

FRONTLINE RETAIL EMPLOYEES – EXTINCT OR
EVOLVING: A LOOK AT THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN, SERVANT LEADERSHIP, EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT, ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE
RECIPIENTS’ BELIEF AND EMPLOYEE INTENT TO
QUIT

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Abstract: Rapid change in the retail industry will remain constant as we navigate the new normal after the pandemic and innovation is implemented. The frontline retail worker is typically the least engaged and costly to replace. The influence of leadership is essential to the success of any organization employing frontline workers. This study evaluated the important relationship between leadership style and employee engagement in the retail industry during times of change. More specifically, this study seeks to understand that reward on investment of utilizing a servant leadership style in order to maintain high frontline employee engagement and buy-in and belief in the rapid retail change, therefore, lessening their intent to quit. The primary goal of this research will be that top management modifies the current retail leadership style and incorporates retail change while maintaining or increasing frontline worker engagement and commitment to the organization.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Frontline workers such as cashiers, department managers on the sales floor, and frontline workers that deliver freight from the warehouse to the sales floor are critical in the retail industry. However, frontline retail workers are the least engaged (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013a; Tempkin & Lewis, 2013) across the retail industry and are very costly to replace (Stock & Bhasis, 2015). In 2020, frontline workers became known as essential employees because of their efforts that help meet the basic needs of humanity. Without frontline employees to stock the grocery store shelves or cashiers to receive payment in return for food and cleaning products, consumers would have limited access to the goods and services they have grown accustomed to. Unfortunately, these employees, now called essential personnel, have been overlooked and considered non-essential for far too long. Consumers often treat them badly and consider them a means to an end as they purchase products. Managers often view them as a cog in the machine,

expendable employees that are low-skilled and easily replaced. These employees are rarely consulted about a better way of doing things and are often the last to know when major decisions have been made that will impact their job.

Amos (2015) assessed the impact of servant leadership as a precursor of team member commitment, significant work, and importance to life. Amos zeroed in on approving if passionate mending directed the connection between the front-line worker and their commitment. He had the option to substantiate the adequacy of the worker style by reviewing 112 self-revealed front-line representatives (producing) that were a piece of worker drive associations. He inferred that worker initiative impacted the results of representative commitment, which means of work, and importance in life in a worker drove workplace (Amos 2015).

An examination by Schneider (2020) investigated the relationship of managerial styles utilizing the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5x), with worker commitment of retail representatives utilizing the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-3), and authoritative change preparation utilizing the Organizational Change Recipients' Belief Scale (OCRBS). Her discoveries affirmed a genuinely critical connection between transactional and transformational leadership styles and worker commitment of retail laborers with blended aftereffects of leadership style and engagement. Schneider called for future

exploration to zero in on other leadership styles, explicitly situational, disseminated, worldwide or servant leadership styles, and the employee commitment of frontline retail workers during organizational change. To date, there is not an easily accessible instrument for situational leadership theory; however, this study attempts to answer the call by Schneider by focusing on the leadership style of servant leadership.

This research inspected the connection between the below constructs:

- Servant Leadership (perceived) - Those who serve with a focus on the followers, whereby the adherents are the essential concern, and the hierarchical concerns are fringe.
- Employee Engagement - Employees of the organization are committed to the organization's objectives and roused to add to the company's prosperity.
- Organizational Change Readiness Belief – Scale used to gauge the progress of organizational change efforts throughout the change process and/ or the degree of buy-in among the recipients (i.e., FLEs).
- Frontline Worker Intent to Quit - Employee engagement with an emotional and motivational feeling, which gives employees a sense of commitment and belonging to their role, managers, workplace, and industry.

In the retail industry, change is inevitable, and since the announcement of the COVID pandemic in 2020, change in the retail industry has been occurring at record speed. The frontline worker has historically received low pay and incurred high turnover as they bounce from job to job, trying to get ahead in life with better pay and possibly the opportunity of

benefits. High employee disengagement in American companies accounted for a loss of \$328 billion annually (Gallup, 2013). January 2021, the Bureau of Labor (BLS) reported that employment in the retail industry lost 383,000 employees since February 2020.

While reflecting on my 18+ years in the retail industry as an operational auditor, when a change was introduced and/or implemented, there was a drastic disconnect between the frontline worker and the leadership within that organization. I would generally start by listening to the leadership of the organization and understanding their challenges with maintaining engagement of the frontline worker during the change. The lack of engagement would ultimately end with the frontline worker quitting or being terminated and not enough frontline workers to backfill the gap. As well, lack of engagement would be associated with low morale among the frontline workers, which ultimately would affect the customer. I proposed that indicators like turnover, expenditures related to selecting new associates, the expense to prepare the new worker, and no productivity from the new employee while in training could contribute to little profitability during the transition and low engagement. My encounters with retail organizations concluded that the care of the frontline worker was not discussed, yet they were critical to the operation. When I would spend time with the frontline employee and collect their thoughts and/or concerns around the change, I discovered that some of them didn't accept that the leader actually fretted about them.

According to Rose (2020), organizational change in the retail industry has been witnessed for decades. In the 1980s, the “Heyday” of retail saw rapid growth of stores popping up in suburbs and cities. There were more malls and stores than in previous years. The 1990s was a time of consolidation where stores such as Allied, Federated, and the May Company became Macy’s. Smaller department stores were acquired by bigger stores. The

“Big Box” stores and outlet malls emerged on the scene too. In the 2000s, stores expanded, and online sales became commonplace. Inventory management was more important than in the past too. In the 2010s, Amazon began to offer next-day delivery (driving disruption in retail). Malls continued to appear vacant and rundown. And competition between Walmart and Amazon brought innovative new services to the marketplace. In the 2020s, delivery services of food began. And many brick-and-mortar stores struggle to survive. As each year of change introduces new elements of innovation, marketing strategies, and automation, the engagement of frontline workers appear as an afterthought.

Research Question

This study addressed a crucial manager’s problem of how we keep FLEs from leaving, which is very costly to the organization. Given the current climate of organizations with FLEs and not being able to obtain talent without an incentive (bonus, gift, etc.). This study examined to what extent a relationship exists between the Front Line Employees’ (FLEs) perceptions of his/her leader’s servant leadership style, their perceived engagement, organizational change readiness belief, and their intent to quit. This research illustrated the importance of various variables (style of leadership, engagement, change belief) that trigger the FLEs intent to quit by answering the following questions: Is there a relationship between a servant leader and FLE? Is there a relationship between FLE engagement and their belief in organizational change? Do leadership style, engagement level, and change readiness belief impact FLE intent to quit?

Answering the proposed research questions will add to the scholarly research by answering Schneider's (2020) call to look at the servant leadership style applied to FLE engagement and their perceived organizational change readiness. This research is taking

Schneider (2020) even further by looking at the FLEs intent to quit. This study could help retail stores retain employees with more significant levels of commitment and responsibility in the future, thereby reducing the expense of replacing workers in this high turnover industry and providing employees with longevity in their careers. Intrinsically, it refers to modifying the current retail leadership style to embrace retail change while maintaining or increasing engagement.

The influence of leadership is indispensable to the achievement story of any organization employing frontline workers. This study strives to bring awareness to decision-makers of the need to understand the important correlation between leadership style and employee engagement in the retail industry during times of change. The findings from this study may incite leaders in the retail industry to create a strategic and in-depth plan to recruit leaders that have certain leadership style competencies that correlate with higher levels of employee engagement with retail employees during times of change. The key contributing component is that top leadership modify the current retail management style and embrace retail change while maintaining or increasing engagement and commitment to the organization.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Frontline retail employees are the least engaged (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013; Tempkin & Lewis, 2013) across the retail industry and are very costly to replace (Stock & Bhasis, 2015). As the retail industry continues evolving, this review analyzed the connection between the Front Line Employees' (FLEs) view of his/her superior's servant leadership style, their perceived engagement (FLE), organizational change readiness belief, and their intent to quit. Considerable evidence implies that a key factor with the FLE is the managing of this form of human capital to be successful. In the absence of good leadership, this can drastically impact FLE engagement, their readiness for change, and their intent to quit. Scholarly research is projected to decide whether if the servant leadership style can affect engagement and intent to quit by the FLEs during rapid change (and their belief that they are ready for a change). There is value in looking at the linkage between FLE engagement, creating buy-in to advance the company through change, and intent to quit. This factor is deficient in the literature as the emphasis remains on consumer demand, disruption in the retail environment, and corporate leadership; however, the management of the FLE human capital has been less than effective the motivation behind this exploration is to address that very segment and close the gap in the literature. More specifically, this study seeks to understand that reward on investment

of utilizing a servant leadership style in order to maintain high employee engagement buy-in and belief in the rapid retail change, thus alleviating their intent to quit.

