Consent Agreement. Interviews will be conducted in-person at a mutually agreeable date and time at a local coffee shop for your convenience.

I sincerely hope that you will participate and look forward to hearing your experiences!

If you have any questions on the research study, please feel free to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

Tansy N. Aguilar Palencia

APPENDIX E

Participant Informed Consent

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

Study Title: Employee Engagement: An Exploration in Engagement of Research Administration- Grant & Contract Officers

Researcher: Tansy N. Aguilar Palencia

Dear Prospective Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Tansy N. Aguilar Palencia at California Baptist University Online and Professional Studies, Doctorate of Public Administration program. I hope to learn how grant & contract officers view employee engagement. For the purpose of this study, grant & contract officers are defined as employees greater than 18 years old, who work in the office of research administration and provide institutional administrative grant support to faculty, staff, and departments. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because I want to focus solely on studying grant & contract officers working in non-profit hospitals.

What are the next steps once you choose to participate in this study

- Your participation will involve an in-person interview or an online interview in which you will give your honest response to 15 interview questions regarding employee engagement.
  - In-person interviews will be conducted at a local coffee shop of your choice.
    The researcher will fly out to Boston, Massachusetts from Los Angeles, California to meet you in person!
- Your participation will take 90 minutes or less.
- Your participation is strictly voluntary.
  - It is your choice to participate in this research or choose not to.
  - If you choose to participate, you may change your mind and leave the study at any time.
  - You may skip any questions you do not want to answer.
  - Refusal to participate or leaving during the interview process will not cause any negative consequences.
- Strict procedures are in place to protect your privacy and confidentiality
- Your responses to the questions will never be linked or identified to you or your organization.
  - In the research document, responses will refer to an alphanumeric coding system.

- All interviews will be audio recorded for accuracy purposes only.
  - Your recorded interview will be downloaded and saved using a password protected file. The file name will refer only to the assigned alphanumeric code and the date of the interview.
- The researcher is the only one who will have access to the cross reference between the alphanumeric codes and participant names. This information will never be made public.
- The researcher will destroy all electronic and paper documents five years after publishing the study by shredding paper documents and deleting electronic files.
- You will not be paid for participating in this research study. You will receive a $10 Starbucks gift card as a token of appreciation for your time. The gift card will be emailed to you at the conclusion of the interview.

We cannot promise any benefits to you for taking part in this research. However, we believe this research will contribute to the understanding of employee engagement from the perspective of a grant and contract officer.

There are no reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences as a result of participating in this research study. Although I do not anticipate any risks, if you experience discomfort, you may contact me (the researcher), or the CBU Counseling Center (951-689-1120, https://www.calbaptist.edu/counseling-center/).

The researcher is Tansy N. Aguilar Palencia. The Chair overseeing this research is Dr. Elaine Ahumada. Please feel free to contact one or both of them if you have questions, concerns, complaints, feel harmed, or would like to talk to any member of the research team.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at California Baptist University (IRB # XXX-XXXX-EXP). They can be reached at by emailing irb@calbaptist.edu if your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team, if you cannot reach the research team, if you want to talk to someone besides the research team, or if you have questions about your rights as a research participant.

What are the next steps once you choose to participate in this study:

The researcher will need a signed **Statement of Consent** which confirms that the researcher has explained the purpose of this research and the intended outcome.

- The Participant understands that upon receiving the signed Statement of Consent, the researcher will contact me by email to establish a mutually agreeable date and time to participate in an in-person interview.
- The Participant understands that the researcher will ask questions about experiences as a grant & contract officer in a non-profit hospital.
- The Participant acknowledges that **ALL INTERVIEWS WILL BE AUDIO RECORDED** and that all audio recordings will be used for research purposes and

will not be used outside the research project.
- The Participants participation in this study should take about 90 minutes or less.
- The Participant understands that their responses will be confidential and that anonymity will be preserved by using an alphanumeric code in all writings that pertain to the research findings.
- The Participant acknowledges that their name and their organization's name will not be associated with any results of this study.
- The Participant may contact the researchers or irb@calbaptist.edu for additional questions.

By digitally signing this form, you acknowledge that you have read the informed consent, you understand the nature of the study, your interview will be audio taped and the potential risks to you as a participant, and the means by which your identity will be kept confidential. Your signature on this form also indicates that you are 18 years old or older and that you give your permission voluntarily to serve as a participant in the study described.

X_____
Please sign here if you <u>consent</u> to participate in the study

Please email this form back to me if you agree to participate. I will then contact you by email to set up a mutually agreeable date and time to conduct the interview.

Thank you for your consideration,

Tansy N. Aguilar Palencia

APPENDIX F

Confidentiality Statement

As a researcher working on a study titled: Employee Engagement: An Exploration in Engagement of Research Administration- Grant & Contract Officers at California Baptist University, I understand that I must maintain the confidentiality of all information concerning research participants as required by law. Only the California Baptist University Institutional Review Board may have access to this information. "Confidential Information" of participants includes but is not limited to: names, characteristics, or other identifying information accrued either directly or indirectly through contact with any participant, and/or any other information that by its nature would be considered confidential.

