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## Measuring Employee Engagement and Adaptive Leadership During Higher Education's Accountability and Performance Era

Karine Sandra Stukes

University of North Florida, ladouceka@gmail.com

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Measuring Employee Engagement and Adaptive Leadership During Higher Education's

Accountability and Performance Era

by

Karine Stukes

A Dissertation submitted to the Department of Leadership,

School Counseling & Sport Management

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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This dissertation titled Measuring Employee Engagement and Adaptive Leadership During Higher Education's Accountability and Performance Era is approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Amanda Pascale, Committee Chair

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Amanda Kulp, Committee Member 1

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Elizabeth Gregg, Committee Member 2

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Matthew Ohlson, Committee Member 3

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DEDICATION

*To My Family and My Loved Ones*

*Whose Encouragement, Support, and Prayers Kept Me Going.*

*Fly High and Happy Landing.*

*And to*

*My Heavenly Father Above,*

*It is to You I Give the Glory.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- To my grandparents, who created an army of sweet butterflies—the *Ladouceur Family* and the *Papillon Family*. *L'union fait la force!* To my parents—I cherish you two always. To my Uncles and Aunties—I thank each and every one of you for being my footprints in the sand. To my sisters, my brother, my brilliant niece and nephews; and to my vast multitude of cousins. You each hold your own special place in my heart. Thank you for being my army and my village.
- To my Stukes Family who showers me with an abundance of love—with humility and grace I thank you.
- To my closest friends who mean so much more—thank you all for not giving up on me through the challenges and obstacles.

And to my husband, Dr. Stukes, DPT. It will take a lifetime to thank you for all that you have done for me. You have my heart now and forever—143.

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## **Abstract**

Back in 2015, the Board of Governors for the state of Florida implemented new funding policy within its public state university system, as a mechanism to hold institutions accountable to their performance. According to the performance-funding policy, lower performing institutions were at risk of losing state funding if university metrics were not met. This challenging accountability and performance environment can cause much strife within lower-performing institutions, where it is relevant to explore positive workforce strategies that keep university employees engaged in the work that is needed to get the job done while keeping employees adaptive to challenges presented to them. Thus, this research study asserts the concepts and practices of employee engagement and adaptive leadership, as two constructs that can drive institutional success. This research uses the Work & Well-being Survey (UWES-17) and Northouse's Adaptive Leadership Questionnaire to present a quantitative study of an engagement-leadership framework among participants at a public state university. This study presents a correlation analysis and hierarchical multiple linear regression model to explore the relationship between employee engagement and adaptive leadership. Results indicate a moderate relationship between the two constructs, and adaptive leadership is a significant predictor of employee engagement. In this case the implications lead to four recommendations for future research. Overall, it is imperative that employees on all levels of organizations are engaged in their work, and more so that leadership capacity is fully harnessed within institutions. And as the model of adaptive leadership prescribes practical leader behaviors that can be exuded by individuals of all backgrounds and of various job roles within the institutions, it is most relevant to consider how these adaptive actions of employees are related to higher levels of engagement

with the aim to drive institutional success. Conclusively, findings from this study validate the need for higher education practitioners to facilitate effective workforce strategies that focus on implementing leadership practices for all employees to engage in for the sake of accountability, performance, and the like.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Debate regarding higher education administration is exacerbated during times of political contention and economic downturn. Over the past few decades public American universities have experienced drastic decreases in the financial support that they receive from their state (Thelin, 2011). Less state support results in institutions increasing their tuition costs where the burden of paying for college falls on students and their families. The rising cost of a public college education for taxpayers, in turn, prompts legislators, governors, and coordinating boards to “act as stewards of the public good for higher education” (Heller, 2011, p. 154) increasing levels of scrutiny towards institutions, in an attempt to ensure that universities are efficiently using funds to effectively meet the needs of students, stakeholders, and society at large. The effect of increased scrutiny by stewards of higher education creates an environment of accountability for institutions, where internally accountability is viewed negatively—a process of control by administration who are using regulations and financial resources to dictate how universities should perform (Heller, 2011). The pressure for accountability is pervasive in academia and institutions are required to better demonstrate their performance, what they do and how well they do it. These circumstances leave institutions vulnerable to changes in expectations for productivity and require employees at universities (or, *university employees*—referring to employees who hold administrative roles throughout various levels of institutions) to be nimble should priorities shift, if they are to remain accountable over their performance and secure financial support.

## **Holding Universities Accountable to Their Performance**

The twenty-first century shows no lessening of interest among higher education governing boards in requiring institutions to use various processes to assess the performance of universities. Stakeholders continue to generate practices to ensure that institutions are successful, where success may be indicated when universities operate under quality standards, promote student learning outcomes, and reach mandated university metrics (Layzell, 2007). However, there is no single indicator that definitively represents what an individual institution has done, so university performance is evaluated using a wide range of measurements that many believe are important for determining institutional success and improvement (MUP Center, n.d.). Relatively, to improve productivity at an institution, university employees involve themselves in their work and complete a number of steps that taken together may exhibit their engagement with the work incorporated to stay accountable and respond to performance demands. For instance, there has been research that studied what institutions were doing, how universities were taking action, and how employees were reacting to processes that measure productivity (Tandberg & Hillman, 2014). Researchers also questioned how university employees were prioritizing their efforts to prevent further decline in state funding (Kelchen & Stedrak, 2016). Moreover, scholars and practitioners studied transformational processes that move individuals to accomplish more than is expected of them, asserting that leadership is central in aligning group efforts aiming to achieve common goals for optimal performance (Northouse, 2019). This additional claim for needing leadership especially when universities are vulnerable to accountability and performance circumstances is specifically relevant to adaptive practices, as adaptive leaders prepare and encourage themselves to take action and deal with change in their environments. Also, Randall

(2012) demonstrated how institutions may consider an adaptive approach in order to answer to commands over accountability and how individuals may perform to transform their universities.

Collectively, these points over university employees' ability to mobilize their efforts around performance directives brings us to a realization for the future of higher education. "The courageous and difficult conversation higher-ed leaders need to have is how to redesign the way they deploy their people" (Mrig & Sanaghan, 2019, p.6) and developing leadership capacity within institutions provides drive to transformation. These concerns point to the need to consider actions and engagement of university employees who are driven by an accountability environment, and also how individuals practice adaptive methods to work through challenges over institutional success. Understanding how university employees can engage and develop their adaptive leadership talent while also responding to the demands of external governance is a nation-wide contemporary concern, and cultivating **employee engagement** and **adaptive leadership** becomes vital to the growth of universities. However, for universities, growing employee engagement is impeded by omni-present accountability processes that present trials within institutions. And for individuals who are resistant to working through challenges and the rapidly evolving nature of higher education driven by external stakeholder demands, this may in return affect individual levels of adaptive leadership. The implications for these claims were explored in this research that studies the relationship between university employees' persistence in their efforts and work (employee engagement) and their willingness and ability to adapt through challenges (adaptive leadership) at a mid-sized public state university located in a state university system that adopted what can be seen as a problematic practice of *performance-based funding* (PBF) policy to regulate accountability.

### ***Problem of Practice***

Contemporary contexts are complex and evolve rapidly rendering university tasks increasingly more difficult. Heller (2011) pointed out that university administrators must contend with a host of complicated issues such as setting the cost of college, ensuring inclusive and diverse enrollment, and maintaining transparent reports of student completion rates. In addition to the daunting task of making these complex decisions, universities are also being held accountable by external stakeholders to demonstrate that the work that is being done remains effective. Proof of successful attainment of stated goals and objectives has become compulsory within institutions of higher education and has created a performance culture that university employees are responsible for maintaining. And while the intent to elevate and strengthen institutions is commendable and well-intentioned, in some instances administrative pressures that are too demanding can have negative effects on efforts to increase responsibility of institutions (Layzell, 2007) and can impede or impair university performance (Nwosu & Koller, 2014). Pressure from administration is present in a variety of ways, as some states have adopted performance funding models as mechanisms for states to hold universities accountable. Florida's State University System (FSUS, n.d.) has implemented performance-based funding, a policy that accounts for how institutions fare in standards, outcomes, and metrics by calculating how resources are allocated to its public state universities. In its most basic form, this practice uses annual data on university benchmarks of excellence and improvement to police the amount of new state funding and an amount on institutional funding that each university can receive from their recurring state base appropriation. Florida's public state universities operate under different

purposes and especially serve different student populations, and the varying efforts of these institutions to work on priorities, directives, and goals are not always managed well under policy.

For example, as a comprehensive university, the University of North Florida (UNF) provides academic programs vital to the growth and economic development of the region served. As the region becomes more diverse and more complex, so too will the educational needs of its citizens and students. UNF has several hallmarks, but most of all the university employees create services that support the needs of the students first, before following controlling accountability practices that are counterintuitive to the institution's deeds. As it is imperative for UNF to remain responsive to local needs in a manner consistent with the scope of its mission and the work being done, UNF represents a problem of practice of a university dispositioned by demanding policy to perform. Since inception of new funding policy within Florida's SUS, UNF had ranked lowest in receiving money and resources when compared to member institutions (FSUS, n.d.). Still, despite the difficulties UNF's unwavering commitment to engage in work that fosters a students first mission-driven model is echoed and supported throughout the University. Honoring UNF's vision, practitioners review ways to solve problems of practice over performance-based funding as a social science, and university employees are becoming very intentional with deploying scholarship and literature on how to improve. It is incumbent upon university employees to adapt to operate under quality standards, promote student learning outcomes, and reach mandated university metrics, and engage in practices and approaches that mobilize themselves and others, especially in instances when external directives compete with internal current practice or

tradition. From this perspective, employee engagement and adaptive leadership are important to increase successful university performance.

### **Employee Engagement and Adaptive Leadership**

Pandey and David (2013) refer to *employee engagement* as “a condition where the employees are fully engrossed in their work and are emotionally attached to their organization” (p.155) where fully involved employees act in ways that further the interest of the organization. Employee engagement is important to understanding what makes organizations successful, and with respect to employee engagement institutions of higher education function similarly to their corporate counterparts. That is, the success of higher education requires that universities harness the emotional and physical commitment of their employees. Furthermore, the Gallup organization (n.d.) use ideas from practitioners and academia to add that employee engagement has a critical link to growth and profitability in organizations, and that high levels of engagement lead to both positive outcomes for individuals as well as their organizations. Essentially, university employees occupy roles that have significant impact on their institutions’ bottom line (Pandey & David, 2013). To get to the bottom line individuals must be highly energized, mentally resilient, willing to work, persist through difficulties, inspirationally enthusiastic, fully concentrated, and passionately immersed (Schaufeli & Baker, 2004). Collectively, these positive characteristics and behaviors model an engaged employee, where the work being done should be supported with leadership to increase employees’ capacity in their actions. To continue positive engagement, employees find ways to manage their efforts and assert leadership to work and adapt through challenges (Pandey & David, 2013).

*Adaptive leadership* is defined as “the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p.14) where thriving is conceptualized by three major components: *situational challenges*, *leader behaviors*, and *adaptive work* (Northouse, 2019). Heifetz and Linsky (2002) use adaptive leadership to explain how individuals encourage effective change across multiple levels, including self and within organizations. At institutions, adaptive leadership can be used as a model to explain and address a variety of challenges that are ever present during growth, where people can feel safe as they confront possible changes in their roles and priorities. The merits of an adaptive approach focus on how others do the work they need to do in order to meet the situations they face. Individuals who are adaptive see complexities, recognize solutions, demonstrate confidence, and empower and protect others (Northouse, 2019). Adaptive leadership as a key component for university progress can become a process for university employees to use, for institutions to achieve mandated goals in higher education.

### **Purpose Statement**

As we see higher education’s accountability processes persisting using performance-based funding measures that are challenging universities (Heller, 2011), and as there was a negative impact to a public state university (FSUS, n.d.), it is necessary to harness the work of engaged employees and lead efforts with adaptive behaviors to maintain employee efforts and achieve institutional success. Furthermore, institutions need to foster employee engagement and use adaptive leadership to solve problems of practice, to continue to strive in performance and receive financial state support. As university employees explore ways to manage productivity, engaging all employees and deploying their adaptive leadership becomes paramount. The

emerging emphasis for engagement and leadership was the focus of this research study.

Relatively, literature asserted the importance of how supporting engagement leads to favorable results in organizations (Bouckenooghe, Devos, & Van den Broeck, 2010; Nimon & Zigarmi, 2015), while there are studies that demonstrated how leadership is needed for institutions to tackle problems of practice (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Humphrey, 2014; Hechanova & Cementina-Olpoc, 2013). Now, the purpose of this research study measures employee engagement and adaptive leadership within a public state university during an accountability and performance-based funding era in higher education, exploring how employee engagement and adaptive leadership are models and strategies that may be used together to drive success within institutions.

### ***Research Questions***

The main research questions that guided this inquiry were:

1. What is the relationship between the level of employee engagement and adaptive leadership among employees?
2. How much of employee engagement can be explained by adaptive leadership when controlling for background characteristics of employees?

This research was built on the premise to consider if university employees demonstrate high levels of both employee engagement and adaptive leadership (which would mean employees remain engaged in their work that is impeded by change all the while exercising their adaptive leadership capacity to thrive in a challenging environment); but more so the premise of this study was to determine how the relationship between employee engagement and adaptive leadership could be described. In other words, if a predictive relationship was demonstrated, then

practitioners can take this into consideration and justify implementing trainings and development within their organization that focus on engagement and leadership with the aim of enhancing their work and efforts that ensures accountable performance in light of challenging work environments. Thus, this study assessed the efforts of university employees, and specifically how employee engagement and adaptive leadership could be understood and implemented as practical concepts and workforce strategies to drive successful performance within organizations.

### **Chapter Summary**

In order for universities to continuously advance in their productivity, it is necessary for university employees to recognize how top-down governance impacts institutions, and for institutions to respond with decisions and practices that support university performance and accommodate the work of university employees but also address the twenty-first century era of accountability placed on institutions of higher education (Tandberg & Hillman, 2014). Engaging in leadership becomes severely important for the field of higher education, as an effective concept for developing techniques to mobilize individuals who seek positive change (Kotter, 2012). Additionally, this study explored the model of adaptive leadership as a way to frame and conceptualize a strategy that may connect to employee engagement and foster the work needed from all university employees. At the center of this argument is that employee engagement and adaptive leadership are essential, for scholars and practitioners to research and apply at their institutions seeking to thrive (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). More explicitly, this study informs the field of higher education administration and leadership as it creates a framework for further studies that can measure how employee engagement relates to leadership approaches, where universities have strong objectives to meet goals. There are four remaining chapters to this

research study. Chapter Two gives an overview of the literature, looking at how employee engagement and the process of adaptive leadership form a conceptual framework and have been/are researched to affirm the scope of the problem. Chapter Three explains the methodology and methods of this study, including the design, the population, data collection and analysis processes used to further contextualize this current study. Chapter Four and Chapter Five provide findings from the data analysis and discusses future research on using employee engagement and adaptive leadership for success during higher education's accountability and performance agenda.

## **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

The second chapter of this study presents a literature review that provides context to the topic and asserts previous research advancing the current argument for employee engagement and adaptive leadership. When exploring an adaptive leadership process, the first step is to identify the challenge persisting in the environment (Northouse, 2019) which also describes the organization that influences the efforts and engagement of employees. Thus, the nature of higher education's accountability era is first described while making a connection to how performance-based funding policy is practiced to control university efficiency and measure institutional success. This opening discourse on accountability and performance then calls for the review of employee engagement and adaptive leadership as constructs that have been measured and approached, both as conceptual and practical models used in settings aiming to positively drive and support employees who are working through adversity. Overall, university employees must complete the work that needs to be done to remain accountable to their performance and secure state funding that supports their success, thus scholars and practitioners discuss strategies that mobilize employees.