Table 1 Servant Leadership, Employee Engagement & Organizational Change

Literature Table

Year	Author(s)	Sample Size	Findings
2020	Brooke Schneider	212	Statistically significant relationship between both transformational and transactional leadership and employee engagement. The results of the moderating variable of organizational change readiness were mixed.
2020	Jessica Vieira de Souza Meira and Murat Hancer	242 front line hotel employees	Perceived organizational support had a significant relationship with psychological empowerment, which also had a significant relationship with work engagement and service-oriented organizational citizenship behavior.
2020	Jiaxin Wang Xiaoxiao Fu Youcheng Wang	Pilot Test = 230 questionnaires (187 complete) 680 - 557 complete	Despite hindrance stressors' negative indirect impact on frontline employees' boundary-spanning behaviors, intrinsic motivation worked effectively to reduce hindrance stress and influence subsequent emotions leading to boundary spanning behaviors.
2020	Graham W. Howard	12 front line employees and their front line manager	The results of this study identified a need for leadership training in blue-collar, manufacturing industries as well as the need to develop stronger leader-follower relations in order to improve employee turnover, satisfaction, and motivation within manufacturing industries.
2020	Anggun Tiur Ida Sinaga ¹ , Prihatin Lumbanraja ² , Isfenti Sadalia ³ , Amlysh Syahputra Silalahi ⁴	786 front line employees	Results indicated that TL and PE have positive influence on innovative work behavior, however specifically, the result showed that PE does not moderates on the relationship between TL and IWB of frontline employees in North Sumatera.

2019	Seonggoo Ji & Ihsan Ullah Jan	205 frontline employees of coffee shops	The results show that abusive supervision is negatively related to frontline employee's trust-in-supervisor, whereas supervisor support and communication quality have significant positive effects on frontline trust-in-supervisor.
2019	Yucheng Zhang, Yuyan Zheng, Long Zhang, Shan Xu, Xin Liu, Wansi Chen	125 studies, 34, 698 participants	The relationships between servant leadership and its outcomes, our results suggest that servant leadership strongly benefits employee work attitudes and behaviors and group climate and performance.
2019	Samaa Kadry Mohamed	10 front line employees	The findings reveal that there is a significant gap between the employees' expectations, understanding and awareness of the engagement concept in the retail industry, and the retailers' views, methods and plans to develop and embed this concept among frontline employees.
2018	Hyo Sun Junga, Hye Hyun Yoonb	383	Employees expressing a high level of engagement were more likely to engage in innovative behavior.
2018	Kuan-Yu Chena, Ching-Wen Changb,*, Cheng-Hua Wangb	260 restaurant industry employees	The results show that harmoniously passionate frontline employees tend to adopt a deep acting strategy when confronted with emotional labor, and then protect themselves from emotional exhaustion, whereas frontline employees with obsessive passion tend to employ a surface acting strategy, and are in turn more likely to exhausting their emotional energy.
2017	Robert White	20 hospitality workers with 5 or more years in Las Vegas	Based on the findings of the study, most participants noted varying degrees of experience in implementing employee engagement initiatives in their organization.
2016	Jaewon (Jay) Yoo Todd J. Arnold	543 frontline employees	Results demonstrate that job resources, such as perceived organizational support and perceived customer

			participation, can positively influence an employee's COA.
2015	Michael Amos	112 front line manufacturers	The study illuminated how servant leadership could act as an effective means of eradicating employee disengagement in for-profit organizations.
2015	MICHAEL D. AMOS	112 front-line workers	The study illuminated how servant leadership could act as an effective means of eradicating employee disengagement in for-profit organizations
2014	LoredanaDiPietro, EleonoraPantano, FrancescaDiVirgili	273 frontline employees	The analysis figured out a linkage between employees' perception of SSTs and their experience in retailing On the opposite,the research did not show any meaningful linkage between the knowledge of advanced technologies and their perception
2013	Laura Chenven Danielle Copeland	11 unions 50 org. across US	These outcomes include systems change, improved patient satisfaction, increased use of soap, reduction of regulated medical waste, increase of recycling, and increased worker engagement.
2013	Banjo Elizabeth Opeyemi	151 frontline banking employees	The PLS analyses results show significant relationship and provide support for majority of the hypothesis setup according to extensive literature review. Specifically, job stress has a positive effect on emotional exhaustion while, intrinsic motivation has a negative effect on it.

As an operations auditor for Walmart, I have experienced two incidents where proper leadership communication was lacking and drastically impeded our FLE workforce. The FLE is typically a low priority with the presence of inadequately prepared and absolutist oversight (Ayupp & Chung, 2010; Baum, 2007; Kusluvan et al., 2010). Retail organizations are liable for not setting adequate accentuation on the development

and improvement of their workforce through initiative (Ellinger, Ellinger, & Keller, 2005). Because engagement is an emotionally driven phenomenon, the seven constructs rooted in the servant leadership model could mitigate employee disengagement because the model encompasses: Agapao love, humanity, altruism, vision, trust, service, and empowerment. Retail organizations have placed heavy emphasis on task-oriented leadership styles without any emotional bonding between the leader and the FLE (Gallup, 2013; Kenexa Corporation, 2012). This leadership style places great emphasis on the employee's mental and physical capacities vs. encouraging leaders to utilize an approach that encourages emotional aspects of the FLE. It is imperative that top leadership realize that FLEs bring a depth of experience, knowledge, abilities, and customer relationships, and these attributes can make or break an organization, and FLEs deserve great leadership.

The Concept of Frontline Employee

In both scholarly community and practice, service employees who come into direct contact with customers either eye to eye or voice-to-voice as a component of a task, and satisfy the requirements of the customer, are alluded to as cutting edge frontline employees (FLEs) (Hochschild, 1983). This research defined the FLE (in the retail industry) as workers with primary responsibility relating to engaging and serving the customer (stocking freight, maintaining inventory, and retail space) and are not defined as leaders or managers. The nature of their duties can generate high turnover with leadership teams that place low value and low priority on the FLE (Ayupp & Chung, 2010; Baum, 2007; Kuslivan et al., 2010). FLE may be subjected to more emotive exhaustion or burnout, which may impair the service experience and/or increase the probability of staff

turnover (Yousaf et al., 2020). Some principals consider FLEs to be important human capital and routinely accommodate their desires and wants for the purpose of preservation and turning a profit (Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014). Leaders who establish a constructive and positive workspace for FLEs may notice an increase in employee motivation (Drake-Brassfield, 2012). Kehoe and Wright (2013) noticed that low productivity straightforwardly impacts organizational adequacy results. Managers should set aside some effort to successfully draw in with their associates to the extent of decreasing FLE's absence of knowledge in the working environment. Hill, Seo, Kang, and Taylor (2012) found that some leaders neglected to draw the FLE on the grounds that the employees were not associated with settling on substantial business decisions. Appelbaum, Louis, Makarenko, Saluja, Meleshko, and Kulbashian (2013) concurred with Hill et al. and further observed the discontinuation often results in reduced engagement and low efficiency in the employee. The more involved an associate becomes the higher their commitment and production levels (Allen, Ericksen, & Collins, 2013). Bettencourt et al. (2001) argued that managers should create a supportive working atmosphere for service employees to achieve better performance. These authors determined that FLEs have strategic significance for organizations, as they can be deemed sources of differentiation. Similarly, Saks (2006) contended that employees with higher organizational backing perception tend to be more engaged in their daily tasks.