To maintain the confidentiality of information, I hereby agree to refrain from discussing or disclosing any Confidential Information regarding research participants, to any individual who is not part of the above research study or in need of the information for the expressed purposes on the research program. This includes having a conversation regarding the research project or its participants in a place where such a discussion might be overheard; or discussing any Confidential Information in a way that would allow an unauthorized person to associate (either correctly or incorrectly) an identity with such information. I further agree to store research records whether paper, electronic or otherwise in a secure locked location under my direct control and with appropriate safe guards. I agree that I will immediately report any known or suspected breach of this confidentiality statement regarding the above research project to the California Baptist University Institutional Review Board.

_____
Signature of Researcher   Printed Name   Date

_____
Signature of Witness   Printed Name   Date

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APPENDIX G

Research Participants' Bill of Rights

Your Right as a Research Participant
If you are asked to consent to be a subject in a research study, you have the following rights:

1. To have enough time to decide whether or not to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.
2. To refuse to be in the study at all, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.
3. To be told what the study is trying to find out, what will happen to you, and what you will be asked to do if you are in the study.
4. To ask any questions concerning the research purposes and procedures.
5. Be given a copy of any signed and dated written consent form related to the research.
6. To be told about the reasonably foreseeable risks of being in the study.
7. To be told about the possible benefits of being in the study.
8. To be told whether there are any costs associated with being in the study and whether you will be compensated for participating in the study.
9. To be told who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.
10. To be told whom to contact with questions about the research, about research related injuries, and about your rights as a research subject.

Your Responsibilities as a Research Participant
1. Completely read the consent form and ask the Principal Investigator (PI) any questions you may have. You should understand what will happen to you during the study before you agree to participate.
2. Know the dates when your study participation starts and ends.
3. Carefully weigh the possible benefits (if any) and risks of being in the study.
4. Talk to the PI if you want to stop being part of the research study.
5. Contact the PI and/or the California Baptist University Institutional Review Board (IRB) with complaints or concerns about your participation in the study.
6. Report to the PI immediately any and all problems you may be having with the study procedures.
7. Fulfill the responsibilities of participation as described on the consent forms unless you are stopping your participation in the study.
8. Ask for the results of the study, if you want them.
9. Keep a copy of the consent form for your records.

The Principal Investigator's Responsibilities

The PI is the individual who is responsible for a research study. The PI is required to:

1. Follow the California Baptist University IRB-approved research study plan.
2. Obtain informed consent from all study participants.
3. Maintain the confidentiality of study participants.
4. Quickly respond to all participant concerns and questions.
5. Tell participants about changes to the risks or benefits of the study.
6. Get approval from the California Baptist University IRB for any changes to the study.
7. Promptly report all unanticipated problems or research-related injuries to the IRB.
8. Keep research records for five (5) years after the study is over.
9. Comply with all California Baptist University procedures for the ethical conduct of
   human subject research.

Interview Protocol and Script

STUDY TITLE: **Employee Engagement: An Exploration in Engagement of Research Administration- Grant & Contract Officers**

TIME OF INTERVIEW: _____   DATE: _____

GENDER: _____   HIGHEST EDUCATION LEVEL OBTAINED: _____

YEARS/MONTHS AT THE [ORGANIZATION]: _____

CURRENT POSITION: _____ HOW LONG IN CURRENT ROLE: _____

The following provides an outline to guide the interview process for each participant to maintain consistency.

I. Introduction

Welcome and overview of session:

Hello and Thank you for your participation in my research study on employee engagement. My name is Tansy N. Aguilar Palencia. I am a doctoral candidate at the California Baptist University, Online and Professional Studies. I am working on a doctorate of public administration. You have read, acknowledged, and signed the Inform Consent letter that explains the intent and characteristics of the study, as well as the authorization form to audiotape this interview. I will ask you 15 questions regarding employee engagement from a grant & contract officer's perspective. Today's discussion will be conducted within a 90 minutes timeframe. When we get close to the end time of the appointment, I will let you know. We will not go beyond that time unless you agree to do so.

Background:

Scientists across the United States and the world are conducting wide-ranging research to improve the health of our nation, which is causing research to grow at an exponential rate. As a result, research administration and the Grant and Contract Officer (GCO) profession are concurrently growing at a rapid speed. The higher demand for GCOs makes their role essential in research administration, which in turn, highlights the importance of employee engagement in order to retain them in the offices of research administration. It is imperative that leaders understand how to engage grant and contract officers.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore a grant and contract officer's experience with employee engagement and the factors that may affect engagement. Grant and contract officers in this study will be defined as employees who are over the age of 18.

Ground Rules:

Please be aware, your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without fear of penalty or loss of benefit to you. All responses will be kept confidential. For your participation, you will receive a $10 gift card to Starbucks which will be emailed to you at the conclusion of the interview. Feel free to disclose as much about your experiences as you feel comfortable. Any reference to your responses contributing to the study will be coded and any identifiable information will be removed.