### **A Critical Environment of Accountability and Performance**

The most talked about theme in higher education is the avalanche of impending changes confronting our institutions, with one in particular being the irreversible decline in state funding for public universities (Mrig & Sanaghan, 2019). Even more, over a decade ago higher education executives commented on the likeliness of turmoil over *how* state governments should allocate the limited funding for institutions and programs, and how changes in the state cause policymakers to establish funding models as methods to allocate funding when equity, adequacy,

productivity, and the like are measured (Layzell, 2007). As stated by Layzell since 2007, “not surprisingly, then, the ongoing budget pressures noted earlier are forcing many states to evaluate their current funding approaches for higher education and the regulatory environment in which public colleges and universities operate” (p. 3). At the same time, legislators and stakeholders voice growing impatience as the value of a college degree for the public is increasingly unclear and public confidence towards institutions’ purpose and output continues to decline. This brought Mrig and Sanaghan (2019) to add that “if higher education is to remain the economic engine of America’s economy (and be regarded as that economic engine by the public), then real changes—to both the cost structure and student outcomes—are needed to begin to turn the tide” (p.11). These implications are now classified as a “new accountability” movement, (Tandberg & Hillman, 2014) after state oversight and the accountability environment for institutions underwent a shift from one that concentrated on regulatory compliance, rudimentary reporting of inputs, and accounting for expenditures, to one that focuses on measuring performance and accounting for outcomes or results. Thus, accountability in higher education is perceived by higher education administrators and university professionals with a few understandings. For institutions of higher education, the typical framework for describing what accountability is follows a principal-agent design, in which the principal (I.e. the state) holds the agent (I.e. the institution) accountable for the quality of their actions and outcomes (Kelchen, 2018). And to sum it up accountability is a ‘watchword’ to ensure ‘educational capital’, and is felt as a concept related to efficiency, effectiveness, assessment, and evaluation, for one to prove their attainments, accomplishments, and completion of pre-established products, goals, tasks, and expectations.

Higher education's era of accountability has a strong emphasis on 1) the business/finance model of funding institutions (I.e. increasing tuition costs, decreasing state government budgets, etc.) and 2) low and alarming college graduation and completion rates (Heller, 2011). Here, Heller (2011) contributed to the rhetoric on accountability in higher education with historical and evolving points that highlight:

- Accountability systems pre-date colonial periods and were established to rationalize the rapid expansion of chartered colleges with public, bureaucratic governance
- The assessment of student outcomes and regulation of institutions, and the usage of accreditation requirements both served as ways to align standards of university performance during the 20th century (a period that also saw the creation of business offices to link student data and university budgeting for institutional improvement plans)
- Postsecondary accountability should operate as a well institutionalized regime, designed to account for Federal, State, political/economic, K-12, and community/societal systems, with sustainable power to enforce policy goals that are logical, measurable, and can be communicated clearly to all stakeholders and citizens
- There are several ways to conceive and 'manage accountability' as a *system*, which functions by instilling policies that provide practical ways to execute duties and measure achievements; but most relevant is how institutional-level accountability is accomplished

To this last point, institutional accountability focuses on the university as the unit of analysis, which prompted Heller (2011) to conclude perceptions of higher education's accountability with empirically based information researching how *accountability systems* (organized frameworks that detail how things are to be done) are classified in order to assess institutions. For instance, a

book entitled *Achieving Accountability in Higher Education* written by Burke and Associates (2005, as cited in Heller, 2011) includes a list of indicators currently in use that explain how states are approaching their accountability systems for institutions to follow. Using both case studies and national surveys, Burke and Associates discovered that institutions are involved in accountability systems that are classified by *input*, *process*, *output*, or *outcomes*, all the while focusing on *efficiency*, *quality*, or *equity*. This means that institutions create metrics that measure their productivity built from what individuals put in, or, productivity is measured by what is produced after processes are completed. Examples of metrics include student retention and graduation measures, licensure exams pass rates, job placement, faculty workload measures, volume of sponsored research, student affordability, racial and ethnic profiles of student completion measures, to name a few. Accountability systems that measure inputs/process/outputs also specify how well productivity is to be demonstrated, and how to score the value of what is being put in and produced. Furthermore, accountability systems may emphasize *resources and reputation*, where states make strategic investments on which institutions to fund and by how much, or, states see that institutions are client/customer centered and responsible for being well known offering much needed programs and essential services. After describing institutional accountability systems Burke and Associates made a significant point that connecting the various classifications of inputs-outputs, efficiency-equity, and resources-reputation is a prominent accountability approach of *performance funding* (2005, as cited in Heller, 2011, p. 178). More relatively, their research primes others to assess the impact of how performance funding policy is used and received by employees at institutions, leading to the current argument that accountability systems that use performance-based funding have persistently challenged

institutions and their employees because they are complex and taxing. Thus, how to achieve success in an era of accountability needs to be addressed in present research.

### ***Challenges of Performance-Based Funding***

As Hillman (2016) demonstrated, with possible variations to how performance-based funding policy is approached as a university accountability system, examining the literature, cases, research, and perceptions of funding policies helps clarify key elements and allows individuals to understand the challenges presented to them. The evolution of various performance funding models and policies has undergone substantial changes since the 1980s, with institutions across our nation implementing mechanisms to police institutional effectiveness and goal obtainment. And as funding policies have long-held since the 1980s, what can be reformed from approaches that simply focus on outcomes, is now performance-based funding (PBF) that embeds rigid formulas into state university budget models. Here, resources allocated, and appropriations given to universities are based on a number of metrics for administrators to measure (such as enrollment growth, credit hour completion, etc.), and no longer only considers historical trends and fixed costs as an incremental tactic for state budgeting (Hillman, 2016). Also, as Layzell (2007) described, higher education is often the largest discretionary spending item in a state's budget and as of 2003 fifteen states had performance funding programs in place at their public institutions. Layzell used Burke and Minassians' (2003, as cited in Layzell, 2007) definition and understanding of how performance funding ties the allocation of some or all of the state funding for public institutions to university performance on specific indicators, and this connection is imperative to know. This is especially due to the nature of performance-based funding's direct and formulaic manner, I.e. if an institution achieves the prescribed targets or

performance levels on indicators then it receives a designated amount of state funding. Tandberg and Hillman (2014) also used Burke and Minassians' ideas to explain the significant diversity in the types of programs adopted by states. Some states reserve up to 10% of an institution's funding as performance funding while others reserve as little as 2%; in most cases performance funding serves as a bonus; however a few states take performance funding further and embed it into their base formula where institutions may not receive these resources if they fail to meet expectations. Overall, these funding models are meant to encourage changes to institutional behavior in order to meet state priorities, and such programs make it easier for policymakers and the public to ensure that institutions are serving the public interest, they allow for the evaluation of institutions' overall performance, they encourage innovation, and such funding programs impose sanctions when institutions fail to produce desired results. But the practical realities and complexities of managing universities are often overlooked, as the various approaches to performance funding models and policies "are often implemented in ways that negate any potential benefits and which distort institutional missions and result in perverse incentives and unintended consequences that negatively affect students and institutions" (Tandberg & Hillman, 2014, p. 225). This point relates to work from Burke and Associates (2005a, as cited in Heller, 2011) who first offered various definitions of university funding programs and then continue to show how there is significance in the way that funding policy is used to demand that universities remain accountable to their performance. Variations such as *performance funding*, *performance budgeting*, and *performance reporting* dictate how states classify their university accountability systems to implement control over institutional productivity and success. Finally, empirical research from influential shapers of higher education policy (for example 'think tanks' such as

the Century Foundation and the Lumina Foundation) study the life cycles of funding models (Dougherty & Natow, 2009a, 2009b as cited in Heller, 2011) using exemplary cases such as the state of Florida to assert why defining (and analyzing) various implementations to university performance is key to understanding challenges on how institutions must meet demands over student cost, enrollment trends, the quality of higher education, and the like.

### ***PBF within State University Systems***

Back in January 2014, the Florida Board of Governors (FLBOG—which governs the operation and management of the twelve public universities that make up Florida’s State University System, FSUS) approved performance-based funding to be implemented. Although Florida’s PBF model took a couple of years to develop and was created by a joint effort between university presidents, provosts, board of trustees, and other stakeholders (FLBOG, n.d.), the new funding policy that lists ten metrics evaluating the institutions on a range of issues did present initial challenges for university employees. Moving the university funding model from a full-time-enrollment (FTE) driven model (more students leads to more funding) to a performance-based model (the higher the achievement on certain metrics the greater the increase in funding, with low achievement potentially penalized by budget cuts) forges an environment where executive leaders at the universities compete for resources and reputation. In Florida’s self-developed model, forty metrics identified in the University Works Plans were reviewed before establishing ten metrics for each university to adhere to, not implying that the selected metrics are without difficulty. Eight of these metrics are used system-wide for all twelve universities to adhere to, the ninth varies based on institutional category and the tenth metric reflects the choice

of the individual institution. For instance, current metrics for one of the twelve FSUS institutions are as follows:

**Table 1**

*Florida Board of Governors' Performance-Based Funding, University Metrics for the Florida State University System*

Metric	Definition
Metric #1: Percent of Bachelor's Grads Enrolled or Employed Earning \$25,000+ One Year After Graduation	Percentage of the graduating class of bachelor's degree recipients in a given academic year (Summer + Fall + Spring) who are enrolled or employed and earning at least \$25,000 somewhere in the United States.
Metric #2: Median Wages of Bachelor's Grads Employed Full-Time One Year After Graduation	Based on annualized Unemployment Insurance wage data from the fourth fiscal quarter after graduation for bachelor's recipients.
Metric #3: Net Tuition & Fees per 120 Hours	Based on the in-state undergraduate student tuition and fees, books, and supplies (currently as estimated by College Board), the average number of credit hours attempted by students who were admitted as first-time-in-college students (FTICs) and graduated with a bachelor's degree from programs that require 120 credit hours, and financial gift aid (grants, scholarships and waivers) provided to in-state undergraduate FTICs and transfers (does not include unclassified students).
Metric #4: Four-Year Graduation Rate	Percentage of first-time full-time students (FTFTs) - first-time-in-college students who started in Fall (or summer continuing to Fall) and enrolled full-time (12+ credit hours) in their first Fall - and graduated by the end of the summer term of their fourth year.
Metric #5: Academic Progress Rate (Retention to Second Fall)	Percentage of first-time full-time students (FTFTs) - first-time-in-college students who started in Fall (or summer continuing to Fall) and enrolled full-time (12+ credit hours) in their first Fall - and were still enrolled during the Fall following their first year with a GPA of at least 2.00 at the end of their first year.

Metric	Definition
Metric #6: Bachelor's Degrees in Areas of Strategic Emphasis	Percentage of bachelor's degrees awarded in a given year (Summer + Fall + Spring) within the programs designated by the Board of Governors as "Programs of Strategic Emphasis" divided into five areas: STEM, Education, Health, Global, and Gap Analysis.
Metric #7: University Access Rate (Percent with Pell grant)	Percentage of undergraduates, enrolled during the Fall term, who received a Pell grant during the Fall term.
Metric #8: Graduate Degrees in Areas of Strategic Emphasis	Percentage of graduate degrees awarded in a given year (Summer + Fall + Spring) within the programs designated by the Board of Governors as "Programs of Strategic Emphasis" divided into five areas: STEM, Education, Health, Global, and Gap Analysis.
Metric #9: Percent of Bachelor's Degrees without Excess Hours	Percentage of baccalaureate degrees awarded in a given academic year within 110% of the credit hours required for a degree based on the Board of Governors Academic Program Inventory, when excluding the established list* of types of student credits.
Metric #10: Percent of Undergraduate FTE in Online Courses	Percentage of undergraduate full-time equivalent (FTE) students enrolled in online courses. Distance Learning is a course in which at least 80 percent of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time or space, or both.

*Note.* Florida Board of Governors, State University System, University Metrics as of fiscal year 2020-2021

Florida's PBF model has four guiding principles: 1) align the metrics with the SUS Strategic Plan, 2) the model rewards Excellence or Improvement, 3) the metrics are to be clear and simple, and 4) metrics should acknowledge the unique mission of the different institutions (FLBOG, n.d.), although the PBF model continues to be assessed and enhanced annually to ensure effectiveness. The original ranking system did, and still does to a certain degree, fault

institutions for failing to meet threshold scores which results in the reduction of base budget allocation. For instance, as the funding model allocates state investment and institutional investment funds that when totaled may be as low as \$8,500,000 for “smaller” institutions and as high as \$100,800,000 for the state’s “larger” preeminent institutions, the gap in funding between universities is evident and quite frankly a loss in budget and resources is detrimental. For the first few years of implementation, the bottom three institutions could lose funding up to 50% of their base budget. And, although Florida’s PBF has been called into question by university employees, advocates for this approach argue that the system does incentivize institutions to achieve high standards of excellence. Excelling in standards leads to financial rewards that can earn universities the ability to prioritize initiatives such as: recruiting and retaining the most talented and accomplished faculty, creating innovative and strategically established divisions focusing on student success and enrollment management, investing in academic programs that are competitive and bring prestige to the university, advancing national ranking efforts, and much more. Hence, it is imperative that university employees have a solid understanding of Florida’s PBF model, and recently practitioners have shared their experiences with performance-based funding and how this funding policy has affected their university environment. Thus, the following rhetoric on perspectives of accountability and performance models will conclude the opening of this literature review that outlined the nature of the environment that university employees are involved in, and also implies how higher education practitioners are reacting, engaging, and adapting to stakeholder demands.

### *Perceptions of Accountability and Performance Demands*

In light of metrics that the Florida SUS institutions must accept, senior level administrators at universities respond to how performance-based funding paved its way through their university, impacting how employees engage in the work that must be done and how others adapt to the challenges they face. Specifically mentioned was the undisputed fact that when it comes to the missions of Florida's universities, they serve different functions and different student populations that are not recognized by the Board of Governors. Senior university administrators seem to be knowledgeable when speaking about an unfair system, one that needs help and change. The response to the metrics reflects the values that their institution has for their students: "regardless of what Tallahassee is telling us and how we get money, it's about trying to do the right things for students and have some faith that you're ultimately going to get paid for that" (J. Coleman, personal communication, October 3, 2017). This philosophy of practice is pro-growth for the students, which for business practices means more tuition, increase revenue, and then it all comes back to students. This perspective is key to mention when furthering considerations for how universities can remain successful in their efforts. This perspective also came at a time when institutions could fall in the bottom three rank of the FSUS, and if so would suffer a loss in resources, funding, and more importantly assurance.

Furthermore, there are some findings that reflect the adversity of using performance-based funding as a mechanism for higher education institutions to remain accountable. Two studies, one completed by Tandberg and Hillman (2014), and the additional study by Kelchen and Stedrak (2016), observed and reported on PBF affects and outcomes that do not advance university missions. Similar questions researched "Does the introduction of performance funding

programs affect degree completion among participating states?” where findings showed limited evidence that PBF increases graduation rates. Kelchen and Stedrak (2016) reported on possibility of unethical admissions practices such as targeting students with less financial need to generate more PBF revenue. More relatively, PBF as seen today severely requires further evaluation on its impact to universities in the state of Florida, as evaluated by Cornelius and Cavanaugh (2016). This policy analysis focused on the current initiative to improve the efficiency and productivity of the Florida SUS by examining how the metrics are applied to universities with different situations and goals. To continue and improve, FSUS university leaders are committed to a learning organization (Senge, 2013), one that requires high levels of engagement and leadership. This point is much like the literature from both Hechanova and Cementina-Olpoc’s (2013) study and Randall (2012), who all depicted how various leadership practices, change management, and commitment to change are vital for institutions to remain engaged and survive through tough times. In transition, these studies provide a great example of one institution that converted from their struggles and detailed the leadership process that allowed for campus-wide turnaround and engagement. Indeed, it is transformation that lower performing FSUS institutions need when dealing with accountability and performance demands, and with additional research and review on employee engagement and adaptive leadership higher education practitioners facing problems of practice can formulate strategies on how to turn the tide for themselves.

As the current environment for higher education accountability and performance funding policy has been introduced, this context adds to the study of how university employees are remaining engaged in their work (employee engagement) and how they are adapting through challenges (adaptive leadership) at a time when accountability and performance demands are at

their highest. In continuation, it is vital to reference studies that have been responsive in defining, measuring, and approaching employee engagement and adaptive leadership, both as conceptual and practical models used in settings where the aim is to positively drive and support individuals and organizations. Overall, there is special attention to how to engage and lead others through challenges, where the engagement-leadership framework then becomes most notable.