As FLE experience retail change and have a lack of belief and/ or efficacy in the change, this can naturally cause detachment to the FLE as they see positions being eradicated and/or repurposed (Leung & Matanda, 2013). This study implies that adding a leader that exhibits servant leadership attributes will have positive effects on the frontline

employee and could eliminate the intent to quit. Retaining frontline workers in Fortune 500 companies has been a challenge for leaders and organization success. Studies of frontline employees have tended to focus on who they are and what they do as individuals exercise discretion when they come together to talk about their work on a regular basis. We know much less about how FLEs engage in peer discussions and reflection on practice among frontline employees has been noted in passing (Goldman & Foldy, 2012). Frontline employees in service industries, especially retail, go about as the contact point among shoppers and the company and are regularly seen as the wellspring of service for the organizations (Tsaur and Tang, 2013). FLE are relied upon to be pleasant, warm, and agreeable to inner and outside partners/customers and are required to not communicate outrage and disappointment (Smollan, 2006). They need to relentlessly regulate their emotions and interact with customers and therefore experience an elevated level of emotional exhaustion (EE) than other employees (Kim et al., 2012). FLEs bring experience, knowledge, abilities, internal and external interactions, mindsets, and manners to their workplaces. These individual capabilities and proficiencies are influenced by the guidelines and traditions of their workplace values and are more likely to be observed among engaged FLEs.

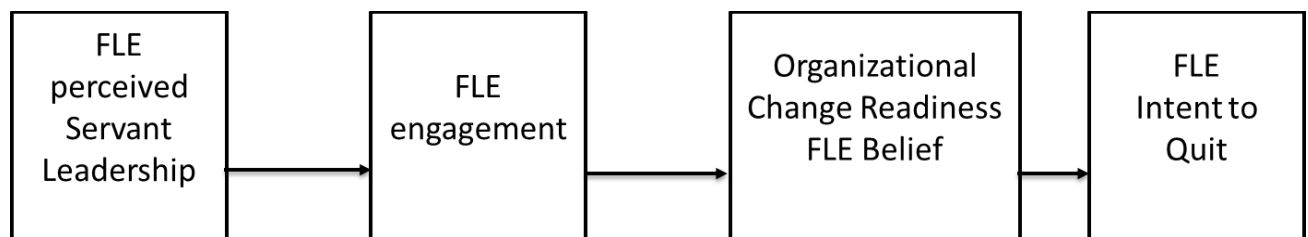
Organizations are compelled to be considerably more risk-taking, proactive, and creative yet without forfeiting their quality, cost efficiency, and adaptability to get by in the exceptionally unique and serious business sectors (Arda, Aslan, and Alpkan, 2016). While companies need leaders with honesty, values, and qualities, they additionally need managers who can propel their FLEs to furnish and support authoritative viability

determined to make long haul and incentive for all partners (Arda, Aslan, and Alpkan, 2016).

Businesses initiate the social exchange method by valuing their employees' contributions and caring for their well-being. Thereby, FLEs retort with proper behaviors (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Yang, 2012). These interactions should always be established through trust, loyalty, and mutual dedication (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Dirks and Ferrin's (2002) meta-analysis of the leadership text corroborated the importance of certainty and suggested that there are two essential ways in which a leader may achieve the belief of followers. The first viewpoint is through personal attributes: some leaders, as individuals, are identified as more dependable than others. Because trust involves making oneself susceptible, followers are more likely to trust someone whom they believe is not the sort to exploit that susceptibility. Adherents will therefore use the leaders' actions to make insinuations about their character and subsequent fidelity. The second angle to gaining trust in Dirks and Ferrin's (2002) version is through the quality of the leader-follower rapport, i.e., relationship-based outlook. In most corporations, leaders and adherents have a de facto economic association, but as their dyadic tie intensifies, it can shift toward a relationship dependent on financial trade to social exchange. Workers in general and FLEs are particularly significant assets as a result of their critical jobs in the general activity of organizations (Ji and Jan 2020). Ji and Jan (2020) likewise propose that, like some other assets in an organization, the manageability of FLE is additionally significant, and it is presently attracting tremendous consideration in scholarly writings. The aforementioned research has argued this evolving phenomenon with different names, such as organic human resource management, green human resource management,

socially accountable human resource management, and principled human resource management. Eisenberger et al. (1986) believe that employees are dedicated to their company because they understand their organization is devoted to them. So, employees feel obliged to contribute to their organization's triumph, aiding in realizing its tactical objectives (Jaiswal and Dhar, 2016; Kurtessis et al., 2017). When thinking of FLEs, one of the underlying concepts mentioned is cultivating a venerable occupation alignment and protection for the employees, which are usually determined by trust, allegiance, obligation, and fairness in employment affairs. Therefore, it is essential to advance these elements in the context of the organization's relational connections, which nurture trust. Ji and Jan (2020) delve into interpersonal trust not only in the framework of viable relationships but also to boost the advantageous outcomes of employees such as job contentment, intention to remain, organizational social conscience behavior, collaboration, and overall implementation. In spite of the implication of interpersonal trust in organizations both for workable employment relationships and employee's constructive attitudinal and behavioral conclusions, scholars in the former have given less consideration to the factors of the alleged interactive trust of frontline employees in supervisors and colleagues together. As shown in Figure 1, perceived servant leadership, engagement, and organizational change readiness belief are to be evaluated with this study.

Figure 1: Hypothesized Model



Servant Leadership Theory

Scholarly research accepts that the foundation of servant leadership began with discussions between Jesus Christ and His followers as recorded in the New Testament Gospel of Luke 22:24-47 (NIV). This sacred text states: Also, a debate emerged among them with regards to which of them was viewed as most noteworthy. Jesus said to them:

The rulers of the Gentiles rule over them; and the individuals who practice authority over them call themselves Benefactors. In any case, you are not to be that way. All things considered, the best among you ought to resemble the most youthful, and the person who rules like the person who serves. For who is more prominent, the person who is at the table or the person who serves? Is it not the person who is at the table? However, I am among you as one who serves.

As indicated by Patterson (2003), "Groundbreaking authority shows pioneers zeroed in on the association and is inadequate to clarify conduct that is charitable in nature, or adherent zeroed in; in this manner, worker administration hypothesis, which is supporter centered, clarifies such conduct" (personal communication 2004).

These standards are subjective qualities that are important for one's character, something that is inward, otherworldly (Whetstone, 2001). Thusly, ideals have the moral qualities of being acceptable, amazing, or commendable (Henry, 1978, p. 697). These characteristics describe the leader, who is guided by ethics inside, hereafter called constructs. These ethical behaviors characterize servant leadership molding their perspectives, attributes, and conduct. In this manner, as per Patterson (2003), the meaning of servant leadership is as per the following: Servant leaders are those who serve with a

focus on the followers, whereby the followers are the primary concern, and the organizational concerns are peripheral. The servant-leader constructs are righteous, which are defined as the good moral quality in a leader. Patterson (2003) assembled that the servant leader poses seven attributes (characterized beneath):

- Agapao Love - is the foundation for servant leadership and employee relationships demonstrated in a social or moral sense.
- Humility - is the ability to keep one's accomplishments and talents in perspective, meaning not being self-focused but focused on others.
- Altruism - is voluntary behavior that is intended to benefit another and is not motivated by the expectation of external reward.
- Vision - is a picture of the future that produces passion
- Trust - is confidence in or reliance on another team member in terms of their morality (e.g., honesty) and competence.
- Service - is a mission of responsibility to others
- Empowerment - is entrusting power to others and involves effective listening, making people feel significant, putting an emphasis on teamwork, and valuing love and equality.