If there are any questions that you cannot answer or do not feel comfortable answering, we can skip over those questions. In addition, I may be taking notes during our conversation and audio recording it for a transcript. There are no foreseeable risks to you from participating in this study.

There are no incorrect responses; say whatever comes to mind. I will retain all notes and audio tapes and no names will appear on the final report. Again, our discussion will focus on a grant and contract officer's experience with employee engagement.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

II. Interview Questions

1. What have been your experiences as a grant & contract officer in research administration?
2. What factors (both personally and professionally) influence your engagement level at work?
3. How long have you been in your profession? Do you notice a difference in your level of engagement based on the number of years you have been a grant & contract officer? If so, what do you feel are the causes?
4. Describe your professional relationships with faculty and department research administrators. Please explain.
5. Describe the organizational culture of your workplace. Please explain. (Probe: can you tell me about your workspace and your perceptions about that?)
6. Do you feel you have adequate interactions with faculty and department research administrators to most effectively carry out your duties as a grant & contract officer and provide the best service to department research administrators and faculty? Why or Why not?

7. Do you feel you have adequate confidence in your abilities to perform the required functions and responsibilities as a grant and contract officer? Why or Why not?
8. Do you feel you receive adequate support in maintaining a positive motivational state for accomplishing goals as a grant and contract officer? Why or Why not?
9. Do you feel you receive adequate support in maintaining optimism to most effectively carry out your duties as a grant & contract officer and provide the best service to faculty and department research administrators? Why or Why not?
10. Do you feel you receive adequate support in learning how to overcome positive and negative challenges in your work as a grant and contract officer? Why or Why not?
11. Do you feel your workplace aesthetics affect your engagement level as a grant and contract officer? Why or Why not? (Probe: do you feel your workspace allows you to effectively carry out your duties/provide the best service to faculty and DRAs?)
12. Have there been any investigators or department research administrators that you have advised during your tenure as a grant & contract officer who have left an unforgettable mark and inspired you to continue as a grant & contract officer? If so, why?
13. What do you think is important for faculty and department research administrators to understand about the role of grant & contract officers that you feel they may not understand and in what ways can they help you to be successful in your job?
14. What do you think is the most important thing for new grant & contract officers to understand before entering the field?

III. Debriefing

Thank you for your participation. The information and responses you shared with me today will remain confidential. I will not use your name, your organization name or any other identifying information in the dissertation. I will be emailing your Starbucks gift card to your email account.

APPENDIX I

Instrumentation

In a qualitative research project there are no specific predetermined instruments. Instead, the researcher becomes the key instrument in the collection of data. To gain an understanding of the lived experiences of grant & contract officers, this research project will utilize a semi-structured interview process with 15 open-ended questions. The interview questions are intended to be non-threatening. The semi-structured format will enable the PI to ask follow-up questions and probes to clarify a response or provide further understanding to the participant. An open-ended question cannot be answered with a "yes" or "no" thus, it enables participants to provide meaningful, well thought out responses to the questions asked. According to Irving Seidman, interviews are at the root of understanding the lived-experience of other people and a way to offer meaning to their experiences. Through this interview process, grant & contract officer participants will be able to vocalize and tell their experience from their own point of view. The following interview questions will be used.

Interview Questions

1. What have been your experiences as a grant & contract officer in research administration?
2. What factors (both personally and professionally) influence your engagement level at work?
3. How long have you been in your profession? Do you notice a difference in your level of engagement based on the number of years you have been a grant & contract officer? If so, what do you feel are the causes?
4. Describe your professional relationships with faculty and department research administrators. Please explain.
5. Describe your workspace. Please explain
6. Do you feel you have adequate interactions with faculty and department research administrators to most effectively carry out your duties as a grant & contract officer and provide the best service to department research administrators and faculty? Why or Why not?
7. Do you feel you have adequate work space to most effectively carry out your duties as a grant & contract officer and provide the best service to faculty and department research administrators? Why or Why not?
8. Do you feel you have adequate confidence in your abilities to perform the required functions and responsibilities as a grant and contract officer? Why or Why not?
9. Do you feel you receive adequate support in maintaining a positive motivational state for accomplishing goals as a grant and contract officer? Why or Why not?
10. Do you feel you receive adequate support in maintaining optimism to most effectively carry out your duties as a grant & contract officer and provide the best service to faculty and department research administrators? Why or Why not?

11. Do you feel you receive adequate support in learning how to overcome positive and negative challenges in your work as a grant and contract officer? Why or Why not?

12. Do you feel your workplace aesthetics affect your engagement level as a grant and contract officer? Why or Why not?

13. Have there been any investigators or department research administrators that you have advised during your tenure as a grant & contract officer who have left an unforgettable mark and inspired you to continue as a grant & contract officer? If so, why?

14. What do you think is important for faculty and department research administrators to understand about the role of grant & contract officers that you feel they may not understand and in what ways can they help you to be successful in your job?

15. What do you think is the most important thing for new grant & contract officers to understand before entering the field?