### **Employee Engagement**

There is emerging consensus that employee engagement is broadly viewed as a psychological state that individuals experience, and is also conceptualized as a workforce strategy. Bridging together this psychological perspective with a human resource management approach denotes how the term engagement gains traction with the dual promise of enhancing both individual well-being and organizational performance (Truss, Delbridge, Alfes, Shantz, & Soane, 2013). With the potential for engagement from employees to raise levels of performance and profitability being noted in both academia and business, there is an attempt by scholars and practitioners in various disciplines, fields, industries, and sectors to create shared vocabulary and understanding of engagement as a construct. There are interpretations of a few synonymous terms such as "work engagement", "personal engagement", "employee engagement", or "organizational engagement" that all add to the meaning and application of the concept of engagement that is found within social sciences and also within professions like critical organizational management. The concept of engagement therefore catches the attention of both academics and laborers who all contribute to its framework and to the practice of engagement, resulting in a continuous growth in the research and literature. For many, the multiple facets of engagement are featured in literature to explore the way this mindset and approach is regarded as

a theory in practice, and to provide guidance and techniques for developing people and enhancing workplaces.

To focus on the academic foundation, the roots of engagement prominently lay in the psychology field and explicitly turns the attention to "employee engagement" as the point of study. An academic focus includes additional domains of employee engagement, as this term considers how engagement relates to contextual features and resources of organizations; how engagement is measured and practiced; drivers and outcomes of engagement; and how engagement connects to leadership. But first, with the term employee engagement having variation of basic understanding by others, Truss et al. (2013) asserted a succinct baseline understanding of employee engagement as such:

Kahn's original (1990) research suggested that engagement is the personal expression of self-in-role; someone is engaged with their work when they are able to express their authentic self and are willing to invest their personal energies into their job. Since then, engagement has been defined as the antithesis to burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1997), as well as a distinctive positive psychological state in its own right, comprising a range of effective, cognitive and, sometimes, behavioral facets, depending on the precise definition adopted (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Soane et al., 2012).

Conceivably then, employee engagement is defined throughout research that attempts to measure how this construct is manifested in various situations, where practitioners aim discover ways to increase engagement within organizations. Scholars develop definitions of engagement from all seminal work completed to construct the term, and Pandey and David's (2013) definition is asserted for the purposes of this research study. As previously introduced, employee engagement

is “a condition where the employees are fully engrossed in their work and are emotionally attached to their organization” (p.155) where fully involved employees act in ways that further the interest of the organization. Along with several others, these scholars build upon original findings from William Kahn, who is recognized for constructing the engagement term in the 1990s when studies on how to best manage human capital were at a peak. Moreover, there are three psychological conditions related to engagement: meaningfulness, safety, and availability, in which meaningfulness refers to the intrinsic value attached to performance in the work role, safety pertains to the sense of freedom to be authentic, and availability involves beliefs of having the physical, cognitive, and emotional resources needed to invest in work. Like many others, Pandey and David (2013) were interested in measuring both cognitive and physical aspects of what drives employees’ willingness to accomplish both personal and organizational objectives. A few notes they included were:

- Employee engagement is derived from studies of morale or a person’s (or group’s) willingness to accomplish tasks, objectives, and goals
- High levels of engagement can be achieved in people and in workplaces where there is a shared sense of mission and purpose, connecting people at an emotional level and raising their personal aspirations
- Work obligations are generated through a series of interactions between individuals where there are two-way relationships and people are in a state of reciprocal interdependence (social exchange theory)
- The process of building engagement is a process that never ends, and it depends on the foundation of an enriching work experience

- Pay and benefits play a less important role in engaging people in their work
- Engagement can depend on management/leadership style and philosophy; and elements found to be fundamental for engagement are strong leadership, accountability, autonomy, a sense of control over one's environment and opportunities for development
- And, employees must be engaged in productive and challenging tasks in order to keep their focus on maximum output

Studies further framing employee engagement described how this construct relates to the emotional and intellectual commitment employees have to their organizations, the amount of effort exhibited by employees in their jobs, and simply put the passion for work that employees have (Pandey & David, 2013). These ideas stemmed from textbooks on the theory and practice of employee engagement, where additional authors like Wilmar Schaufeli contributed to the development of this concept. Schaufeli's (2013) work is used as opening remarks to define "what is engagement?" outlining how the everyday connotations of engagement refers to involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, absorption, focused effort, zeal, dedication and energy (p. 15). This perspective includes a few definitions of employee engagement in both business, and in academia.

The emergence of engagement in academia is well documented, stressing different aspects of engagement. After a systematic review of over 200+ sources found within the human resource management field, psychology discipline, and management databases, Shuck (2011, as cited in Schaufeli, 2013) derived that engagement has 1) a relation with role performance, 2) a positive nature in terms of employee well-being as opposed to burnout, 3) a relation with resourceful jobs, and 4) a relation with the job as well as with the organization. Schaufeli (2013)

also credited work from 2008 performed by Macey and Schneider who shared an exhaustive synthesis of all elements used to define engagement. Their conceptual framework for understanding employee engagement includes trait engagement; state engagement; and behavioral engagement. Employee engagement then, encompasses conscientiousness, trait positive affect proactive personality, satisfaction, involvement, empowerment, extra-role behavior, proactivity, and role expansion. Furthermore, a more condensed model of employee engagement considered the synonymous term work engagement as an experienced psychological state which mediates the impact of job resources and personal resources on organizational outcomes, making engagement a unique construct with distinctions that focus on job-related attitudes, job behaviors, behavioral intentions, certain aspects of employee health and well-being, and personality. These distinctions have a few theoretical underpinnings (I.e. the *needs-satisfying approach*; the *job demands-resources model*; the *affective shift model*; and *social exchange theory*) where taken together demonstrate how employee engagement remains to reflect a genuine and unique mindset that manifests through actions and results in outcomes (Schaufeli, 2013). Together, these perspectives solidify comprehensive approaches to define and assess employee engagement among employees within their workplaces. Also, although efforts to further outline employee engagement are critiqued as attempts to relabel existing notions such as commitment, satisfaction, involvement, and motivation, the term remains necessary to distinguish the relationship employees have with the organization (Schaufeli, 2013). Hence, even more prevalent is the term work engagement that refers to the relationship that employees have with his or her work (p. 15). As it is agreed upon that engagement is a psychological state experienced by employees in relation to their work, this makes the term sufficiently distinct from

satisfaction, motivation, involvement, etc. and makes the term work engagement distinct to this current study (keeping in mind that employee engagement and work engagement are used interchangeably).

### ***Measuring and Assessing Employee Engagement***

While the Gallup Organization (a global analytics and advice firm that helps leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems focusing on talent, workplaces, and more) became credited for being first to assess perceptions of strong work places in the 1990s, research on engagement blossomed in academia during a positive psychology movement (Schaufeli, 2013). Gallup's developed engagement questionnaire (the Q<sup>12</sup>) is now a tool that contributes to a scientific approach to study optimal human functioning, aiming to discover and promote the factors that allows individuals, organizations, and communities to thrive. Schaufeli (2013) added to this work, adding that the substantial psychological component to employee engagement reveals that employees who are highly engaged have high levels of adaptation, and workers need certain capabilities in order to thrive and to make their organizations survive. Especially worth mentioning here is how this psychological aspect relates to employees engaging with an organization undergoing challenges and change, supporting claims by another champion for successful human resource management and employee engagement, David Ulrich. Schaufeli (2013) cited an important point by Ulrich claiming that employee contribution is a critical business issue when trying to produce more output, and "companies have no choice but to try to engage not only the body, but also the mind and soul of every employee" (p. 16). The need for organizations and institutions to participate in the study of "positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed

for performance improvement in today's workplace" is evident (Luthans, 2002, as cited in Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p.3), calling scholars to create effective ways to evaluate engagement within organizations. More so, evaluating and measuring how engagement is practiced by employees is normally completed by merging a 'deficit approach' whereby the focus is on identifying problems and challenges and then working on appropriate solutions, with an 'abundance approach' based on identifying positive, peak experiences and identifying their enablers and drivers (Truss, et al., 2013). Truss and associates mentioned how the evaluation and usage of employee engagement by the practitioner community is based on "a model of staff engagement surveys aimed at identifying levels of engagement across organizational units, followed by a range of interventions designed to raise engagement levels" (p. 10). This fact aligns with the approach of this current study, aiming to measure university employees' perspective of their engagement, considering their organization that is undergoing a challenge. Relatively then, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17) is extensively used in academia to measure engagement, and this current study uses the UWES-17 adding to the body of literature that discusses ways to explore and harness employee engagement at institutions.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) developed the UWES-17 to evaluate employee engagement, where work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by *vigor*, *dedication*, and *absorption*. Vigor refers to high levels of energy and resilience, the willingness to invest effort, not being easily fatigued, and persistence in the face of difficulties. Those who exude high levels of vigor usually have much energy, zest, and stamina when working. Dedication refers to deriving a sense of significance from one's work, feeling enthusiastic and proud about one's job, and feeling inspired and challenged by it. Those who

exude high levels of dedication strongly identify with their work because it is experienced as meaningful, inspiring, and challenging. Absorption refers to being totally and happily immersed in one's work and having difficulties detaching oneself from it so that time passes quickly and one forgets everything else that is around. Those who exude high levels of absorption feel that they usually are happily engrossed in their work, they feel immersed by their work and have difficulties detaching from it because it carries them away. Collectively, these characteristics become a persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that employees display through their actions and contextualizes a way to measure engagement. Furthermore, employee engagement is important to understanding what makes organizations successful, and with respect to employee engagement institutions of higher education aim to support the work being done, increase employees' capacity in their actions, and continue positive engagement. Consequently, employees find ways to manage engagement specially when individuals strive to continue their work while having to adapt through challenges (Pandey & David, 2013). And when there are challenging circumstances, practitioners find it essential to assert leadership as a theory and practice needed to manage how individuals and organizations thrive.

### **Adaptive Leadership**

Since the 1970s, researchers have noticed that there have been as many definitions to the word *leadership* as there have been individuals attempting to define the term (Stogdill, 1974 as cited in Northouse, 2019; Fiedler, 1971 as cited in Antonakis & Day, 2018). Although leadership (or what leadership is not) may seem identifiable in practice, the phenomena and the study of leadership makes its way through academia as a concept that scholars and practitioners continuously attempt to frame into theory and practice. Leadership is a common topic of interest

in the private and business sectors, global and political affairs, community development and organizational study, K-12 and higher education, and it is common to every trade, field and setting. Today's understanding of leadership has a basic premise of leadership as a process of influence involving people, groups, organizations, communities, and society at large (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Antonakis & Day, 2018; Northouse, 2019). Along with numerous other scholars, Northouse (2019) explains how definitions of leadership often begins with intuitive and informal understanding of abstract and baseline concepts that asserts how leadership is about who people are, relationships between others, and what people do. The leadership process is manifested through actions that impacts others on a micro to macro level. Concepts are framed into *leadership theory* (or simply put grounded principles about leadership that are formed through tested beliefs and observation); *leadership models* (or systematic ways to carry out various themes and practices of leadership); and *leadership approaches* (Northouse, 2019; Dugan, 2017). More so, within the twenty-first century there have been various approaches developed capturing how people apply and carry-out a leadership process using various *leadership styles*.

Thus, leadership involves people, or *leaders*, where leadership is paradigmatically derived, socially constructed, inherently values based, and interdisciplinary (Dugan, 2017). A paradigm reflects the basic lens through which a person views the world and consists of concepts, assumptions, values, and practices; and furthermore as leaders look for ways to understand the influx of leadership taxonomies and frameworks the reality of why leadership is essential to human capital becomes evident. Meaning, the interest in leadership “likely stems from the ways in which it evokes issues we care about deeply” (Dugan, 2017, p. 2). For instance, if a person starts a new business, they most likely want to understand what makes their business

successful; or, a person who cares about their environment may gather community members to develop a recycling program; or finally, a person who acknowledges that their place of work is where they spend a great deal of time may explore ways to contribute to a positive culture and working environment. Subsequently, there continuously is a compelling rationale for leadership and how people interpret and assert its underpinnings, and more relatively how the complex process of leadership involves the intricacies of leaders themselves. People study how leaders are developed and how people involve themselves in the expansion of their capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes, but also, people focus on *leadership development*, where there is emphasis on enhancing the capacity of organizations to engage successfully in leadership tasks (Dugan, 2017). Together, these focal points involve how leaders are capable, motivated, and have *leadership efficacy* to confidently enact or put into action a leadership process that is believed to grow the capacity of both people (including the leader themselves) and organizations. Relatively then, leadership emerges from individuals' spheres of influence, hence merges an individual's personal and micro-level of leadership with a macro-level that considers how an environment impacts the leadership process. Unfortunately, as an impact to both a personal and organizational level of leadership can present itself in harmful ways, scholars and practitioners study how to effectively implement the facets of leadership and put theory into practice (Humphrey, 2014). Specifically, individuals recognize common ways to assert leadership models that can guide others on how to deal with complex challenges and changes that can be detrimental to both the person and organization, where the adaptive leadership model becomes most relevant to the opening remarks on leadership.

Development of the adaptive leadership model emerged largely from the desire to conceptualize how a leader assists others with facing difficult challenges, providing others with the space and opportunity to learn how to deal with inevitable changes they encounter (Northouse, 2019). The adaptive leadership model is also approached with leadership as a process and by definition leadership is “a process whereby an individual influences a group or individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 5). This definition supports the sentiment that an adaptive leader is not necessarily a person who holds a formal managerial role or has power, but rather, leaders are regarded as those who are able to effect positive change for others (Komives, Wager, & Associates, 2017; Dudley, 2018). Scholars and practitioners believe that leadership is *non-positional* and is a practice for all, where leaders are positioned on all levels of institutions, and all employees have the ability to be a leader and show leadership (Grogan, 2013; Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Most relevant to this current study then, as university employees consider effective approaches to support employee engagement at institutions attempting to thrive, an adaptive leadership process may be an imperative strategy to implement at a university that is striving to overcome adversity and perform. An adaptive process consists of a few theoretic components, where adaptive leadership has been grounded by Heifetz (1994) seminal work.

The study of adaptive leadership is defined as “the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p.14) and thriving is conceptualized by three major components: *situational challenges*, *leader behaviors*, and *adaptive work* (Northouse, 2019). Heifetz and Linsky (2002) coined adaptive leadership to explain how individuals encourage effective change across multiple levels, including self and in organizations. More so, as a psychiatrist, scholar, and professor, Heifetz completed decades of

research to address questions about leadership, authority, and the challenge of tackling very hard problems, and produced *Leadership Without Easy Answers* to present theory-building on the practical and conceptual framework of adaptive leadership (1994). In summary, Heifetz asserted that in order for individuals, organization, communities, and even society as a whole to progress on any presented challenge, our adaptive leadership capacities need to be promoted. In doing so, there are five assumptions that exist when asserting an adaptive leadership framework: 1) many problems are embedded in complicated and interactive systems, 2) much behavior reflects an adaptation to biological circumstances, 3) problems that conflict with one's values and purposes requires adapting socially, where working through competing values becomes a form of doing the adaptive work, 4) adaptation involves authority relationships and trust in terms of a service orientation, and 5) people accomplish adaptive work in accordance with their emotional capacity and environment. To elaborate on the fourth point, individuals collaborate with others, sharing the challenges that are presented to them in hopes of arriving to a prescriptive solution. Leaders then, are trusted to provide a service and recommend practical ways of fixing problems by applying theory and research. With the assumptions at work, there are strategic principles (or components) of adaptive leadership that Heifetz and his associates have built upon. Accordingly, the three components that summarize the principles and strategies of the adaptive leadership process are as such: The first component of adaptive leadership is to identify *technical and adaptive challenges* (Northouse, 2019). *Technical challenges* are explicit for leaders to authorize known solutions into existing practices; and *adaptive challenges* involve others in asking questions to create answers for unclear problems. The combination of the two includes everyone's input to address clear challenges that have ambiguous resolutions. For any challenge

identified leaders gain control to create a *holding environment* to interact and perform. The next component of the model, the adaptive work, focuses on how individuals direct their efforts in a safely established setting confronting inevitable changes that accompany them. And finally, at the center of the model are statements that describe six leader behaviors that individuals can exercise, and it is this final component of the model that becomes most important to this study. These leader behaviors contextualize the adaptive leadership process as a measurable construct.