Dennis and Bocarnea (2005) extended Patterson's research by developing the Servant Leadership Assessment Index (SLAI) to measure the seven constructs. The issue has been asked concerning the concept of servant leadership and if it is indeed a feasible premise, a subgroup of another theory such as transformational leadership, or just simply an abstract idea (Rainey & Watson, 1996; Pawar & Eastman, 1997). Most exploration in the beginning severely relied on transformational leadership. According to Kuhn (1970, p. 64), "in the development of any science, the first received paradigm is usually felt to account quite successfully for most of the observations;" nonetheless, Kuhn shows that when there are phenomena not clarified with existing theory, new theory arises. The writing on authority offers various hypothetical viewpoints to the comprehension of pioneers (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2002; Daft, 2002). While groundbreaking leadership offers a practical methodology and seems to catch predominant intuition in initiative circles

(Rainey and Watson, 1996; Pawar and Eastman, 1997), a few scholars recommend groundbreaking management has impediments, for example, the ambiguity of the theory which takes into account a nearly any interpretation (Yukl, 2002). In particular, transformational leadership does not explain certain phenomena such as altruism to followers or humility, which leaves the door open for a new theoretical understanding based on Kuhn's (1970) approach. With the indication for the need for further theory, servant leadership offers a viable perspective to the organizational leadership literature. Contradictory to the typical notion of governance, where the rationale is prominent, servant leaders practice serving first as the primary means of leading. Greenleaf offers "that his servant leadership thesis is not particularly popular" (2002, p. 24) due to the concept of leaders becoming servants; nevertheless, this author conceives the idea that servant leadership offers a distinctive viewpoint to the theoretical arena in leadership. Patterson (2003) claims that servant leadership is a theory of virtue. A virtue is a subjective quality that is important for a leader's character, something inside an individual that is inner, profound (Whetstone, 2001), a trademark that embodies human greatness (Yu, 1998). Most prominently in the field of ethics is Aristotle, who is credited with building up the structure for uprightness definition (Kennedy, 1995). Virtue theory tends to address the correct things with an emphasis on moral character. Prudence doesn't respond to the general inquiry of right or wrong, yet rather, it tries to make the best decision in a specific circumstance (Kennedy, 1995). Arjoon (2000) proffers that virtue theory is vital to leadership due to the focus on the mutual good rather than profit-maximizing, therefore securing a place in leadership. Virtue theory allows leadership to be concerned with the dynamic interactions among organizational members. Whetstone

(2001) states a virtue is a qualitative characteristic that is part of one’s personality, something within a person that is intangible, almost spiritual, and further, that servant leadership is the preferred paradigm because servant leaders serve according to highly principled means.

Table 2 Arguments for and Against Servant Leadership Style

Arguments for Servant Leadership style	Arguments against Serving Leadership style
The style depicts the development of meaning at work and life (Greenleaf, 1977; van Dierendonck, 2011; Wong 2011)	The concept of servitude is exhausting to many modern day leaders and managers, simply because of the notion of being a servant (Brewer, 2010; van Dierendonck, 2011; Wong, 2011)
It is imperative for the future learning of an organization (Bass, 2000)	Limited studies identified as servant leadership increasing employed engagement, but the style has enhanced outcomes such as job satisfaction, employee trust, and organizational citizenship behavior (van Dierendonck, 2011)
People see it as a more evolved form of leadership (Stone & Patterson, 2005) mainly because it opposes self-interest actions (Liden et al./ 2008; Sendjaya et al./ 2008;van Dierendonck, 2011), thereby supporting a higher calling of human nature	Limited studies linking servant leadership style to the meaning of work and/ or life, though some have made the argument (van Dierendonck, 2011; Parris & Peachey, 2013)
Servant leadership is similar to transformational leadership, however, it is even more centered around moral leadership practices because of the serving dimension (Searle & Barbuto, 2010)	Empirical research is the area of servant leadership is limited and measures and methods are varied (van Dierendoincek 2011; Parris & Peachey, 2013)
Servant leadership is one of the oldest forms of leadership dating back to biblical times (Parris & Peachey, 2013)	There are some scholars that believe that this style of leadership is not productive, because the focus is too much on the follower and not enough on the organizations goal (Carter & Baghurst, 2014)
There is potential to increase worker engagement (Carter & Baghurst, 2014; Kular et al., 2008)	It is thought of as a form of religious ideology, making it difficult to implement with corporate/ organizational leaders (Carter & Baghurst, 2014)

According to Kuhn (1996), when present theories do not explain observed phenomena, a fresh theory is necessary. Patterson (2003) cultivated a working model of servant leadership that generates a proposal for more precise research by defining the values on which servant leadership is based—values that she calls the seven constructs of servant leadership. Patterson recorded the need for a tool to measure these constructs known as the servant leadership assessment. In Patterson’s (2003) opinion, trendy

leadership theories such as transformational leadership have not illustrated the values—for example, altruism—that is sometimes demonstrated by leaders.

Bowie (2000) contended that the servant leader has minimal respect for herself or himself in relation to others. As such, servant leadership is no sign of humbleness but of a “monk’s virtue” (p. 187), which is unnatural and is, in fact, a form of pride. Johnson (2001), on the other hand, condemns servant leadership for “seeming unrealistic, encouraging passivity, not working in every context, sometimes serving the wrong cause, and being associated with a negative connotation of the term servant (or slave)” (p. 136). Bowie (2000) argued that the term “servant leadership” has undesirable undertones because adherents may manipulate the servant leader in some settings, such as in penitentiaries. The author posited that some prisoners would take advantage of a servant leader, suggesting that servant leaders are docile. Thus, Bowie insisted that servant leadership theory misses its point by positing a model in which followers would use the agent (leader) for their own ends. Berry and Cartwright (2000) viewed servant leadership as unrealistic and implied that it is unsuitable for Western corporations because the leader focuses on service to God or others before self. They concluded that “as an agent, the servant leader is not serving his or her principle (p. 342)”. However, in a recent study, Dean (2021) found that servant leaders have been misunderstood and are, in fact, called to be assertive and zealous. In other words, they have a calling or duty to speak up when something is not right and take action to correct the wrongdoing.

Employee engagement explorations implied that linkages might exist between the servant leadership style (Gallup, 2013) and the outcomes of employee engagement. Kahn

(1990) found that the advancement of engagement in work brings a sense of healthy satisfaction to one's life. Harter, Schmidt, and Keyes (2003) suggested that engagement leads to increased well-being and the development of healthy living habits. Maslach, Schaufelli, and Leiter (2001) suggested that the opposite of burnout is a life full of personal meaning and engagement. Shuck and Rose (2013) stated that "engagement and performance are a secondary consequence of working that is interpreted as meaningful and purpose-driven and ultimately, work that stimulates the 'engagement of condition'" (p. 3). The restoration of value in work can function as a method to promote an employee's motivation and attachment to work, thus resulting in engagement (May et al., 2004; Nelson & Simmons, 2003; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007). "Linking meaningfulness to work life is critical if not essential to addressing employee commitment and engagement" (Morrison, Burke, & Greene, 2007, p. 102), and yearning for meaningful work is reflective of our human nature. Servant leadership is a socio-emotional style of leadership (Casimir & Ng, 2010) that is a "long term, holistic transformational approach to life and work (a way of being) that emphasizes leading through serving society, including employees, customers, and community" (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010, pp. 13-14). Servant leadership focuses on lessening the FLEs nervousness thinking about FLE feelings, conveying appreciation for the endeavors of workers, and developing solid social connections between the pioneer and supporters (Casimir & Ng, 2010), thereby positively impacting the wellbeing of workers (Jaramillo et al., 2009; Rieke, Hammermeister, & Chase, 2008), increasing trust between leaders and followers, reducing the intent to quit, and improving employee engagement. Patterson (2003) delineated the servant leader as one who: (a) leads and serves with agapao love, (b) acts

with humility, (c) is altruistic, (d) is visionary for the followers, (e) is trusting, (f) is serving, and (g) empowers followers. These are the seven constructs that comprise the servant leader in Patterson's model.

This study used the concepts from Patterson's (2003) seven constructs and Dennis and Bocarnea's (2005) Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (SLAI). The seven constructs (agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, service, and empowerment), as described by Patterson, were used to construct elements for a servant leadership instrument. These seven constructs encompass the servant leadership in Patterson's model has the capability to forecast or give measurement to the seven constructs of servant leadership so that a leader or employee can measure the apparent efficacy as a servant leader. This mechanism is designed for a peer, employee, or leader to evaluate their perceived leadership traits. This instrument employed the literature on SL in order to build a set of seven items and evaluate Patterson's servant leadership model.

Frontline Worker Engagement

Employee engagement has been a topic of curiosity for years as researchers and practitioners have found that engaged employees are more likely to stay with their present agency for longer periods of time, thus reducing turnover costs and increasing revenue. Gallup has analyzed employee engagement for more than 50 years and discovered that involved employees generate better business results than disconnected employees. In a recent study, Gallup reported that employee engagement heights swung to an all-time high of 38% in 2020 (Harter, 2020). Still, if only 38% of the employees in the workplace are engaged, this means that 62% remain disengaged.