### ***Measuring and Assessing Adaptive Leadership***

Heifetz and his colleagues (1994) established leader behaviors as activities that individuals do, to carry out leadership using an adaptive leadership process. Leader behaviors become the epitome of implementing a strategic approach to survive and thrive, as they present six steps that are straightforward and are outlined for leaders to exercise (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Furthermore, Northouse (2015) constructed the Adaptive Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) to assess how individuals perceive and practice these six leader behaviors, and this research study uses the ALQ adding to the body of literature that reveals ways to further explore adaptive leadership. The ALQ accounts for a succinct way to conclude the review of the framework for adaptive leadership, and the six leader behaviors are synthesized as such:

- *Get on the Balcony.* Taking a step back and seeing complexities and interrelated dimensions of a situation, or the bigger picture of challenges that are present with a clear view of reality. An example of this behavior includes forming a group of unofficial constituents to discuss organizational issues.
- *Identify the Adaptive Challenge.* Recognizing adaptive challenges need adaptive solutions and cannot be resolved with technical leadership. Adaptive challenges strike at the core

feelings and thoughts of others and an example of this behavior is when others do not avoid the emotions and actions of a disgruntled worker who is struggling to face challenges within the organization.

- *Regulate Distress.* Demonstrating confidence and calmness, to provide a safe environment to tackle difficult problems in conflict situations. Psychologically, individuals have a need for consistency, hence leaders should establish a work setting where people have direction and production management to tackle difficult problems. People recognize the need to change but do not become overwhelmed in doing so.
- *Maintain Disciplined Attention.* Getting others to face challenging issues and not letting others avoid difficult problems, where avoidance can be ignoring problems, blaming or attacking others for problems, or working harder on unrelated tasks rather than tasks related to the actual problem. In response, an example of a positive leader behavior that enables others to focus on issues would be conducting staff meetings where “hot” topics are on the agenda and people can safely address the “elephant in the room”.
- *Give the Work Back to the People.* Empowering others to think with autonomy to solve their own problems. “For adaptive leaders, giving the work back to the people means empowering people to decide what to do in circumstances where they feel uncertain, expressing belief in their ability to solve their own problems, and encouraging them to think for themselves rather than doing that thinking for them” (Northouse, 2019, p. 270). Essentially, leaders need to be attentive to when to provide direction on how to tackle problems with the input and initiative from others.

- *Protect Leadership Voices From Below.* Opening and accepting unusual and radical contributions from all individuals, especially members that hold “lower” positions. This behavior creates a balance in social equilibrium as adaptive leaders relinquish some control in order for all members of the organization to be fully involved, independent when appropriate, more responsible for their actions, and fully engaged in the adaptive work that their group needs to accomplish.

Collectively, these leader behaviors describe steps leaders can consider to implement an adaptive leadership process. Furthermore, scholars from various disciplines and practitioners from numerous fields attempt to research how adaptive leadership can be approached by others and within institutions, to better understand it as a multifaceted and multidimensional concept, act, and process that contributes to positive development for people and their organizations, and more notably how leadership can be explored in relation to employee engagement.

### **Engagement-Leadership Framework**

As this research study involves the concept of employee engagement and the practice of adaptive leadership, there have been some studies that are most relevant to the engagement-leadership framework. About a decade ago, researchers made it known that the dynamics of workplaces underwent drastic change at the turn of the twenty-first century (Shuck & Herd, 2012). The increased expectation within organizations for employees to engage in authentic, meaningful work resulted in an increased need to create efficient practices to develop organizations. Professions such as human resources management began to explore what the implications were for how leadership development within various types of organizations could affect perspectives and practices of employee engagement. Along with Shuck and Herd (2012)

researchers began to pay more attention to new visions and models of how to equip employees to meet challenges of an evolving organizational landscape. For instance, in 2011 Serrano and Reichard presented a conceptual argument asserting how leadership strategies were pivotal for overcoming a lack of employee engagement. Their work presented a framework for how leaders can impact employee engagement by considering four practical strategies: Designing meaningful and motivating work; Supporting and coaching employees; Enhancing employees' personal resources; and by Facilitating rewarding and supportive coworker relations. Transitioning from Serrano and Reichard's (2011) work, while research around employee engagement emerged and several reports suggested that leadership was a crucial element to the development of employees and organizations, a gap was found in understanding from empirical studies of what specific leadership theories and practices (or leadership behaviors and styles) were most effective in managing highly engaged institutions. Shuck and Herd (2012) began to fill this gap although their work too presented a conceptual argument for the engagement-leadership relationship. Although, Carasco-Saul, Kim, and Kim (2015) did further the concepts by finally adding a systematic review of empirical research on the engagement-leadership relationship. Together, these two studies from Shuck and Herd (2012) and Kim and colleagues (2015) offer a conclusive way to review the literature on engagement and leadership.

In their study of the convergence and implications for employee engagement and leadership development, Shuck and Herd (2012) used similar definitions that this present research asserts to define and outline these two paradigms, and more so what the conceptual relationship between the two constructs is. More so, they explained how a transformational approach and style of leadership can connect to factors of employee engagement, where their

goal was to develop a conceptual framework that practitioners can utilize to create guides for human resource management within organizations. The implications suggest that the basis of emotional intelligence is key for developing engagement-focused leaders, and their study offers suggestions on leader behaviors that support people's motivational needs. When needs are met so too are performance outcomes, and overall there is a continuing premise to study leadership in the context of employee engagement. Consequently, to further the premise of an engagement-leadership relationship Carasco-Saul and colleagues (2015) performed a systematic review of previous research to address an essential need for scholars and laborers to have a better understanding of engagement and leadership, specially to equip practitioners with tools to combat the most pressing changes and challenges that organizations face. However, of the studies reviewed, there seems to be a lack of research addressing how adaptive leadership behaviors are most relevant to supporting and increasing employee engagement. And specifically, as higher education professionals also attempt to manage the talent and efforts of university employees, there continues to be a need to further understand how adaptive leadership behaviors are most vital in supporting both individual and organizational levels of employee engagement during institutional challenges. Thus, Carasco-Saul and colleagues (2015) recommendations align with this current study, where they assert the need for scholars and practitioners to use grounded scales and surveys to test how specific approaches drive engagement—this present research seeks to fulfill this knowledge gap.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter described the nature of higher education's accountability era while making a connection to how performance-based funding policy is practiced to control university efficiency

and measure institutional success specifically at public state institutions. In describing accountability and performance directives that challenge institutions, this described the environment that may impose on how employees are engaged in their work (employee engagement) and how individuals and organizations are being adaptive through challenges (adaptive leadership). Also, describing challenges in an environment is the first step to considering an adaptive leadership process. Hence, this study exploring the concepts and practices of employee engagement and adaptive leadership advances the argument for the need to consider an engagement-leadership framework especially when strategies that mobilize employees need to be developed. Employee engagement and adaptive leadership are constructs that have been approached as models that can be used in settings where the aim is to positively drive and support individuals and organizations who are working through adversity, thus scholars and practitioners continue to share conceptual and empirical research to measure and assess engagement and leadership in theory and practice. Hence, the next chapter of this study presents the methods and methodology of how this research study was completed on this topic of employee engagement and adaptive leadership.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter discusses the method and methodology of this research study that determined the relationship between employee engagement and adaptive leadership. In this case, employees were working at a public state university striving to perform under funding policy that has challenged the institution to remain accountable to higher education and compete for financial resources from the state. Thus, considering employee engagement and adaptive leadership was highly relevant. Two research questions guided this inquiry.

1. What is the relationship between the level of employee engagement and adaptive leadership among employees?
2. How much of employee engagement can be explained by adaptive leadership when controlling for background characteristics of employees?

Two constructs were measured in this study. The dependent variable was employee engagement and the independent variable was adaptive leadership. For this study employee engagement was defined as “a condition where employees are fully engrossed in their work and are emotionally attached to their organization” (p.155) where engaged employees are involved and energized to do their work and act in ways that further the interest of their organization (Pandey & David, 2013). Employee engagement was further defined according to the instrumentation used for this research study, where the UWES-17 asserts concepts of vigor, dedication, and absorption to measure the engagement construct (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). These dimensions of engagement contextualize an overall measure of the variable. Vigor was characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication was being strongly involved in

one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Absorption was characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work. The independent variable of adaptive leadership was defined as the practice of mobilizing and tackling tough challenges to thrive in an organization (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009) where an individual who executes an adaptive approach focuses on how their self and others do the work they need to do in order to meet the situations they face. Adaptive leadership was also further defined according to the instrumentation used for this study, where the ALQ asserts six leader behaviors that are carried out in the adaptive leadership process (Northouse, 2019). These leader behaviors served as dimensions of adaptive leadership and contextualized an overall measure of the variable, and were described as the ability to 1) Get on the balcony—take a step back and see complexities and interrelated dimensions of a situation, 2) Identify the adaptive challenge—recognize adaptive challenges need adaptive solutions, and cannot be resolved with technical leadership, 3) Regulate distress—demonstrate confidence and calmness, to provide a safe environment to tackle difficult problems in conflict situations, 4) Maintain disciplined attention—get others to face challenging issues and not letting others avoid difficult problems, 5) Give the work back to the people—empower others to think with autonomy to solve their own problems, and 6) Protect leadership voices from below—accept unusual and radical contributions from all individuals, especially members that hold “lower” positions.

It was hypothesized that university employees who perceive themselves as highly engaged will also demonstrate high levels of practicing adaptive leadership behaviors used to thrive in a challenging environment where furthermore, that these two variables would

demonstrate a significant relationship. More so, it was expected that there was a likelihood that adaptive leadership does have a significant chance of explaining levels of employee engagement where consequently, then there would be implications that increasing adaptive leadership capacity can result in higher levels of engagement. Thus, the aim of this research was to better understand the relationship between employee engagement and adaptive leadership, to provide insight to employees and practitioners who seek to increase levels of engagement while remaining adaptive to succeed with their performance.

### **Design**

This study used a quantitative method to answer the research questions, and the most practical approach to gather and examine data for this study was the use of survey design (Vogt, 2007). Survey design allowed data collection to be completed by emailing an electronic survey to the population of this study. This method of data collection effectively and quickly facilitated access to a large population that was geographically and physically spread out, and also provided a mean for quick response rates (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, Fowler (2009) asserted that an electronic and computerized survey is optimal because it maintains consistency in responses by controlling the construction and the flow of how participants respond to one question at a time.

### **Instrumentation, Reliability, and Validity**

For this research, the electronic survey took approximately 10-12 minutes to complete (per participant) and consisted of three main parts: (a) employee engagement, (b) adaptive leadership, and (c) employee demographics and background characteristics. The survey instrumentation for this research combined and used two established questionnaires that are grounded and well-known for both proprietary and academic use. The Work & Well-being

Survey (UWES-17) was used to measure employee engagement and consisted of 17 Likert scaled questions/statement items that measured the vigor, dedication, and absorption dimensions and overall variable of employee engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 48). Next, the Adaptive Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) consisted of 30 Likert scaled questions/statement items that measured the six leader behavior dimensions and overall variable of adaptive leadership (Northouse, 2019, p. 285-267). Example statements found on the UWES-17 that measured employee engagement included 1) I am enthusiastic about my job, 2) I feel happy when I am working intensely, and 3) At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well. Participants responded to each employee engagement item using a 6-point scale of 0 - Never; 1 - Almost never/A few times a year or less; 2 - Rarely/Once a month or less; 3 - Sometimes/A few times a month; 4 - Often/Once a week; 5 - Very often/A few times a week; and 6 - Always/Every day. Example statements found on the ALQ included 1) I have the emotional capacity to comfort others as they work through intense issues, 2) During change, I challenge people to concentrate on the “hot” topics, and 3) I thrive on helping people find new ways of coping with organizational problems. Participants responded to each adaptive leadership item using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 - Strongly disagree to 5 - Strongly agree. More importantly, according to the ALQ scoring protocol (Northouse, 2019) responses to ten of the adaptive leadership statements were to be reverse coded, where the value of 1 - strongly disagree became 5 - strongly agree; 2 - disagree became 4 - agree; 3 remained neutral; 4 - agree became 2 - disagree; and 5 - strongly agree became 1 - strongly disagree. The survey for this research concluded with eight question items capturing employee demographics and background characteristics such as gender, race, age, education, employee title/position, length of

employment, and the number of employees participants supervise. These descriptors accounted for the objective to measure and relate engagement and leadership among various university employees who were working under the accountability and performance environment involved in this research. The full list of survey items and the complete instrumentation for this research is included in Appendix A of this study. Furthermore, reliability and validity for this study's instrumentation were considered by the following process.

The first step that distinguished validity within the survey instrument used for this research was that the survey for this study combined and implemented two established questionnaires that are scales that were made to measure employee engagement and adaptive leadership and have been grounded in previous research. More so, Cronbach's alphas were calculated to review the UWES-17 questions/statement items that measured employee engagement and to review the ALQ statements that measured adaptive leadership. This reliability analysis was completed by using data from this study's sample to determine internal consistency between the survey items and determine how well the questionnaires measured the constructs of employee engagement and adaptive leadership. Additionally, Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficient(s) were computed to complete significance testing and provide the probability-values ( $p$ -values determined by two-tailed testing) which determined if the items demonstrated strong correlation to measure the engagement and leadership variables. Finally, for reliability and validity of the instrumentation used for this study there was careful acknowledgment to cut off levels (which also included consideration of effect size indices), and, appropriate G\*Power levels were carefully considered for population and sample size and also selection effects. Further mention of reliability of this study's instrumentation is detailed later in

this chapter when specifying how data collected from the population and study sample was handled and analyzed.

### **Population**

As previous research has asserted, employee engagement and adaptive leadership are concepts and strategies that should be considered within organizations to drive successful productivity, where the engagement and leadership of individuals of all backgrounds and who work and serve on all levels of institutions should be mediated and supported (Pandey & David, 2013; Komives, et. al., 2017). More so, leadership is not about holding a certain title or position, thus should be considered and harnessed among all individuals on all levels of institutions and not only among employees with formal managerial titles (Northouse, 2019; Dudley, 2018). As this study was framed around the situation of performance policy used within public state universities to hold institutions accountable to higher education, this study focused on employees of various backgrounds, who were dealing directly with the problem of practice outlined in this research. Relatively, this study surveyed university employees—referring to the employees who held administrative roles throughout various levels at the institution. Specifically, the population for this study were Administrative & Professional (A&P) employees and their equivalents at a public state university within Florida's State University System. Referred to as the *University*, this population and the University were selected for this study, as the University is an institution within Florida where performance-based funding policy is in effect. Thus, the University's environment was challenged by accountability and performance constraints which made it relevant to study employee engagement and adaptive leadership. Including A&P employees and their equivalents as the university employees for this study involved a population classified as

frontline workers addressing problems of practice over accountability and performance, as these university employees held roles related to daily university operation, policies, program direction, and had monetary responsibility (UNF, n.d.). Work from these university employees shapes institutional progress in securing funding when the University follows state mandated quality standards, manages various student outcomes, and oversees that university metrics are attained.

These participants for this study were employees such as student affairs practitioners; employees who had administrative and student support roles in areas such as academic advising and undergraduate studies; employees who were non-tenured and were not primarily considered faculty; and employees who worked within centers and departments such as career services, enrollment services and the like, where centers and departments included divisions such as academic affairs with emphasis on roles that were administrative in nature. Moreover, these university employees ranged in rank from entry-level to upper/senior level full-time employees; and characteristics among the population varied in gender, race, age, education, years employed, position/titles, and supervisory roles.

### **Data Collection**

Prior to data collection, permission to complete this study was obtained from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and a distribution list with only emails of the university employee population pool of about 650-700 individuals was compiled by the Office of Institutional Research. Moreover, a link to the electronic survey was emailed to each participant individually using the distribution feature within the online survey platform used for this study known as Qualtrics. The survey was to remain open for two to four weeks with the aim of receiving 100-250 responses. Participants were able to complete the survey in their own personal

settings, on a computer device or even from a mobile device, by accessing their work email where the survey link was sent to. One to two weeks after distributing the survey, and depending on the number of responses received, a reminder email was scheduled to be sent (a part of Qualtrics' email reminder feature) to encourage additional participants to complete the survey. It was planned that the survey would not remain open for no longer than four weeks after first being distributed.

In other regard to data collection, participants' identities were kept (and are to remain) confidential. The survey for this study did not collect sensitive and identifiable information about specific participants, other than IP addresses that were used only when emailing the survey link via Qualtrics' 'invitation only' feature. This method created and used individualized survey links to control for participants' ability to only take the survey once, allowed for the ability to send reminder emails, and created an efficient process to track response rates and survey completion until data collection was complete. Thus, the population distribution list and IP addresses may be the only 'data' that held the most identifiable information and was only used to distribute the survey. More so, data storage and safety monitoring protocols were and (continue to be) followed in accordance with IRB approval for this research, and before completing the survey participants viewed an electronic informed consent which indicated the objective of this research, and data collection and confidentiality protocols for this study. Finally, limitations and delimitations of this study included that the survey was self-administered and additional personal or professional challenges outside of the University's performance environment could have affected how participants answered questions and responded to the survey. With final regard to data collection, a summary of the data collected and the study sample are as followed.

### *Summary of Data Collected and Study Sample*

The survey for this study was sent to 693 Administrative & Professional (A&P) and their equivalent staff members as the study population representing university employees. The survey link was sent as individual emails to the population on Monday, March 22, 2021 and within one week 127 participant survey responses were recorded. A reminder email was sent seven days later to 545 recipients who had not yet completed the survey within the first week of data collection, and two weeks from the survey first being distributed 225 participant responses were recorded. The survey closed Thursday, April 15, 2021 thus the survey remained open for approximately three and a half weeks, however the last recorded response was completed on Tuesday, April 6, 2021. Of the 266 surveys started, 248 surveys were recorded, yielding a 36% response rate.

To yield accurate data from the study sample, responses were reviewed for outliers to discard. Specifically, Qualtrics was set-up to automatically record participants' last activity from surveys that were initiated but were still in progress after one week after being started by the participant, thus surveys that were partially completed were initially included in the data collected. 51 survey responses that were not fully completed were discarded. And, after reviewing responses for additional outliers (I.e. duration of time taken to complete the full survey and responses provided by a few participants to answer demographic and background questions that allowed for a short text entry after a participant selected "other") no responses needed to be discarded. Thus, the yielded sample size was  $n=197$ . Overall, with a final response rate of 28%, the data collected was indeed sufficient to analyze (G\*Power, n.d.).

## Data Analysis

Data was exported and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which allowed data and results from the survey instrumentation used for this research study to be downloaded from Qualtrics. Data analysis began with descriptive statistics to describe characteristics of the study sample; and to analyze distribution, average measures, and variance of participants' responses for each section of the survey used for this study (Mujis, 2011). For instance, the frequency of categorical factors were calculated and analyzed to describe and account for how many participants were of the same demographic and background characteristics and the study sample. Additionally, mean scores were calculated and analyzed to describe and account for participants' average responses to the questions/statement items for both continuous variables that were measured according to the UWES-17 and ALQ Likert scales. Meaning, responses to the statements measuring employee engagement fell on a scale that ranged from 0 - Never to 6 - Always, every day, so mean scores ranging from 0 to 6 were produced and analyzed to describe on average how the study sample responded to items measuring the engagement variable. More so, analysis was completed to determine how participants described their attitudes towards the vigor, dedication, and absorption dimensions of engagement where essentially the higher the mean score for each statement item, the more frequent participants indicated they felt engagement levels every day or at least a few times a week. Similarly for adaptive leadership, as responses to the statements fell on a scale that ranged from 1 - Strongly disagree to 5 - Strongly agree, and with using the appropriate reverse coding per the ALQ scoring protocol (Northouse, 2019), mean scores ranging from 1 to 5 were produced and analyzed to describe on average how the study sample responded to items

measuring the leadership variable. Accordingly, analysis was completed to determine how participants perceived that they practice dimensions of adaptive leadership exuded through leader behaviors, where essentially the higher the mean score was for certain statement items that asked about positive leadership actions, the more frequent participants indicated they felt they exhibit the positive behavior.

After completing data analysis to detail the descriptive statistics that accounted for participants' characteristics and the study sample, and determined participants' average responses to statements measuring employee engagement and adaptive leadership, descriptive statistics were further included in data analysis to determine that the instrumentation for this research study was sound. Using data from this study's sample, reliability, correlation, and significance tests were ran to analyze if questions/statement items that measured employee engagement and adaptive leadership met statistical standards in order to be create variable composite scales and respectfully answer the research questions for this study.

### ***Reliability, Correlation, and Significance Testing***

In order to continue data analysis and answer the research questions for this study, each variable was computed into a composite variable using the questions/statement items from the instrumentation used for this study. First, by using the data collected, reliability analysis producing Cronbach's alphas, and, bivariate correlation analysis producing Pearson's correlations with *p*-values to indicate significance were all ran to test for statistically significant correlations between the items that were to measure both variables. A scale reliability analysis of the 17 statements on the UWES-17 measuring employee engagement was ran to provide an output on the descriptives for the scale, means summaries, and inter-item correlations. Also a

correlate bivariate analysis of the 17 engagement items was ran to output Pearson's correlation coefficient(s), two-tailed test of significance (flagging for significant correlations), means, and standard deviations. The same analysis was completed for the 30 questions/statement items on the ALQ measuring adaptive leadership. Consequently, the reliability, correlation and significance between each variable's statement items were analyzed by reviewing the *Inter-Item Correlation Matrix* produced from reliability testing, and by reviewing the *Correlations* table produced from bivariate testing for significance. The objective was to determine how closely items hung together to accurately form a scale to measure each variable. Cronbach's alpha levels between each variable's statement items were analyzed using the following thresholds: alpha scores 0.70 or greater were considered to be strongly correlated; scores between 0.69 and 0.40 were considered to be moderately correlated; anything between 0.39 to 0 was weakly correlated; and, positive correlation values meant items were positively correlated while negative signs meant items were negatively correlated. Also, two-tailed significance were reviewed to determine if statements demonstrated statistical significance at least at the 0.05 level, and there was preference that significance was demonstrated at the 0.001 level or the 0.01 level. Second, as reliability testing consisted of checking for significant correlation between all 17 engagement questions from the study's survey and then all 30 leadership questions from the study's survey, this produced an overall Cronbach's alpha score for each variable. Accordingly, an overall Cronbach's alpha score 0.70 or greater was considered to be reliable to then sufficiently calculate responses to all 17 UWES-17 items and to all 30 ALQ items together into official variable composite scales. Finally, the *Item-Total Statistics* produced from reliability testing detailed what would happen to the overall Cronbach's alpha score for each variable if responses to

questions/statements items were to be removed from analysis, so the total statistics were also reviewed to determine if items needed to be discarded to then yield a stronger correlated composite scale for each variable.

This methodology for reliability, correlation, and significance allowed for the constructed variables to remain as designated by the authors of the UWES-17 and the ALQ, where the composites were created using an item reduction strategy based on maximum likelihood estimation. And after thorough analysis of the instrumentation used for this study with much respect to reliability testing and scale building, the composite variables were used to further data analysis and determine the relationship and explanation between employee engagement and adaptive leadership by running correlation and regression analysis.

### ***Correlation and Regression***

To answer research question one and determine the association and strength in the relationship between both continuous variables, the data was analyzed by running bivariate correlation, or a Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficient (including the  $p$ -value (two-tailed) testing for significance between the variables, flagging for significant correlation). Specifically, Pearson's correlation coefficient is a measure of the strength of a linear association between two variables and is denoted by  $r$  where the purpose of running a correlation is to "attempt to draw a line of best fit through the data of variables, and the Pearson's correlation coefficient indicates how far away all the data points are to this line of best fit (or, how well the data points fit this new model/line of best fit)" (Laerd Statistics, n.d. p. 1). More so, for this current research study the Pearson's  $r$  that was yielded and demonstrated the relationship between employee engagement and adaptive leadership was evaluated using Laerd statistical norms where  $r$  could take the range

of a value from +1 to -1 and the closer the value of  $r$  was to +1 the stronger the positive association of the variables. Additionally, statistical norms used for this study asserted that positive  $r$  values 0.10 to 0.30 were considered as having small strength of association; positive  $r$  values 0.31 to 0.50 were considered as having medium strength of association; and positive  $r$  values 0.51 to 1.00 were considered as having large strength of association. And essentially, a value that did not indicate at least a small association was considered to be an indication that there was no working relationship between the variables.

Answering the first question for this study tested for correlation and significance, to determine the relationship across the employee engagement variable composite scale and the adaptive leadership variable composite scale. After the level and significance of the relationship between engagement and leadership was established, a hierarchical multiple linear regression (or in short, a hierarchical regression model, HRM) analysis was completed to further study and analyze the relationship between the variables and to answer research question two examining the explanation between adaptive leadership and employee engagement after including control variables. More so, a hierarchical regression model accounts for how predictor variables are introduced to a regression analysis model in a series of steps, where a nested-structure is evaluated to determine how the results of the model change after each variable is introduced into the analysis and the change in the increments of variation demonstrates how each predictor variable affects the dependent variable or an outcome after new factors are included (Laerd, n.d.). In other words, HRMs are designed to where the first step of the analysis controls additional variables thus accounts for the possibility that these additional factors contribute to the explanation of the outcome variable more than the main independent variable in question. For

this research, the demographic and background characteristics of the study sample were controlled for, which allowed this study to evaluate how adaptive leadership explained employee engagement regardless of employees' characteristics. In doing so, this supported one of the ideologies of this research study that asserted engagement and leadership should be assessed and harnessed among employees on all levels of the University regardless of an employee's status. Relatively, as the demographic and background characteristics of the study sample accounted for gender, race, age, education, job title, number years employed at the University, numbers years working within current department, and how many employees participants supervise, in order to run a regression model data collected and these control variables were first reviewed especially for categorical factors that were not measurable via continuous scales, and, for categorical variables that did not have enough responses from participants of the study. Meaning, values of the control variables were recoded, and dummy variables and reference groups were created as needed in order to run an HRM.

For instance, of the six categories accounting for education level (I.e. some college, Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, Doctoral degree, and other), three dummy variables were created for the participants who have a Bachelor to Doctoral degree. This was done because 1) there were not enough participants who received lower than a Bachelor's degree and there were not enough participants who listed other for education, but also because 2) as most positions at the University require a Bachelor's degree or higher (UNF, n.d.) this made it appropriate to create three dummy variables for the participants with Bachelor to Doctoral degrees. A similar rationale was approached for the seven groups accounting for job titles and positions. To account for participants representing various staffing levels of the University, three

dummy variables were created, one for mid-level coordinator/student advisor roles; one for managerial assistant/associate director roles; and one for department head/executive level service roles. And finally, race was also classified as people of color compared to participants who were not people of color, while the (dichotomous) variable of gender was arranged into female and not female.

Next, the multiple regression analysis test procedure from Laerd Statistics (n.d.) was followed to assert a protocol that detailed what statistical options to select to run the regression for this study. Precisely, the following steps were completed to determine how much variation of employee engagement could be explained by adaptive leadership: When running an analysis of linear regression the background characteristic control variables were first transferred as the “Independent(s)” (I.e. step 1 of the model) and then the adaptive leadership variable composite scale was transferred as the “Independent(s)” (I.e. step 2 of the model). Also, the test procedure involved statistical options to be selected to where the output of the composite scales and variables would produce regression coefficients estimates with confidence intervals at the 95% level; a model fit; and *R* square change. Results from the hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis were evaluated to report the findings in Chapter Four of this study. For purposes of this study, the Model Summary with the *R* square values ( $R^2$  coefficient of determination), *F* statistics, and *F* Change values, and, the *Coefficients* table with the unstandardized coefficient *B* values and the corresponding statistical significance were all analyzed and reported-on. The results from this study were evaluated to see how much variance the control variables had on employee engagement according to the *R* square value of the first model, and then the second  $R^2$  value yielded when adaptive leadership was introduced into the model was evaluated. Most

importantly, the  $F$ -values and the change of both models were reviewed for statistical significance. Finally,  $B$  values with significance were identified and compared from both models to determine how the variance of engagement could be further explained by the coefficients, but especially by leadership when holding and controlling for other variables.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed the design; instrumentation, reliability and validity; population; data collection; and data analysis for this research that determined the relationship between employee engagement and adaptive leadership and also determined how levels of employee engagement can be explained by adaptive leadership when controlling for characteristics of participants of the study sample. Consequently, the next chapter of this study reports the results after administering the survey for this research to the population.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

This chapter reports the results of this research from the survey given to employees at a public state university where these employees were engaging and adapting in their work while dealing with changing and challenging demands from higher education administration for their institution to remain accountable, and where performance-based funding policy was used to dictate how financial resources were allocated to their University. The overall aim was to consider how to best harness engagement and leadership to drive successful institutional performance, therefore this research study determined the relationship between employee engagement and adaptive leadership, and, how much of engagement could be explained by leadership among university employees when controlling for background characteristics. Results from this study includes: descriptive statistics of employee demographic and background characteristics of the study sample; descriptive statistics for both variables—employee engagement and adaptive leadership; and analysis of the research questions.

Using data collected from the study sample, the following section reports descriptive statistics of the participants all-together, providing characteristics of the sample, and reports results on how participants responded to the statement items from the survey measuring employee engagement and adaptive leadership.

### **Descriptive Statistics: Employee Demographic and Background Characteristics**

The descriptive statistics detail the results of the demographic and background characteristics of the participants from this study and provides a report of the sample from the population surveyed for this research. Specifically, Table 2 details who the participants from this study were. In all, 30% of respondents identified as male and more than double (66%) identified

as female. And along with gender identity, responses to race/ethnicity were representative of the University's employees (UNF, n.d.), where 71% participants from this study were white/Caucasian. Furthermore, the three largest age ranges that each account for about 25% to 30% of the study sample participants were 26-35 years old, 36-45 years old, and 46-55 years old. Thus, about 75% of participants were between the ages 26 to 55, only a small percentage of participants were older than 66 years of age (4%) and only 2% were 25 years old or younger. Over 60% of participants have obtained graduate degrees or higher, which aligns with most job requirements of these employees needing to have advanced degrees when working in academia (UNF, n.d.).

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics: Employee Demographic and Background Characteristics*

Variable	No. of participants	%
<b>Gender identity</b>		
Rather not disclose	7	3.6
Female	130	66.0
Male	59	29.9
Other	1	0.5
<b>Race or ethnicity</b>		
Rather not disclose	12	6.1
Black or African American	26	13.2
Hispanic or Latino	10	5.1
White	140	71.1
Asian	5	2.5
Native American or American Indian	2	1.0
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	-	-
Other	2	1.0
<b>Age</b>		
18 to 25 years old	4	2.0
26 to 35 years old	60	30.5
36 to 45 years old	47	23.9
46 to 55 years old	47	23.9

Variable	No. of participants	%
56 to 65 years old	31	15.7
66 years or older	8	4.1
Education level		
No college	-	-
Some college	2	1.0
Associates degree	1	0.5
Bachelors degree	67	34.0
Masters degree	102	51.8
Doctoral degree	22	11.2
Other	3	1.5

*Note.* (n=197)

Table 3 further reports characteristics of the study sample, specifically relating to participants' employment such as years spent working for the University, position title, and how many employees participants supervise. Overall, the majority of the study sample were mid-level employees (I.e. Coordinator/Advisor or Assistant Director) at 108 total participants (55%) while 61 participants (31%) do not supervise others, and the largest group of participants who supervise employees were the 46 employees (23%) who supervise at least 1 to 2 people. Although, there was a fairly even spread when it came to supervising others, as 34 participants (17%) supervise 3 to 5 employees, 20 participants (10%) supervise 6 to 10 employees and 36 participants (18%) supervise 11 or more employees. Also, 41 total participants (21%) were Dean/Director/Department Head to Executive Service level employees, which may be relative to the 131 in total (67%) who were entry-level to mid-level employees. And with 69% total of the sample supervising others, this was especially relevant to consider when measuring engagement and leadership among employees of all levels of the institution and furthermore, years employed

at the University can be telling when considering how participants are immersed into their environment (Jamrog, 2004).