Employees at the rank of frontline roles can typically be deemed a significant loss even if there is a sizeable pool of talent available to fill their vacant positions. Organizations are now having to address new difficulties in their endeavors to be competitive, including expanded monetary disturbance, better assumptions, new advancements, and distinctive work esteems among the younger laborers (Albrecht, 2012; Bakker, Albrecht, and Leiter, 2011; Leiter and Bakker, 2010). Work commitment has become a significant idea as companies endeavor to release the talents of their labor forces (Leiter, 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Sirota, Mischikind and Meltzer, 2005; Sisodia, Wolfe, and Sheth, 2007). According to Peterson (2007) and Smith and Macko (2014), the retail business is susceptible to increased turnover due to the elevated pressure that employees experience in their roles. This consists of night/evening shifts, heavy foot traffic during the weekends and holidays, and relocation or transfers based on business needs. The retail sector is varied and comprises a broad spectrum of small to large organizations. Additionally, Handa and Gulati (2014) highlight that customer service in the retail sector is the prime factor in determining profitability and business survival, and in providing this quality of service, frontline employees must show a high level of effort, abilities, and appropriate behavior. Research alleges that when work roles correspond with employee expectations, employees become gratified with their job and career choices. Positions in retail are not fully understood (Hurst & Good, 2009). Accordingly, FLEs often develop negative perspectives about a career in retail (Hurst & Good, 2009; Swinyard, Langrehr, & Smith, 1991). Most lack of enthusiasm comes from the rhythmic work and being absent from home or the long work hours, which make the work challenging. Interaction with customers is one of the most enjoyable factors among the

participants, and they describe this as the enjoyable side of their job. Thus, the main belief here is that, even if the work conditions are difficult, the participants still enjoy working in retail because of the interaction with customers and meeting different people every day, which can mean, no one day is the same.

Engaged staff are connected emotionally to the mission, vision, and values of the organization. They buy into the objective of the organization and, as a result, operate harder for the benefit of the organization (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009). Also, there is a strong congruency with the organization's aspirations by staff who are energetically engaged with the organization (Carmeli, 2003; Boyatzis, 2009). Effective leadership is the foundation of an employee's engagement level and is a significant factor in turnover rate. Engaged workers are likelier to remain with an organization longer. Finally, from the initial discussions, many scholars and practitioners agreed that there are three types of employees: engaged, disengaged, and actively disengaged (Benza, 2012). Engaged employees are those who go above and beyond their job description (Coad, 2014) and display behaviors that promote the success of the organization (Bhattacharya, 2013).

The most applied measure of work engagement (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzales-Roma & Bakker, 2002) contains three factors: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Research has shown these measures to be consistent and valid indicators of the construct. Employee engagement was recommended by Maslach and Leiter (1997), who suggested that engagement was the direct reverse of burnout and comprised of energy, involvement, and efficacy. These three components were the opposite of the three burnout components: exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of efficacy, respectively. However, Schaufeli et al. (2002)

suggested that defining engagement as the opposite of burnout and using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to assess both constructs created a measurement challenge in assessing whether they are indeed two distinct constructs. Hence, Schaufeli et al. redefined engagement as retaining some of the elements of burnout but argued that it was indeed a distinct construct. By editing the burnout inventory, the authors advanced the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) to distinguish between engagement and burnout. They redefined the three factors as:

- Vigor - Having elevated levels of energy even in challenging situations and serves as the opposite of the MBI's exhaustion factor.
- Dedication – Refers to a sense of significance, enthusiasm, pride, and inspiration functioning as the opposite of the MBI's cynicism factor.
- Absorption - Having elevated levels of energy even in challenging situations.

Three facets of work engagement were assessed using scales developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002). Vigor was measured by one item, for example, "At my work, I feel bursting with energy." Dedication was measured by one item, for example, "I am proud of the work that I do." Absorption was assessed by one item, for example, "I am immersed in my work." Respondents indicated their agreement with each item on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 5 = Strongly agree). Two employee engagement measures were compared to determine if one is better than the other or if both are required to adequately assess the construct domain. The first measure is Rich, LePine, and Crawford's (2010) Job Engagement Scale based on Kahn's (1990) conceptualization of engagement. The second measure is Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker's (2002) Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, based on Maslach and Leiter's (1997) conceptualization of engagement. Schaufeli et al. (2002) proved to be a scale with minimal questions, operationalized and validated to assess engagement.

Practitioner publications quote large financial figures to convey the cost to businesses of disengaged employees, with the assumption that such losses become advances when organizations can convert disengaged employees into engaged employees (Van Allen, 2008). Given the substantial differences between engaged and unengaged employees, as well as the potential upswing of converting unengaged to engaged, employee engagement as a topic domain has accumulated growing interest amongst practitioners and researchers. This research was exploratory and investigated the isolated effects within the model. For this study, I started with the research question and hypothesized the following:

R1: Is there a relationship between perceived servant leadership and employee engagement of frontline employees?

H1: Servant leadership correlates positively with frontline employee engagement.

Organizational Change Readiness FLE Belief

The most effective and successful approach to dealing with change begins with leadership. After the year of the pandemic (2020), the retail industry experienced more complexity and change. The retail industry is transforming dramatically due to customer demand, shopping habits, innovation, and progressing digitalization (Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman, 2015). Retailers should proceed to change and adjust their business methodology to stay aware of shopper interest in an omnichannel retail climate (Verhoef et al., 2015). Retailers are currently putting more accentuation on their online stages, shipment times, and making a consistent encounter for their purchasers to stay aware of rivalry. Weiner (2009) suggested the organizational change readiness is a multi-faceted and multi-level construct that exists throughout an entire organization. Weiner further

stated all of the employees (frontline or management) must share the same passion and urgency around implementing the change and share a belief in their collective capacity to accomplish. Retailers today have to modify their business structure to support changes in the marketplace, their customer behavior, and e-commerce strategies (Dahloff & Cohen, 2018). Amazon began the major disruption in the retail sector. Big companies such as Walmart, Target, and Kroger had to quickly change strategy and vision, communicating said change from top executives to the FLEs in the stores. As the consumer began to consume differently, there was a heavy focus on supply chain innovation. Suddenly after that shift, top retail organizations had to quickly ramp up their e-commerce business integrating online and in-store shopping (Hamstra, 2017). To date, Amazon is the largest internet retailer and one of the world's most powerful and influential organizations. Other top retailers such as Walmart (Fortune One) continue to make significant changes to the business, affecting the FLE.

Leaders are critical to ensuring smooth organizational change and maintaining FLE engagement. Knowledge of the needed leadership styles best predict employee engagement, especially during times of organizational change, shifting business priorities while maintaining a competitive edge. It is necessary that retailers learn to be agile and nimble as priorities shift. A regular and open exchange between the leaders who are driving the change and their employees is essential to the overall triumph of the change proposals. Salmon (2014) surveyed hundreds of employees to determine how change was being managed. He found that even the most engaged and skilled employees will resist the change process if: (1) they do not feel like it is being managed and (2) they do not feel as though they have a voice throughout the change process (Salmon, 2014). Xu and

Thomas (2011) confirmed that there is a positive link between both task-oriented and relationship-oriented leader behavior, as reported by employees, and the employees' level of engagement. The strongest unique predictor of this relationship was the leadership factor of "supports team," which is tied to a relationship-oriented construct (Xu & Thomas, 2011). Xu and Thomas's (2011) findings suggested that FLEs report positively and report strong engagement with leaders who take a sincere interest in an employee's development.

Today's retail organizations must continue to modify their business strategies to remain viable, and therefore, leaders must incessantly support and implement change throughout all organizational levels (Cohen, 1999). In order to achieve cohesiveness, there should be training and development for the FLEs impacted. Kotter (2007) found that more than 70% of all change efforts collapse because leaders do not engage or prepare their followers effectively for change and do not establish a sense of urgency among their employees before implementing the change process. For this reason, leaders must understand how to create momentum to conduct the change process within their organization, thus helping to preserve and sustain the company's competitive advantage (Kotter, 2007). Victory as a retailer in the future is based on five key trends known as personalized marketing, multichannel and mobile commerce, distribution revolution, pioneering retail business models, and demographic changes (MacKenzie et al., 2013).