Table 3 also demonstrates how of the study sample, most employees have worked at the University for 2 to 5 years (76 participants making up 39%) and the second largest range of years employees have worked at the institution was depicted by 63 participants (32%) who have been with the University for 11 or more years. This trend was also seen for the number of years employees have spent within their current/specific department, where most participants have been stationed within their current department for 2 to 5 years (96 participants making up 49%, almost half of the study sample) and the second largest range of years employees have been in their current department were depicted by 41 participants (21%) who have worked within their current department for 11 years or more. There were 21 participants (11%) who have only been with the institution for 1 year or less which accounted for how participants may be acclimated to the University operations (and how years employed may or may not affect their engagement and leadership) but also in terms of their lingering “day one” enthusiasm for the work they do (Dudley, 2019). There were 90% total participants who have been at the University for at least 2 years or more, which may account for individuals who were privy to accountability demands and PBF policy that have been present and were heavily weighing on their institution’s financial resources. Finally, it is interesting to note that there was a lesser amount of participants who have worked at the University for 6 to 10 years and a lesser amount of participants who have been stationed within their current department for 6 to 10 years.

**Table 3***Descriptive Statistics: University Employee Background Characteristics*

Variable	No. of participants	%
Years employed at the University		
0 to 1 year	21	10.7
2 to 5 years	76	38.6
6 to 10 years	37	18.8
11+ years	63	32.0
Employment/position title/role		
Specialist/Support Staff	23	11.7
Coordinator/Advisor	62	31.5
Assistant Director	46	23.4
Associate Director	18	9.1
Dean/Director/Department Head	33	16.8
Executive Service (AVP/VP)	8	4.1
Other Administrative	7	3.6
Years employed in current department		
0 to 1 year	26	13.2
2 to 5 years	96	48.7
6 to 10 years	34	17.3
11+ years	41	20.8
Number of employees supervised		
0 employees	61	31.0
1 to 2 employees	46	23.4
3 to 5 employees	34	17.3
6 to 10 employees	20	10.2
11+ employees	36	18.3

*Note.* (n=197)

After reporting descriptive statistics of the participants' demographic and background characteristics all-together, the following results reported are the descriptive statistics demonstrating how the study sample responded to the employee engagement and adaptive leadership variable scales.

### **Descriptive Statistics: Employee Engagement**

The first section of the survey for this study used the Work & Well-being Survey. The UWES-17 had 17 Likert scaled statements that measured employee engagement, and participants responded to each statement using a 6-point scale. Table 4 reports the descriptive statistics (mean scores) for how the participants responded to the UWES-17 statement items. The results report how participants described their attitudes towards dimensions of engagement (I.e. vigor, dedication, and absorption), where essentially the higher the mean score, the more frequent participants indicated they felt engagement levels every day or at least a few times a week. Overall, with statements capturing how participants feel energized, inspired, and immersed in their work, for the majority of the survey participants' average response to 14 statement items were 4 - Often/Once a week. Also, the only one item to receive an average score above a 4 demonstrated how participants seem to have feelings of pride in their work very often, if not a few times a week, where the mean score to the statement of dedication "I am proud of the work that I do" was a 5.28. Furthermore, the only two items with an average response rate below a 4 related to absorption, were participants indicated that they only sometimes forget about everything else around them while working (3.65) and find it difficult to detach from work (3.62).

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Statistics: Employee Engagement Mean Scores from Work & Well-being Survey*

Variable Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
At my work, I feel bursting with energy.	4.05	1.14
I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.	4.85	1.19
Time flies when I'm working.	4.65	1.14

Variable Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
At my job, I feel strong and enthusiastic.	4.49	1.16
I am enthusiastic about my job.	4.64	1.30
When I am working, I forget everything else around me.	3.65	1.59
My job inspires me.	4.31	1.36
When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	4.04	1.47
I feel happy when I am working intensely.	4.59	1.11
I am proud of the work that I do.	5.28	0.86
I am immersed in my work.	4.74	1.06
I can continue working for very long periods at a time.	4.82	1.09
To me, my job is challenging.	4.51	1.29
I get carried away when I'm working.	4.07	1.33
At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.	4.64	1.18
It is difficult to detach myself from my job.	3.62	1.71
At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.	4.94	0.97

*Note.* (n=197)

Similar to employee engagement, the descriptive results for how participants responded to the adaptive leadership statement items are reported next.

### **Descriptive Statistics: Adaptive Leadership**

The second section of the survey for this study used the Adaptive Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) which consisted of 30 Likert scaled statements that measured adaptive leadership. Participants responded to each statement item using a 5-point scale. Table 5 reports the descriptive statistics (mean scores) for how the participants responded to the ALQ items. Also, to offer comprehensive description on how participants responded to the 30 adaptive leadership items the results for the 30 statements are shared per the six leader behaviors, as these behaviors were the dimensions of adaptive leadership that were outlined in previous chapters of this study to further define and contextualize this concept and variable used for this research.

Overall, with statements capturing how participants exude the dimensions of adaptive leadership by practicing adaptive leader behaviors, participants' average responses/mean scores ranged from 3 - neutral to 4 - agree for just about all 30 statements except for five items. These five exceptions where participants' average responses were below 3 - neutral were only relevant to statements related to two leader behaviors: Identify the adaptive challenge (which had three of the five exceptions/the majority of the lowest mean scores—2.38, 2.54, & 2.86); and Give the work back to the people (which had the lowest mean score of all, 1.93 and another low mean score of 2.74). With Identify the adaptive challenge having the lowest mean scores, on average participants disagreed with three of the five statements related to that leader behavior. However, although Give the work back to the people had the lowest mean score of all (1.93) where participants strongly disagreed with “When people look to me to solve problems, I enjoy providing solutions”, this leader behavior also had the most variation as remaining statement items related to this behavior received 3 to 4, keeping with the overall average response trend of neutral to agree. Relatively, statements related to three leader behaviors received average responses of 3 to 4 only: Get on the balcony; Regulate distress; and Protect leadership voices from below, where Protect leadership voices had the two highest mean scores. For instance, “During times of difficult change, I welcome the thoughts of group members with low status” received the highest mean score of 4.41 when compared to all other items across the ALQ. But also, Regulate distress is the only behavior where participant responses to three of the five statements relative to this leader behavior ranged in 4 (4.00, 4.04, & 4.02), thus this behavior had items with the most mean scores in the 4 - agree range. Finally, statement items related to the

remaining leader behavior, Maintain disciplined attention were the only items to have received responses in the neutral range only.

**Table 5**

*Descriptive Statistics: Adaptive Leadership Mean Scores from Adaptive Leadership*

*Questionnaire*

Variable Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Get on the balcony</b>		
When difficulties emerge in our organization, I am good at stepping back and assessing the dynamics of the people involved.	4.11	0.69
In difficult situations, I sometimes lose sight of the “big picture.”	3.56 <sup>a</sup>	1.00
When I disagree with someone, I have difficulty listening to what the person is really saying.	3.81 <sup>a</sup>	0.88
In challenging situations, I like to observe the parties involved and assess what’s really going on.	4.15	0.70
In a difficult situation, I will step out of the dispute to gain perspective on it.	3.66	0.80
<b>Identify the adaptive challenge</b>		
When events trigger strong emotional responses among employees, I use my authority as a leader to resolve the problem.	2.38 <sup>a</sup>	0.88
When people are struggling with value questions, I remind them to follow the organization’s policies.	2.54 <sup>a</sup>	0.88
When others are struggling with intense conflicts, I step in to resolve the differences.	2.86 <sup>a</sup>	0.85
I encourage people to discuss the “elephant in the room.”	3.73	0.89
I thrive on helping people find new ways of coping with organizational problems.	3.83	0.87

Variable Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Regulate distress</b>		
When people feel uncertain about organizational change, they trust that I will help them work through the difficulties.	4.00	0.81
When people begin to be disturbed by unresolved conflicts, I encourage them to address the issues.	3.97	0.75
I have the emotional capacity to comfort others as they work through intense issues.	3.95	0.86
People recognize that I have confidence to tackle challenging problems.	4.04	0.84
People see me as someone who holds steady in the storm.	4.02	0.76
<b>Maintain disciplined attention</b>		
In complex situations, I get people to focus on the issues they are trying to avoid.	3.69	0.82
During change, I challenge people to concentrate on the “hot” topics.	3.20	0.80
When people try to avoid controversial organizational issues, I bring these conflicts into the open.	3.27	0.94
I think it is reasonable to let people avoid confronting difficult issues.	3.63 <sup>a</sup>	0.88
In an effort to keep things moving forward, I let people avoid issues that are troublesome.	3.46 <sup>a</sup>	0.84
<b>Give the work back to the people</b>		
When employees are struggling with a decision, I tell them what I think they should do.	2.74 <sup>a</sup>	0.98
When employees look to me for answers, I encourage them to think for themselves.	3.50	0.92
I encourage employees to take initiative in defining and solving problems.	4.23	0.64

Variable Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
When people look to me to solve problems, I enjoy providing solutions.	1.93 <sup>a</sup>	0.65
When people are uncertain about what to do, I empower them to decide for themselves.	3.87	0.68
<b>Protect leadership voices from below</b>		
During times of difficult change, I welcome the thoughts of group members with low status.	4.41	0.72
Listening to group members with radical ideas is valuable to me.	3.85	0.88
I am open to people who bring up unusual ideas that seem to hinder the progress of the group.	3.44	0.92
I have an open ear for people who don't seem to fit in with the rest of the group.	4.24	0.65
To restore equilibrium in the organization, I try to neutralize comments of out-group members.	3.04 <sup>a</sup>	0.86

*Note.* (n=197).

<sup>a</sup> the value that resulted from reverse scoring the original response value given by participants, based on ALQ scoring protocol (Northouse, 2019)

After reporting descriptive statistics that detailed how the study sample responded to the statements measuring the employee engagement and adaptive leadership variables, the following are the results from determining that the instrumentation for this research study was sound and that items within the UWES-17 and ALQ were statistically reliable to officially calculate into variable composite scales. Reliability testing and composite scale building included inter-item reliability, Pearson's correlation, and significance testing, following the methodology outlined previously in Chapter Three.

## Reliability Testing and Composite Scale Building

Reliability statistics producing Cronbach's alpha scores and bivariate correlation detailing statistical significance were generated to test whether the individual items within each variable scale had inter-item correlation to be accurately grouped together into a calculated composite scale. In summary, for both the employee engagement and adaptive leadership variables the overall threshold used to evaluate a Cronbach's alpha as a strong correlation was 0.70 or greater, with preferred significance ( $p$ -values) at the 0.001 level (two-tailed). The following narrative describes the variables and their items, pertaining to each variable's internal reliability.

All 17 statements from the UWES-17 were analyzed and calculated into one variable composite scale—*Employee engagement*. The results from the inter-item correlation reliability analysis and the significance level notations produced from analyzing Pearson's correlations and  $p$ -values (two-tailed) of statement items on the UWES-17 are summarized as: The Employee engagement composite variable Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 had a mean score of 4.47 (0.84  $SD$  where  $n=197$ ); more than half of the inter-item correlations were moderate (ranging from 0.40 to 0.69); and of the 136, every inter-item correlation was significant at the 0.001 level except for 15 correlations (six correlations were significant at the 0.01 level; two correlations were significant at the 0.05 level; and only seven correlations did not demonstrate significance). Also, if statements were to be removed from this overall Employee engagement scale, the Cronbach's alpha would decrease rather than increase, therefore this allowed for the composite scale to be calculated using all 17 statement items from the UWES-17 to create an overall total variable scale for how the study sample fared in employee engagement. Next, all 30 statements from the

ALQ were analyzed and calculated into one variable composite scale—*Adaptive leadership*. The Adaptive leadership composite produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.76; with a mean score of 3.57 (0.29 *SD* and  $n=197$ ). At least 124 of the inter-item correlations were moderate (ranging from 0.40 to 0.69); and of the numerous correlations, over 94 inter-item correlations were significant at the 0.001 level. Coincidentally, according to the Item-Total Statistics, there were only four statements that if deleted the result would be a slightly higher Cronbach's alpha for the Adaptive leadership composite scale, but the alpha score would only increase by less than 0.05, thus this composite scale was calculated using all 30 statement items from the ALQ to create an overall total variable for how the study sample fared in adaptive leadership.

After thorough analysis and respect to reliability testing and composite scale building, both variables for this research study were measured using each variable's calculated composite scale (an overall employee engagement composite scale and an overall adaptive leadership composite scale) to determine the relationship and explanation of variance between engagement and leadership. The results of analysis to the first question for this current study are detailed next.

### **Correlation Analysis: How Employee Engagement Relates to Adaptive Leadership**

Bivariate data analysis consisted of running Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficient (testing for two-tailed significance) to address the first question of this research study (What is the relationship between the level of employee engagement and adaptive leadership?) As previously mentioned, for this current study results were evaluated by Laerd (n.d.) statistical norms that asserted the closer the value of  $r$  was to +1 then the stronger the positive association of the variables were, and the results were analyzed by evaluating positive  $r$  values 0.31 to 0.50 as having medium strength of association.

Hence, the results indicated that when considering all statement items from the UWES-17 and from the ALQ, employee engagement and adaptive leadership demonstrated a medium association. This moderate correlation across the overall composite scale Employee engagement and the overall composite scale Adaptive leadership had an  $r$  value of 0.32 with significance at the 0.001 level. In other words, there was a statistically significant relationship that was demonstrated, indicating that engagement and leadership were moderately correlated and the strength of the relationship across the variables can be described as suitably meeting a “best fit line” representing the closeness of the correlation. Overall, employee engagement and adaptive leadership seemed to have a significant association, and the implications to this correlation are discussed in Chapter Five of this study, especially as it pertains to the second research question of this research. Accordingly, as the relationship between employee engagement and adaptive leadership can be described as moderate, this correlation allowed for further data analysis and reporting of running a regression model to determine how adaptive leadership explains the variance of employee engagement and to isolate the affect leadership had on engagement when controlling for background characteristics.

### **Regression Analysis: How Employee Engagement is Predicted by Adaptive Leadership**

A hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis was completed to determine how much variation of employee engagement could be explained by adaptive leadership. The results from the regression models were favorable with an overall model that was fit and demonstrated significant functionality. The  $R^2$  yielded from the first step of the regression analysis (I.e. model one) was 0.231 and was statistically significant, thus the demographic and background characteristics of the study sample explained 23% of the variation of employee engagement. As

step one from the HRM yielded a decent model with just the control variables in and of themselves, model two advanced these findings with an even better model where all of the scores improved. Step two from the HRM yielded an even higher  $R$  square value of 0.288 that was suitably statistically significant. This meant that even after accounting for various background factors of participants of the study sample, an additional 5%, or, almost 30% of the variance in employee engagement could be explained by adaptive leadership. Most notably, there was statistical significance at the 0.001 level for the  $R^2$  value of both model one and model two. Also, the  $F$  change that increased by 10 points from steps one to two depicted how the change in the  $R$  square from model one to model two was too significant. Overall, it was obvious that just by the way people are/ participants' background characteristics told a lot about how they might be engaged as employees, but when the adaptive leadership component was included there was an even better set of predictors of people's engagement as employees. In other words, regardless of participants' characteristics, adaptive leadership was above and beyond a high predictor of employee engagement. These results demonstrated that there was something interesting and important taking place with adaptive leadership as it related to employee engagement. And with over a quarter of the variance in employee engagement being explained by adaptive leadership (and participants' characteristics), the  $B$  coefficients also demonstrated promising results.