Awareness of leadership behavior is important because it helps both the leaders and the organization to fully utilize and integrate their resources, especially during times of company change (Wahan, Rahmat, Yusof, & Mohamed, 2016). Especially in the retail sector, the only constant is change (Tkaczyk, 2015). In order to lead positive change,

leaders must be change-ready, be catalysts for adaptableness, and become change energizers (Tkaczyk, 2015). The active change process could be small-scale or large-scale that focuses on altering the core of the company's business operations (Tkaczyk, 2015). The active modification process could include continuous improvement efforts, flexibility efforts, mergers, acquisitions, technological changes, organizational restructuring, and e-commerce growth (Tkaczyk, 2015). A leader's style could negatively impact an employee's willingness to be fully engaged and participate in the change process within an organization (Johnson, 2014). This quantitative correlational study aims to establish if a prognostic relationship between perceived servant leadership style, FLE engagement, organizational change readiness belief exists in the retail environment. Kahn's theory on engagement (1990) calculates the employee's degree of engagement within the workplace based on three psychological conditions. As retail transitions to more of an e-commerce business, change is inevitable. Keeping top FLE talent and their expertise will positively guide the organization through the change. Weiner's organizational readiness for change theory (2009) explains the importance of employees being prepared and ready for the change process. Having employees who are ready for change is a fundamental precursor for implementing and managing a productive organizational change (Weiner, 2009). This is similar to Lewin's model of change, which requires FLEs to shift their existing mindsets and behaviors and develop a sense of urgency before the change is in motion to get ready for the change to be put into motion (Weiner, 2009). This study postulates that when FLEs are engaged, understand the long-term benefits of the change, have belief in their readiness and efficacies to complete the

new role, and have leaders that establish a clear vision of the future; change is more successful in organizations.

The theoretical foundation used for organizational change readiness is Weiner's organizational readiness for change (2009), which assumes that organization members' change efficacy and change commitment promote organizational readiness to implement change throughout the company (Weiner, 2009). Armenakis et al., 2007 built on Weiner's theory to include the subordinate's (FLEs) level of "buy-in" or belief with the change initiative. Research by Carasco-Saul et al. (2015) found that a sizable portion of the leadership-engagement relationship was focused on transformational leadership, but the research did not address external validity, different industry sectors, and did not consider a second predictor variable, which is also known as the moderating variable. Focusing on servant leadership vs. transformational leadership will provide additional information and lessen the gap using a different leadership style focused on FLEs (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Xu & Thomas, 2011). This theory treats organizational readiness as a shared psychosomatic state in which all members of the organization feel committed and engaged in implementing an organizational change and are confident in their collective abilities to do so (Weiner, 2009). The Organizational Readiness for Change (ORC) theory states that employees are both behaviorally and psychologically prepared to act and move forward with the change process. The three determinants of ORC include:

1. Content: The organization and employees are prepared to implement change because they have the proper culture, resources, and company structure.
2. Change commitment: Employees are engaged and want to pursue the actions

involved in change implementation.

3. Change efficacy: Employees believe that they are capable to implement and execute the steps that are involved throughout a change process (Nilsen et al., 2018).

The three elements of Greenleaf's servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1970), Kahn's theory on engagement (Kahn, 1990), and Weiner's organizational readiness for change (2009) help to provide a framework to develop research questions and select data collection instruments of the study.

Organizational change recipient's belief is measured by the FLEs buy-in with the process and for this study as the retail industry as a whole is currently in a massive state of organizational disruption. The Readiness Change Recipients' Belief Scale (OCRBS) (Armenakis, Bernerth, Pitts, & Walker, 2007) is a 24-item scale using interval level data that can be used throughout the change process to assess the level of "buy-in" from subordinates with the change initiative across five factors:

- Discrepancy – Belief that some change is needed, then a related belief must be established.
- Appropriateness – Managers demonstrate, among other things, the importance of identifying the unique attributes of an organizational situation so that the appropriate corrective action can be matched to that situation, thus eliminating the discrepancy.
- Efficacy - The perceived capability to implement the change initiative.
- Principal Support - support from change agents (highest level of organization & locally) and opinion of leaders.
- Valence – Recognizing the importance of change agents addressing the personal needs of the change recipients.

Armenakis et al. (2007) indicated that the survey instrument could also retrieve the employee's connection with their leader, perceptions of the organization being supportive or non-supportive of subordinates, and the subordinate's level of commitment toward the

organization. The OCRBS proved to have strong construct validity and discriminate validity along with all five factors. The OCRBS has not been used in many studies, but as companies are continuing to evolve and adapt to keep up with the changing economy, understanding change readiness belief, from the FLEs perspective, is essential for long-term success and sustainability. Due to the exploratory nature of this research with the purpose of investigating the isolated effects, the following research question and hypothesis was penned:

R2: Does employee engagement levels impact the change readiness belief of the employee?

H2: Employee engagement correlates positively with the change readiness belief of the employee.

Frontline Employee Intent to Quit

Personnel are particularly important for all corporations and are assets to companies, but when employees resign or do not function well because of dissatisfaction or lack of motivation because of a poor leader or manager, it can cost the company in many ways (Eli, Şener, Aksoy, & Alphan, 2012). While the retail industry is employing a high number of FLEs every year, it is also confronted with a high rate of turnover compared to many other sectors such as transport, education, and agriculture (DeConinck, 2009; Shari, 2007; Suhartanto & Brien, 2018; L. Williams, 2018). FLEs complete critical duties in the retail sector. They are constantly dealing with customers, merchandise, money, and their leader daily and are expected to do that all with a smile and no emotional exhaustion. FLEs deal with various risks and pressures such as constantly relocating to a different

area, lifting and stocking heavy freight, thieves, and safety issues. For these and a myriad of other reasons, the retail industry deals with costly turnover. The intent for FLEs to quit creates soaring expenditures to hire more FLEs, wasted energy and time training new employees, and then hoping they will stay (Azanza, Moriano, Molero, & Mangin, 2015; DeConinck, 2009). FLE Intent to Quit in this paper is defined as employee engagement with an emotional and motivational feeling, which gives employees a sense of commitment and belonging to their role, managers, workplace, and business (Boichuk and Menguc, 2013). Intent to Quit is often described as an employee's dedication towards the organization by displaying discretionary effort (Yamaguchi, 2013). Liu and Wang (2013) asserted that Intent to Quit is a psychological attachment between the employee and the organization. Mowday et al. (1979) conducted research with 2,563 employees from nine organizations to operationalize the Intent to Quit Questionnaire. Mowday et al. identified Intent to Quit as the reasonable strength of a person's identification with and participation in a particular organization. Intent to quit can be described by at least the following three elements: (1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and (3) a fervent desire to maintain membership in the organization. The authors noted that it is important when using this instrument to take caution in administering the survey as it can easily be dissembled. Scholarly research depicts turnover as a complex process with no single factor resulting in quitting a job for all employees all of the time. One factor that is common to all of the models is opportunity (Price & Mueller, 1981). The more an employee perceives that there is a comparable or better job than the one they already have, the easier it is to leave the current position. Another factor that is

consistently related to turnover is job satisfaction (Porter & Steers, 1973). Other factors studied in relation to turnover are commitment (Mobley et al., 1979; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974), psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1989), justice (Bies & Shapiro, 1987; Greenberg, 1993; Leventhal, 1980), and social networks (Moynihan & Pandey, 2008). Social support can be perceived by the employee to come from several different areas. Three of those areas include perceived support from the organization, the manager, and peers. For this study, exploratory in nature looking at the isolated effects, the following research question and hypothesis was developed:

R3: Does frontline employee change readiness belief impact the frontline employees' intent to quit?

H3: Frontline employee change readiness belief negatively correlates with frontline employees' intention to quit.

Conclusion

This study investigated and analyzed front-line employees' (FLEs) perceptions of his/her leader's servant leadership style, their perceived engagement (FLE), organizational change readiness belief, and their intent to quit. The general issue to be tackled is the lack of servant leadership managing FLEs in the retail industries resulting in high quantities of turnover and prominent levels of employee displeasure within the retail sector (Howard 2020). Downing (2016) found in his research that managers in authority positions in retail have not treated employees consistently, thus identifying a problem with leadership. Ariyabuddhiphongs and Kahn (2017) stated that immediate managers are the number one predictor of employee turnover in the United States.

Listianti & Hamali (2015) suggest that leadership can drastically affect morale, job satisfaction, turnover, security, motivation, job quality, and the positive goals achieved by the company. Human capital is the most valuable resource an organization possesses (Field & Johann, 2012). Additionally, a review by the Bureau of Labor (2003), which consisted of more than one hundred studies, found that people-focused organizations positively impacted financial performance, productivity, and employee satisfaction (Baptista, Karaöz, & Mendonça, 2014). For this reason, organizations invested in a relatively innovative human resource concept called employee engagement. FLEs are a crucial resource of the organization and play a pivotal role in the operation of businesses (Ji & Jan 2020). Therefore, researchers and practitioners give substantial importance to the determinants of their sustainable relationships. It is assumed that transformational and servant leaders will inspire FLE's by relating their future to the organization's future and by encouraging them to engage in innovative work behaviors by developing a keen sense of shared vision and belongingness with the organizations. Such leaders can articulate the organizational vision with individual goals and increase inspirational motivation among followers (Bednall, Rafferty, Shipton, Sanders, & Jackson, 2018).

This research collected four diverse sources of data for each construct in order to determine if and to what extent a predictive relationship is present between Front Line Employees' (FLEs) perceptions of his/her leader's servant leadership style, their perceived engagement (FLE), organizational change readiness belief, and their intent to quit. All surveys were proven to be tested and validated through prior empirical research. Academic scholars peer-reviewed the instruments used to explore and confirm instrument creditability, validity, and reliability.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The quantitative research method is appropriate for the study as this method involves testing hypotheses to determine relationships among perceived leadership styles, employee engagement, change readiness belief, and the intent to quit in the retail industry. The instruments used in this study are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Chosen Instruments for the Frontline Retail Workers Study

Instrument Name	Author(s)	Subscales	Number of Questions
Servant Leadership Assessment Index (SLAI)	Dennis & Bocarnea (2005)	Altruism, Empowerment, Humility, Agapao Love, Service, Vision, Trust	42
Utrecht Work Engagement Scale – Ultra-Short (UWES-3)	Schaufeli & Baker (2017)	Vigor, Dedication, & Absorption	3
Organizational Change Recipients' Belief	Armenakis, Bernerth, Pitts, & Walker (2007)	Discrepancy, Appropriateness, Efficacy, Principal Support & Valence	24
Intent to Quit	Mobley (1977)	Intent to quit the job based on job satisfaction	3

Having 18+ years in the retail industry as an operational auditor suggested that when a change was introduced and/or implemented, there was a severe disconnect between the frontline employee and the leadership within that organization. Our team

would frequently deploy to the stores across the US to discern the disconnect that was preventing seamless change. After interviewing the FLE as an auditor of the company, they generally felt the leadership did not genuinely care for them, yet they understood how important they were to the operation. Listening to the frontline employees' concerns impelled this study to focus on the relationship between a servant leadership style and employee engagement of frontline retail employees during times of change and with a goal to prevent turnover. Our team became the liaison between executive leadership and FLEs. Through my occupation, I saw the need to ensure that FLEs were committed to the organization. As an auditor and a scholarly researcher, it is imperative that I remain unbiased throughout the process of auditing and/or research.

Research Design

This study is a quantitative, correlational effect, survey-based study that drew upon frontline employees' actual experience. Examining the relationships between perceived servant leadership style, FLE engagement, organizational change readiness belief, and FLE intent to quit. While a starting point to any study is the research question, choosing a methodology requires an understanding of the data needed to answer the research questions (Kuchartz, 2014). The quantitative methodology is appropriate for this study because hypothesis testing was used (Park & Park, 2016). Quantitative data consists of collecting numerical data and analyzing the data collected to explain potential phenomena (Muijs, Chapman, & Armstrong, 2013). The rationale behind using quantitative methodology is the study objective which uses a deductive process, is structured and is testing a theory (Park & Park, 2016). Quantitative methodology identified and isolated the four specific constructs within this study, which are perceived

servant leadership styles, employee engagement, organizational change readiness belief, and the FLE's intent to quit.

Qualitative methodology was not suitable for the study. Qualitative methodology is focused on exploratory research in order to gain an understanding of opinions and reasons. Qualitative research is often used to uncover trends. As well, it generally has smaller sample sizes in order to do a deep analysis of the problem to uncover trends. Qualitative data are used when a researcher explores a problem in-depth, develops new variables, or tests theories or events. Qualitative methodology is appropriate for examining lived experiences in the context of the participants and studying their meaning of the situation and/or events that occurred (Gavin, 2008). Qualitative methodology was not an appropriate choice for the study because the objective of the study was not to test a new theory or uncover new trends but rather to measure relationships. Quantitative methodology is preferred to qualitative methodology because the information gathered from the participants was in numerical form and can be easily put into categories and rank order for data analysis. Using quantitative methodology within this study allowed for examination among four constructs using a statistical correlation among the variables. This correlation indicated the direction and strength of a linear relationship between servant leadership style, FLE engagement, organizational change readiness belief, and FLE's intent to quit. The degree and form of the relationship among the four variables of leadership style, FLE engagement, organizational change readiness belief, and FLEs intent to quit are separate and separable aspects of the relationship (Arnold, 1982). In quantitative research, there are three types of reliability, including the degree to which a measurement that is administered repeatedly remains the same, the

stability of a measurement over time, and the similarity of measurements within a given time period (Kirk & Miller, 1986). One of the most popular reliability statistics among researchers is Cronbach's alpha to determine the internal consistency of items in a survey instrument to gauge its reliability (Santos & Reynaldo, 1999). A reliability coefficient of .70 or higher is considered acceptable in many research studies (Santos & Reynaldo, 1999).

Research Methodology

This study used the survey method in order to collect data. This research was collected from four diverse sources of data for each construct in order to determine if and to what extent an isolated correlational effect is present between FLEs perception of his/her leader's servant leadership style, FLE engagement, organizational change readiness belief in the retail industry. All scale items were drawn from previous empirical work. Academic scholars peer-reviewed the instruments used to explore and confirm instrument creditability, validity, and reliability. The measurements in the study are Likert scales yielding interval data with the assumption that equal intervals are between all points on the scale. Some researchers argued that Likert scales should be analyzed using non-parametric statistical tests (Norman, 2010). However, this study used parametric tests of correlation and regression, whereas assumptions include a normal distribution of the population.

Participants & Procedures

This study examined the relationship between perceived servant leadership styles, employee engagement, organizational change readiness belief, and intent to quit during times of disruption in the retail industry. This study focused on servant leadership style as

a previous study by Schneider (2020) used transactional, transformational, and laissez-fair leadership styles resulting in a recommendation for another scholar to replicate the study with servant leadership style. The research participants were frontline workers in retail brick and mortar settings. MTURK compensated each participant with \$2. Using this type of incentive, the hope was to secure a 90% + response rate. The time frame for the procedures was a maximum of two weeks, starting September 2021. According to Hair et al. (2014), there should be 15 – 20 participants (minimum of 10) per predictor variable. The Servant Leadership Assessment Index (SLAI) includes seven constructs. For this study, we had 303 participants. This study examined the relationship between perceived servant leadership styles, employee engagement, organizational change readiness belief, and intent to quit. Data were examined with SPSS, Version 27.

Instruments

For data collection, online surveys were completed by FLE in retail in the United States using questionnaires comprised of four instruments along with demographic questions. The purpose of the selected instruments is to measure variables for the study, servant leadership style (predictor/independent variable), employee engagement (criterion/ independent variable), organizational change readiness belief (criterion/independent variable), and intent to quit (criterion/dependent variable).

Servant Leadership Style - This study used the concepts from Patterson's (2003) dissertation through the servant leadership assessment instrument (SLAI) (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005). The seven constructs (agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, service, and empowerment), as defined by Patterson, were used to build items for a servant leadership instrument. The SLAI collects interval data using 42 survey questions

using a Likert scale for each construct. SPSS, Version 27 was used for statistical analysis to calculate both the factor analysis and the scale reliability analysis. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal consistency. The agreed-upon minimum is set at 0.70, and the coefficient alpha for each SLAI subscale was between 0.89 and 0.94, thus deeming the instrument dependable (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005).