After comparing the results from the partial model (I.e. step one of the HRM consisting of the control variables only) to model two, there were no changes in any of the coefficient values from steps one to two that warrant discussion. More so, only values that demonstrated statistical significance are worth mentioning before reporting final results of the adaptive leadership variable of interest. The only two control variables with  $B$  values from both model one

and model two that demonstrated statistical significance as predictors of engagement were age and job title/position. Specifically, for job title/position a significant  $B$  value was only yielded for the participants who were mid/coordinator level. When holding all other variables constant, the results were as follows: As age increased, this background variable accounted for a 0.26 increase and explanation of employee engagement; and with a  $-0.47$   $B$  value, participants who were mid/coordinator level had less engagement. In other words, the older participants of this sample were, the higher their level of engagement was; and participants of mid-level status were less engaged (or had the least amount of engagement) when compared to people who were not mid/coordinator level. For every one-unit change in employee engagement, there was an additional predictive value of 0.26 age-units. Thus, the coefficient value indicated that age demonstrated a minor contribution with a general pattern that was relatively small but a significant predictor of engagement among the sample. For employee job title/position, being a mid-level/coordinator employee was a significant predictor of having a lower amount of engagement. However, as participants' characteristics were appropriately recoded and arranged into dummy variables (per the methodology outlined in Chapter Three of this study) and as there were only two categorical factors that demonstrated significant prediction of engagement, this meant that overall characteristics alone were not significant in predicting engagement. These results were favorable as the idea behind this current research was that engagement and leadership should be harnessed among *all* people, leading to the final and most significant report of the results.

The variable that yielded the largest statistically significant predictive power in explaining employee engagement was the variable of interest, adaptive leadership. For every

one-unit increase in adaptive leadership, the model predicts a 0.72-point increase in employee engagement, and this effect demonstrated statistical significance. The adaptive leadership coefficient value of 0.72 was higher than the remaining *B* values of both models, hence when reviewing and comparing all other *B* values (I.e. the control variables), adaptive leadership was the biggest predictor that was significant. In other words, when controlling for other factors that could affect employee engagement, participants who had higher levels of adaptive leadership were more likely to have higher levels of employee engagement. And although the leadership variable was the strongest predictor and most significant, it was not likely that this variable was taking over the explanatory power of alternate variables especially as there was not a change in significant variables from models one to two aside from additional power added from adaptive leadership. Consequently, when controlling for “everything that is not adaptive leadership” the two main variables of this research study, engagement and leadership demonstrated a connection. This result enhanced the aim of this study and warrants the exclamation that it was not by chance that adaptive leadership relates and explains employee engagement. Moreover, the regression analysis from this study furthered points made during initial data analysis that first described the correlation between engagement and leadership. Meaning, when focused on the relationship between employee engagement and adaptive leadership, the hierarchical multiple linear regression modeled how participants’ characteristics did (or, did not) significantly influence the relationship leadership had on engagement. When considering adaptive leadership, there was a unique contribution to employee engagement, which was the relationship factor that was the strongest and most relevant in this study.

Finally, Table 6 shows the results from the HRM and the significant findings that were shared. Moving forward the interpretation of the results, implications and consideration for future research are shared in the next and final Chapter Five of the study.

**Table 6**

*Hierarchical Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results Explaining the Variance for Employee Engagement*

Employee Engagement	Model 1			Model 2			$\Delta F$
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>p</i>	
Step 1							5.574***
Constant	3.51	0.31	0.00	1.08	0.69	0.12	
Gender <sup>a</sup>	0.16	0.12	0.17	0.18	0.11	0.13	
Race <sup>b</sup>	-0.01	0.13	0.93	0.03	0.13	0.84	
Age	0.28***	0.06	0.00	0.26***	0.05	0.00	
Education BA (ref) <sup>c</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Education MS <sup>c</sup>	0.10	0.12	0.42	-0.03	0.12	0.79	
Education Doc. <sup>c</sup>	0.04	0.19	0.82	-0.06	0.19	0.76	
No. years at university <sup>d</sup>	-0.03	0.09	0.76	-0.03	0.09	0.76	
Position mid-coordinator	-0.47**	0.14	0.00	-0.44**	0.14	0.00	
Position managerial role	-0.25	0.14	0.07	-0.23	0.14	0.10	
Position DDD-exec. (ref) <sup>e</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	
No. years within dept. <sup>d</sup>	-0.06	0.10	0.58	-0.06	0.10	0.54	
Supervisory role <sup>f</sup>	0.02	0.04	0.67	0.00	0.04	0.95	
Step 2							15.005***
Adaptive Leadership				0.72***	0.19	0.00	
Model R <sup>2</sup>	.231			.288			
Degrees of freedom	10			11			
<i>F</i> statistics	5.574***			6.813***			

*Note.* (n=197). *B* = unstandardized beta; *SE B* = standard error for the unstandardized beta; *R*<sup>2</sup> = R Square;  $\Delta F$  = F Change.

<sup>a</sup> Gender = accounts for two groups of gender identity, 1 = female and 0 = not female. <sup>b</sup> Race = accounts for two groups of races, 1 = people of color and 0 = not people of color. <sup>c</sup> Education BA was the reference category of participants who have earned a Bachelor's degree; Education MS was 1 = participants who have earned a Master's degree and 0 = those who do not have/do not only have a MS degree; Education Doc. was 1 = participants who have earned a Doctoral degree and 0 = those who do not have a Doctoral degree. <sup>d</sup> No. years = referred to number of years participants have been employed at the University and within their current working department. <sup>e</sup> Position DDD-executive was the reference category of participants who were Dean/Director/Department Head or AVP/VP Executive level employees. <sup>f</sup> Supervisory role = accounted for participants who supervise other employees within the University.

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter reported the results of the data collected during this research of the descriptive statistics that described the participants of the study sample and the results of Pearson's bivariate correlations to determine and analyze a statistically significant relationship between two variables measuring dimensions of employee engagement and adaptive leadership. Overall, the results indicated that employee engagement and adaptive leadership did have a moderate relationship, and furthermore a hierarchical multiple linear model demonstrated very successful results from the regression analysis. An HRM had the statistical ability to handle control variables and isolate the effect between the two variables in question. Hence, even after accounting for background characteristics of participants from the study sample, adaptive leadership on its own was an additional bonus predictor explaining the variance of employee

engagement. The next and final chapter of this study discusses how the results of this research were interpreted and asserts implications for future directions on engagement and leadership.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

Over the past few decades public American universities experienced a drastic decrease in the financial support that they received from their state, where less state support resulted in institutions increasing the cost of college that students and their families became responsible for paying (Thelin, 2011). The rising cost of a public college education prompted higher education governing boards to implement accountability practices such as performance-based funding policy to ensure universities were effectively and efficiently meeting the needs of students. Accountability and performance measures have pressured institutions to remain productive, where it was relevant to consider how university employees were remaining engaged with the work that they do but also how employees were being adaptive to demanding challenges presented to them. More so, research has shown that higher employee engagement levels lead to higher levels of productivity within organizations (Bouckenooghe, Devos, & Van den Broeck, 2010; Nimon & Zigarmi, 2015), and literature has shown how employees exude leadership has been crucial to the performance of individuals and their organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Humphrey, 2014). Furthermore, the adaptive leadership model was developed (Heifetz, et. al., 2009) for scholars and practitioners to consider ways that individuals can practice leader behaviors that mobilize themselves to tackle tough challenges and thrive in any situation. Relatively, as higher education's accountability and performance measures have challenged universities (Heller, 2011) and as there was a negative impact to a public state university within the state of Florida (FSUS, n.d.), it was essential to explore the constructs of employee engagement and adaptive leadership. Hence, the purpose of this study was to determine the relationship of employee engagement and adaptive leadership where two research questions

guided this inquiry: 1) What is the relationship between the level of employee engagement and adaptive leadership among employees? and 2) How much of employee engagement can be explained by adaptive leadership when controlling for background characteristics of employees? This research study assessed the efforts of university employees, and specifically how employee engagement and adaptive leadership could be understood and implemented as models and workforce strategies to drive successful performance within institutions. Also, this study informs key stakeholders (including university employees themselves) who are interested in implementing efficient university performance measures and who are interested in increasing engagement among university employees while using effective leadership strategies for the betterment of higher education administration. In result, this final chapter of this research study further explores the findings from this study; discusses applications of the findings; and recommends direction for future research.

### **Findings from Research Questions and Implications**

To answer the first research question of this study, a Pearson's correlation analysis was completed and analyzed to determine the strength of the relationship between the two variables employee engagement and adaptive leadership. The analysis and results indicated that together, engagement and leadership demonstrated a medium correlation with a Pearson's  $r$  of 0.32 significant at the 0.001 level. Although both constructs can each be considered a positive workforce strategy (Pandey & David, 2013; Mrig & Sanaghan, 2019), engagement and leadership were only moderately related thus could be further analyzed and explained as separate constructs that could then be framed together. Hence, the second research question of this study involved completing a hierarchical multiple linear regression, where step one of the model

considered how demographic and background characteristic control variables may have explained employee engagement and then step two of the model introduced the main variable in question, adaptive leadership. The regression analysis demonstrated a statistically significant model fit, where control variables alone explained 23% of the variance in engagement, and the  $R^2$  of the second model was even more statistically significant. Along with including characteristic factors, it was found that adaptive leadership explained more than a quarter of employee engagement with an  $R^2$  of 0.289. More importantly, the coefficient values indicated that only two control variables demonstrated significance in predicting employee engagement (age and a mid-level job title), but the highest predictor variable that had the most statistical power in predicting employee engagement was indeed adaptive leadership. As such, the discussion focuses on the isolated effect between engagement and leadership, while recommendations for future research are drawn from the appearance of additional significant variables to study further.

Of the study sample, as adaptive leadership increased, employee engagement increased by 0.72, and this increase was statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Moving forward, the results of this study and attention to previous literature can now add to the topic of this completed research study, regarding how university employees may foster employee engagement and use adaptive leadership to solve problems of practice with the aim of managing productivity and reaching outcomes, striving in performance, remaining accountable, and ultimately receiving financial state support. The implications to discuss from the findings involves synthesizing practical levels of both engagement and leadership that were manifested during this study and

suggests how the results are meaningful according to the University environment and the employees of this study.

### ***Implications of Practical Levels of Employee Engagement***

The first section of the survey for this study consisted of 17 questions/statement items that measured the first construct of this research, employee engagement. For this study, employee engagement was further contextualized by concepts of vigor, dedication, and absorption, and participants' responses to the 17 Likert scaled engagement items produced descriptive statistics (specifically mean scores) ranging from 0 - Never to 6 - Always/Every day. Accordingly, for data analysis the mean scores were analyzed and reported-on to describe the frequency and average responses participants selected to answer to the engagement statements. Now, these mean scores can be further synthesized to draw implications on how the study sample assessed their practical levels of being in a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is a persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior—otherwise known as an engaged employee. Relatively, the implications of how the study sample fared on their levels of employee engagement are relevant to previous literature that established norms on how to discuss and interpret the results after administering the UWES-17.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) developed the engagement scale to provide scholars and practitioners with an instrument that can measure and assess the vigor, dedication, and absorption dimensions and the overall variable of employee engagement. Specifically, their seminal research established scoring norms that uses the mean scores and scoring percentages to interpret participants responses into very low, low, average, high, and very high categories of

employee engagement. Aligning with seminal research, overall participants of this study were found to be average in their levels of employee engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). And as vigor referred to energy, resilience, willingness, and persistence; dedication referred to enthusiasm, pride, meaning, and inspiration; and absorption referred to being happily immersed in work, the results imply that on average participants preserved and persisted in the work that they do despite their challenges.

These average levels of employee engagement were consistent with previous research that demonstrated staff who hold administrative roles within organizations and student affairs professionals tend to be moderately engaged within their respective environments (Shuck, 2010; Hempfling, 2015). Furthermore, using the data from this research study, implications of an average engagement level for participants of this study sample who are working under performance directives are plausible especially when acknowledging the recent efforts made from the University associated with this study. Specifically, over the past few years the University has instilled numerous processes to align the efforts of staff where for instance published annual reports now demonstrate sections directed to the performance-based funding metrics while events hosted for students are now designed to target specific outcomes that increase student success (UNF, n.d.). These implications and context begin to inform ways that university employees can apply the findings of this research. For example, employees would benefit from streamlining processes that capture efforts that are being taken to ensure departments across the University are adhering to the funding metrics. Ideally, having a template that employees should use when creating and hosting student events, or, investing in an integrative enterprise management system that tracks and reports business intelligence and

student data on matters concerning academic advising and how students are progressing towards graduation for instance, are just a couple of ways university practitioners can increase their intentionality with ensuring their efforts align with the target performance for their institution. Furthermore, these implications on employee engagement relate to the implications of adaptive leadership.

### ***Implications of Practical Levels of Adaptive Leadership***

The second section of the survey for this study consisted of 30 questions/statement items that measured the second construct of this research, adaptive leadership. For this study, adaptive leadership was further contextualized by practical leader behaviors that individuals can perform, and participants' responses to the 30 Likert scaled leadership items produced descriptive statistics (specifically mean scores) ranging from 1 - Strongly disagree to 5 - Strongly agree. Accordingly, for data analysis the mean scores were analyzed and reported on to describe the frequency and average responses participants selected to answer to the leadership statements. Now, these mean scores can be further synthesized to draw implications on how the study sample assessed their practical levels of being able to see complexities, identify challenges, regulate calmness, maintain attention, empower others, and accept contributions from all colleagues—otherwise known as an adaptive leader. Relatively, the implications of how the study sample fared on their levels of adaptive leadership are relevant to previous literature that established norms on how to discuss and interpret the results after administering the ALQ.

Northouse (2019) developed the leadership scale to provide scholars and practitioners with an instrument that can measure and assess the six leader behaviors that individuals should implement into practice to demonstrate the dimensions of the adaptive leadership model.

Specifically, the seminal research established scoring norms that uses the summed mean scores and scoring percentages to interpret participants responses into a high range, moderately high range, moderately low range, and low range. Aligning with seminal research, overall participants of this completed study were found to be moderately high in their inclination to exhibit adaptive leadership behaviors (Northouse, 2019). Having a moderately high score in adaptive leadership speaks to participants' skill in engaging an emotional capacity that gives individuals the ability to work thru challenges, and based on the results of this study it can be implied that this skill can be related to participants' emotional commitment exuded through their employee engagement. Furthermore, having a moderately high score in leader behavior actions that demonstrate how participants are maintaining disciplined attention can also relate to employee engagement, as this behavior speaks to how participants have the ability to remain focused and concentrate on organizational issues. Also, it can be implied that university employees who were moderately high in their adaptive leadership also have the ability to see the bigger picture and welcome ideas from all peers especially while the organization is undergoing issues.

Overall, the study sample appeared to have a thriving adaptive leadership capacity and previous studies have demonstrated that when individuals deploy adaptive leadership energy and involvement levels increase, communication increases, and shared responsibility makes work more meaningful (Serrano & Reichard, 2011; Shuck & Herd, 2012). Additionally, the synthesis and implications of the levels of engagement and leadership, and the relationship yielded from this study become more impactful given additional context of the challenging environment that participants of this study were involved in. For instance, employees working at the University involved in this study were working against performance metrics that were counterintuitive to

their University mission and purpose (Cornelius & Cavanaugh, 2016). And as a smaller, regional institution, the University had to compete with larger, research I, flagship institutions where it seemed as if the competition was destined to succeed when performance-based funding was implemented into the state university system. Being an employee at the University associated with this study meant that participants may have been engaged in numerous on-going meetings, University-wide Town Hall conversations, and these employees would have especially seen changes in practices of requirements to document and chart their efforts to ensure student outcomes were attained. Hence, this context makes it more plausible, to why university employees are adaptive in their environment. With average and moderate levels of both engagement and leadership, the findings from this study can be interpreted into applicable action items that employees should explore and discuss.

### **Application of the Findings**

This study suggested that adaptive leadership is a significant predictor of employee engagement. With this information, it is imperative that university employees apply these findings to their working environment with the intention of remaining engaged and adaptive through change and challenge presented to them. More so, there have been studies that imply what factors increase levels of engagement (Pandey & David, 2013; Truss, et. al., 2013), however the application of the findings from this research can be narrowed down on how to embed an adaptive leadership model into institutions seeking to thrive. There are key examples of what an adaptive leadership model could resemble given the context of this study, where these next suggestions provide a reasonable protocol that employees can follow to instill meaningful practices into the work that they do.

As it has been found that adaptive leadership predicts employee engagement, university practitioners and administration would benefit from the creation of a workforce training program on the adaptive leadership technique. An adaptive leadership training program would be centered around Heifetz and his associates' work (1994, 2002, 2009) and the framework for this study. This research asserted how leadership is not seen as a practice for only individuals with formal managerial roles to implement, hence an adaptive leadership model engages all employees within the institution. Department heads across the University can be provided with continual updates such as data bytes, that reports the status of how the University is fairing on the performance metrics. These data bytes should facilitate staff monthly meetings, where colleagues are able to connect how the University's measures informs their daily efforts in the services that they offer students and the administrative work that is done. During meetings and collaborative conversations, employees can provide input and set shared goals on bi-annual and annual objectives. Furthermore, these goals can be shared on a transparent platform, where department heads across the university can coordinate efforts across the campus to ensure the efforts remain cohesive and accountable productivity is maximized.

Additional to having employees consume University status reports and contribute to solutions and shared goals, embedding an adaptive leadership training program specifically involves a series of workshops that staff can facilitate and attend. For instance, employees can participate in exercises where participants list and assess any challenges that are presented in their specific department, but also challenges across the University. Employees can participate in exercises where they are charged with providing specific examples of the challenge presented to them following the six leader behaviors of the adaptive leadership model. Moreover, resources

should be provided at these workshops, where for instance employees can complete engagement and leadership assessments (such as the UWES-17 and the ALQ), to provide anecdotal measures of their engagement and leadership perceptions and reflect on their current success and impact made within their department from the work that they do.

Finally, a program that embeds an adaptive leadership approach should include mentoring opportunities for university employees to connect with colleagues that have formal managerial titles (and connections can even be made to the students that employees are motivated to serve). Research has shown that when individuals are mentored on best-practices and when upper administration authentically supports the work that employees do there is an increase in levels of motivation, and personal and professional achievement (Northouse, 2019; Ohlson, Buenaño, & Gregg, 2021). A mentoring program that focused on the leadership development of employees may also improve other areas such as the overall professional development of university employees and human resource management. Employees can be commissioned with taking ownership of their leadership learning and practice, while also assessing and reacting to effective leadership strategies that fuels their desire to perform and strive (Humphrey, 2014). All together, these suggestions for how the results and implications of this completed research can be applied to university settings appeals to university employees who seek practical strategies that are implemented into workplace settings to cultivate a positive and successful working environment and enhance the overall profession of higher education administration.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

The introduction to this topic on accountability and performance in higher education, the literature reviewed, and the completion of this study that measured employee engagement and adaptive leadership lead to four recommendations for future research.

Within this study, the demographic and background characteristics of the study sample served as control variables when running a regression model in order to align with this study's overall aim of describing how adaptive leadership explains employee engagement regardless of employees' characteristics. This methodology supported the idea that engagement and leadership should be assessed and harnessed among all university employees, for higher education administrators, stakeholders, and university leaders to consider ways to increase engagement and leadership for institutional success. Subsequently, a major recommendation for future research is to consider advanced inferential data analysis that measures and reports group differences between the university employees to determine how/if employee engagement and adaptive leadership are manifested differently depending on an individual's characteristics. For instance, to test for group differences across types of employees based-off of peoples' characteristics, one-way ANOVAs (or an equivalent non-parametric test for non-linear data) may be completed, or independent samples t-test for employee groups (e.g., managerial level employees compared to non-managerial level employees) may be completed. This first recommendation aligns with the results of this completed study, especially as two demographic control variables emerged as having significant effects with engagement. Moreover, additional research and analysis will further the implications and application of this study, to determine how engagement and leadership workforce strategies and training exercises may be catered to meet the various needs

of various employees with the desire for all university employees to resonate with adaptive leadership practices and reach shared goals with all colleagues of their institution. Relatively, additional research can expand to include other university groups such as faculty-based roles, part-time positions, and support staff. As university efforts completed by all employees on various levels should remain cohesive, including more groups of employees that represent additional facets of university work and administration will be beneficial for future research.

The second recommendation resulting from this research study also considers additional inferential analysis. Specifically, both the engagement questionnaire and the adaptive leadership questionnaire used for this study measure different dimensions of engagement and leadership. According to the questionnaires, these dimensions such as engagement's vigor, dedication, and absorption, and adaptive leadership's six leader behaviors each have a number of statement items that relate to the specific dimensions defined in this study. Hence, there is opportunity to enhance the instrumentation used for this study by compiling subsections that measure the dimensions of engagement and leadership even further and more-so, distinctly. This methodology creates the opportunity to add sub-variables to future research, thus scholars and practitioners can further contextualize how employee engagement and adaptive leadership can be measured and explained. Also, this recommendation aligns with the implications and application of this completed study. University employees can further understand what aspects of engagement and leadership to enhance more and implement targeted strategies to increase levels of vigor and dedication for instance. Or, employees can aim to increase communication within the institution to ensure employees are aware of presented challenges and updates, and that employees on all levels are a part of solutions.

This research study explored employee engagement and adaptive leadership under the context of higher education's accountability and performance demands. Moving forward, there is opportunity for additional studies to further the research on engagement and leadership under different context or challenges presented to university employees. Furthermore, there is much opportunity for additional leadership styles to be considered, measuring how the various leadership approaches that are commonly known in the field of leadership education (I.e. transformational leadership; servant leadership; authentic leadership) may relate-to and/or predict employee engagement levels. As previous research has indicated, understanding, assessing, and implementing various effective leadership styles has a large impact on how employees are driven within their workplaces (Pandey & David, 2013; Humphrey, 2014). And as employees may manifest engagement and levels in different ways and at different times, having more understanding of how various leadership patterns fit into the model of engagement and leadership can be of essence for future research. With this recommendation, the objective of future research can continue to adhere to the desire and need to increase engagement levels within institutions, and further asserts just how much leadership is vital to the increase of productivity among both individuals and organizations as a whole (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Grogan, 2013; Dufour & Marzano, 2011).

In addition to adding and exploring various leadership approaches and models that may relate to employee engagement to future research, the final recommendation for future research also involves connecting to other possible facets related to this topic. This final recommendation brings the discussion on engagement and leadership in full circle and offers a holistic connection to the topic of interest. Meaning, there is discourse regarding how performance policy has

improved (or derailed) how institutions are approaching mandated university metrics (Kelchen & Stedrak, 2016; Tandberg & Hillman, 2014). Therefore, it is recommended that stakeholders and administrators begin to explore ways to research this phenomenon of accountability and performance. Constructively, there is room to not only design studies that measures the impact of how university employees perceive accountability and performance directives, but also advanced analysis can be completed to determine if connections can be drawn to university outcomes such as student graduation and retention rates. This final recommendation can be advanced farther, where scholars and practitioners can also explore additional methodologies and conduct cross-sectional and/or longitudinal studies that introduce data collected from similar and/or varying populations and institutions where performance-based funding policy is in effect. Also, this final recommendation can incorporate the aforementioned recommendations from this study, where for instance a cross-sectional study can also evaluate how different groups of university employees perceive and demonstrate the specific dimensions and possible sub-variables of engagement and leadership.

Overall, the recommendations for future research will add to the study of employee engagement and adaptive leadership. These recommendations promote the theory and practice of these constructs while offering practitioners strategic methods to approach future research on engagement and leadership. Continuing research on this topic will positively affect university employees on a professional and practical level. More importantly, this work evokes university employees on a personal level representing the continuous nature and process of engagement and leadership.

## **Conclusion**

Back in 2015, the Board of Governors for the state of Florida implemented new funding policy within its public state university system, as a mechanism to hold institutions accountable to their performance. According to the performance-funding policy, lower performing institutions were at risk of losing state funding if university metrics were not met. This challenging accountability and performance environment can cause much strife within lower-performing institutions, where it was relevant to explore positive workforce strategies that keep university employees engaged in the work that is needed to get the job done while keeping employees adaptive to challenges presented to them. Thus, this research study asserted the concepts and practices of employee engagement and adaptive leadership, as two constructs that can drive institutional success. This study used the Work & Well-being Survey (UWES-17) and Northouse's Adaptive Leadership Questionnaire to present a quantitative study of an engagement-leadership framework among participants at a public state university. This study presented a correlation analysis and hierarchical multiple linear regression (or in short, a hierarchical regression model, HRM) to explore the relationship between employee engagement and adaptive leadership. Results indicated a moderate relationship between the two constructs, and adaptive leadership was indeed a significant predictor of employee engagement. In this case the implications lead to four recommendations for future research. Overall, it is imperative that employees on all levels of organizations are engaged in their work, and more so that leadership capacity is fully harnessed within institutions. And as the model of adaptive leadership prescribes practical leader behaviors that can be exuded by individuals of all backgrounds and of various job roles within the institutions, it is most relevant to consider how these adaptive actions of

employees are related to higher levels of engagement with the aim to drive success.

Conclusively, findings from this study validated the need for practitioners to facilitate effective workforce strategies that focus on implementing leadership practices for all employees to engage in for the sake of accountability, performance, and the like.

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## Appendix A: Survey Instrument

### University Employee Engagement & Adaptive Leadership

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#### Survey Info & Consent

##### Introduction to the Study and Informed Consent

Hello, my name is Karine Stukes and I am a doctoral candidate here at the University of North Florida completing a research study for my dissertation. I really do appreciate your time in taking this survey. My goal is to study the relationship between employee engagement and adaptive leadership among university employees, to consider ways to best harness workforce strategies that support individual engagement and leadership and overall university success.

Participation in this survey will take about 10-12 minutes to complete, and all responses will be and will remain confidential. Only authorized doctoral committee members will have access to responses. There is no compensation for taking part in this study. Additionally, there are no foreseeable risks for taking part in this study. Participation is voluntary and there are no penalties for deciding not to participate or for withdrawing participation. Furthermore, this study is being completed independently and solely for my research dissertation purposes; No data and responses will be shared with UNF senior administration or any other individuals.

If there are any questions or concerns about this study, please contact me using the information below. Additionally, please print a copy of this consent form for your record.

Thank you for your consideration.

##### Contact Information:

Karine Stukes

Email: k.stukes@unf.edu

##### Authorized Doctoral Committee Members:

Dr. Pascale

Email: amanda.pascale@unf.edu

Dr. Kulp

Email: amanda.kulp@unf.edu

For questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the UNF Institutional Review Board (IRB) at irb@unf.edu or by phone at 904-620-2498.

Click the Arrow Below to Consent and Begin Survey

## SECTION ONE: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

This first section collects information on how you engage with your organization.

The following statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, indicate "0" (zero). If you have had this feeling, indicate the option (from 1 to 6) that best describes how often you feel that way.

### SECTION ONE: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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#### Work & Well-being Survey (UWES-17)

0 - Never	1 - Almost never / A few times a year or less	2 - Rarely / Once a month or less	3 - Sometimes / A few times a month	4 - Often / Once a week	5 - Very often / A few times a week	6 - Always / Every day
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1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy.
2. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.
3. Time flies when I'm working.
4. At my job, I feel strong and enthusiastic.
5. I am enthusiastic about my job.
6. When I am working, I forget everything else around me.
7. My job inspires me.
8. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.
9. I feel happy when I am working intensely.
10. I am proud of the work that I do.
11. I am immersed in my work.
12. I can continue working for very long periods at a time.
13. To me, my job is challenging.
14. I get carried away when I'm working.
15. At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.
16. It is difficult to detach myself from my job.
17. At my work I always preserve, even when things do not go well.

## SECTION TWO: ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

This second section will measure how you identify as an adaptive leader, regardless of your job title/regardless of the position you hold within your organization. You do not have to directly supervise staff or be in a managerial role to demonstrate adaptive leadership. A few statements may be considered hypothetical and answered based on how you perceive your leadership capacity. This section assesses different dimensions of how you respond to your environment and progress through work, using your own knowledge, skills, and capabilities.

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the statements below regarding your adaptive leadership, using a scale of 1 - Strongly disagree to 5 - Strongly agree. There are no right or wrong responses; indicate the response that you believe most accurately characterizes you.

### SECTION TWO: ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

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#### Adaptive Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ)

1 - Strongly disagree    2 - Disagree    3 - Neutral    4 - Agree    5 - Strongly agree

1. When difficulties emerge in our organization, I am good at stepping back and assessing the dynamics of the people involved.
2. When events trigger strong emotional responses among employees, I use my authority as a leader to resolve the problem.
3. When people feel uncertain about organizational change, they trust that I will help them work through the difficulties.
4. In complex situations, I get people to focus on the issues they are trying to avoid.
5. When employees are struggling with a decision, I tell them what I think they should do.
6. During times of difficult change, I welcome the thoughts of group members with low status.
7. In difficult situations, I sometimes lose sight of the “big picture.”
8. When people are struggling with value questions, I remind them to follow the organization’s policies.
9. When people begin to be disturbed by unresolved conflicts, I encourage them to address the issues.
10. During change, I challenge people to concentrate on the “hot” topics.
11. When employees look to me for answers, I encourage them to think for themselves.
12. Listening to group members with radical ideas is valuable to me.

## Adaptive Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ)

1 - Strongly disagree    2 - Disagree    3 - Neutral    4 - Agree    5 - Strongly agree

13. When I disagree with someone, I have difficulty listening to what the person is really saying.
14. When others are struggling with intense conflicts, I step in to resolve the differences.
15. I have the emotional capacity to comfort others as they work through intense issues.
16. When people try to avoid controversial organizational issues, I bring these conflicts into the open.
17. I encourage employees to take initiative in defining and solving problems.
18. I am open to people who bring up unusual ideas that seem to hinder the progress of the group.
19. In challenging situations, I like to observe the parties involved and assess what's really going on.
20. I encourage people to discuss the "elephant in the room."
21. People recognize that I have confidence to tackle challenging problems.
22. I think it is reasonable to let people avoid confronting difficult issues.
23. When people look to me to solve problems, I enjoy providing solutions.
24. I have an open ear for people who don't seem to fit in with the rest of the group.
25. In a difficult situation, I will step out of the dispute to gain perspective on it.
26. I thrive on helping people find new ways of coping with organizational problems.
27. People see me as someone who holds steady in the storm.
28. In an effort to keep things moving forward, I let people avoid issues that are troublesome.
29. When people are uncertain about what to do, I empower them to decide for themselves.
30. To restore equilibrium in the organization, I try to neutralize comments of out-group members.

## SECTION THREE: EMPLOYEE DEMOGRAPHICS

This final section will be used to collect employee demographic information. Demographic information will only be used to describe survey respondents for the purposes of this study. No data will be shared with other individuals.

### SECTION THREE: EMPLOYEE DEMOGRAPHICS

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#### Employee Demographics

1. How many years have you been employed at your organization?
  - 0 to 1 year
  - 2 to 5 years
  - 6 to 10 years
  - 11+ years
  
2. What title best describes your current position/level?
  - Specialist/Support Staff
  - Coordinator/Advisor
  - Assistant Director
  - Associate Director
  - Dean/Director/Department Head
  - Executive Service (AVP/VP)
  - Other Administrative
  
3. How many years have you spent in your current department?
  - 0 to 1 year
  - 2 to 5 years
  - 6 to 10 years
  - 11+ years
  
4. How many employees do you supervise?
  - 0 employees
  - 1 to 2 employees
  - 3 to 5 employees
  - 6 to 10 employees
  - 11+ employees

## Employee Demographics

5. Please indicate your highest education level obtained.

- No college
- Some College
- Associates degree
- Bachelors degree
- Masters degree
- Doctoral degree
- Other:

6. Please indicate your age.

- 18 to 25 years old
- 26 to 35 years old
- 36 to 45 years old
- 46 to 55 years old
- 56 to 65 years old
- 66 years or older

7. Please indicate your race/ethnic background.

- Rather not disclose
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- White
- Asian
- Native American or American Indian
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Other:

8. Please indicate your gender.

- Rather not disclose
- Female
- Male
- Other:

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Survey Complete

*Thank you for your time spent taking this survey.  
Your response has been recorded. Please close your browser.*