Employee Engagement Scale - The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-3)

(Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) was used in the study to measure how engaged participants were within their retail work environment. This was the original questionnaire by Schaufeli (2003) to measure work engagement that is characterized by three main aspects of work engagement known as dedication, absorption, and vigor. The UWES-3 instrument collected ordinal level data that was treated as interval level data, assuming a normal distribution of the data from the sample size. According to past results of the study, the UWES-3 showed internal consistency reliability above the suggested .70 and along with strong factorial validity with all three actors (vigor, dedication, and absorption) (Balducci et al., 2010). In terms of reliability, the UWES-3 has a strong internal consistency as tested with Cronbach's *a* for a total score of .90 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). All UWES scales (3, 9, & 17) have proven to be highly reliable, and even though the shortened versions, with three and nine variables, are slightly lower, they still fall within the acceptable range (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The UWES tool is grouped into three subscales that reflect underlying dimensions of engagement and is scored using a 7-point Likert scale collecting interval data (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

Organizational change readiness - The Organization Change Readiness Belief Scale (OCRBS) (Armenakis et al., 2007) was used to assess the level of buy-in from employees throughout the organization's change initiatives. The OCRBS is a 24-item scale that can be used throughout the change process to assess the level of "buy-in" from frontline workers with the change initiative (Armenakis et al., 2007). Armenakis et al. (2007) stated that the survey tool could also assess the FLE's relationship with their leader, perceptions of the organization being supportive or nonsupportive of FLEs, as well as their level of commitment toward the organization. The OCRBS collects interval data using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) (Armenakis et al., 2007). The Cronbach's coefficient alphas were 0.94 - 0.66. Holt, Armenakis, Field, and Harris (2007) explained that although one scale did not meet "the standard of 0.70 that has been suggested, the standard of 0.70 was relaxed because of the exploratory nature of the scale" (p. 244). The OCRBS meets the standards for construct and discriminant validity from empirical testing on four studies (Armenakis et al., 2007). The OCRBS instrument collected ordinal level data, and the researcher treated the data as interval level data. "It has become common practice to assume that Likert-type categories constitute an interval-level measurement" (Jamieson, 2004, p. 1213).

Intent to Quit - Based on the Literature, there was a body of knowledge that associated different forms of support in the workplace with an employee's intent to quit their organization. Three questions evaluated the FLE's intent to quit based on Mobley's (1977) research. Reliability was evaluated to show the accuracy of the measurements used in the study. Without high reliability, relationships between variables could be missed (Vogt, 2007). The Cronbach alpha, or just alpha, was used to measure the internal

consistency reliability of the scale when using the three items that are included in the measurement. An alpha greater than .70 is considered to show consistency in the measurement tool (Vogt, 2007).

Data Collection Procedures - Data was collected with the use of MTurk® online panels, an online sampling service collector. The process included contracting with MTurk® to send the survey to a targeted population. The requirements for the respondents included frontline employees with non-managerial positions over the age of 18 and frontline employees with at least one year of experience. The goal of this study was 105-144 participants, and this research surveyed 303 participants. The permission Mturk Invoice is shown in Appendix I, the recruitment letter is available in Appendix II, and the Informed Consent letter is shown in Appendix III. The survey started with a recruitment process agreed upon between the researcher and MTurk, identifying the purposeful sample for this study. Research by Brandon, Long, Loraas, Mueller-Phillips, and Vansant (2013) found that using sampling such as MTurk® or Survey Monkey, who recruit participants using nontraditional methods generate data that are as externally valid as those provided by more traditional participant recruitment methods. Online survey research saves time, cost, and can reach larger and diverse populations.

Each participant completed a consent form acknowledging their understanding of the survey and agreement to complete the survey. If the requirements are met, and the consent is signed, the participant proceeded with completing the survey consisting of questions from (a) the Servant Leadership Assessment Index, (b) the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, (c) the Readiness for Organizational Change Measure, and (d) the

intent to quit instrument. In addition to the four surveys, demographic questions included gender, age, years worked in the retail industry or frontline work.

MTurk® provides each participant with a link that explains the participant's rights, the opportunity to opt-out, confidentiality protections, and understanding that their answers provided their informed consent. The informed consent form is available in Appendix III. The participants were given the option to withdraw their participation at any time without consequence. All participants were provided with an informed consent form explaining the nature of the study and that choosing to participate in the study will not have an impact on their job, and that their information will remain confidential.

The survey included qualifying questions at the beginning of the survey to verify that the participants matched the criteria required for participating in the study. One of the qualifying questions asked participants if they have at least one year of frontline work. If a frontline worker did not have at least one year of retail experience, the individual would be disqualified from continuing with the survey. Frontline employees do not have any qualifying questions other than an age requirement of being 18 years old or older and working in a frontline role.

MTurk® offered a security plan for the data that includes password protection and storing the data in a locked location and destroying after three years. The MTurk® data collection service collected and transmitted the data without personally identifiable information such as names, companies where participants work, addresses, or email addresses. No identifying information was collected from the leaders and subordinates through the questionnaires. Any printed data, hard drives, or flash drives with data is kept

under lock and key in a safe place. The data management plan for the study included security codes for all computerized records of the completed surveys and demographic information. The online survey tools and any original forms were kept by the researcher for three years then properly destroyed, eliminating digital data and paper backups. The MTurk® data collection service will destroy any digital or paper data used in the study within 90 days of the termination of the researcher's account.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study is a quantitative, correlational effect, field-based study is to review the relationships between servant leadership style, FLE engagement, organizational change readiness belief, and FLE intent to quit. The first phase of the data analysis is to clean the data in Microsoft Excel®. Preparing the data in Excel allows the researcher to see if all survey questions were answered, compute scale scores as directed by the interpretation documentation, and remove participants with missing data. Prior to moving the survey data from MTurk to Excel, MTurk provided the information to calculate the actual response rate. After the data had been cleaned and prepared, it was uploaded to IBM SPSS®.

Prior to running analyses, many assumptions are made. These assumptions include linearity of variables, level of measurement, absence of outliers, normality of variables, and homoscedasticity. Homoscedasticity is otherwise referred to as homogeneity of variance (Statistics Solutions, 2018). Once in SPSS, the analysis began with descriptive statistics, including graphs and charts to describe the demographic data findings of the data (Shang, 2015). Descriptive statistics is a way to “gut check” the data to make sure the number of participants in the study transferred properly from MTurk to

Excel and finally to SPSS. In addition, descriptive statistics explains the central tendency within the data collection. Central tendency includes the mode, median, variation, mean, range, and standard deviation of the dataset. According to Vogt (2007), descriptive statistics are used to summarize and describe the data.

The second step in the analysis of data was to compute the reliability coefficient for each subscale contained within (a) the Servant Leadership Assessment Index, (b) the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, (c) the Organizational Change Readiness Belief Scale, and (d) the intent to quit instrument. The goal is for Cronbach's alpha to score above .70. However, some studies argue that a lower score can still be deemed reliable for certain circumstances.

Step three involved conducting multiple regression analyses. Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2006) wrote that "multiple regression is by far the most widely used multivariate technique" (p. 189). Multiple regression is a "family of techniques" based on correlation (Pallant, 2011, p. 148). This analytical approach is a sophisticated exploration of the inter-relationships between variables and is ideal for complex, real-life research questions. The significance value, also known as the p-value, was set at .05 as a threshold for statistical significance. If the p-value is above .05, there is not a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. If it is below .05, there is a statistically significant relationship. The Beta weight was also examined to see which independent variable has the most predictive influence on the dependent variable. The Beta weight can be negative or positive; however, the signage is ignored, and the value is examined as the strength of the unique contribution between the independent and dependent variables. The negative or positive sign is not an indication of weakness or strength; instead, it

infers the direction of the relationship. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is also used for data analysis to measure both the strength and direction of association that exists between interval scale variables. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient can range from -1 to +1. A correlation of 0 indicates no relationship between the two variables.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Chapter 4 provides the detailed findings from the final study. Throughout this chapter, the population demographics, procedures, reliability and relationships, hypotheses testing, and summary are provided. A pre-test of the items was conducted to determine the questions for the final study. This pre-test was meant to add clarity to how the current scales and subscales relate to one another with the anticipation that multiple items may be dropped from the final survey. The pre-test was conducted with 200 participants.

Population Demographics

The first analysis was to evaluate the descriptive statistics. The study included 303 participants. All participants had at least one year of customer-facing experience and were at least 18 years of age. As shown in Table 4, the survey included more males than females.

Table 4 General Demographics of Survey Participants

Demographic	<i>N</i>	%
Gender		
Male	163	53.8%
Female	139	45.9%

Procedures

The survey was sent to a random sample of participants using MTURK. MTURK compensated each participant \$2. A pilot study was conducted with 200 participants to validate the long survey. The final study included 303 participants from MTURK. The first step was to retrieve the information from SurveyMonkey and clean the data. This required removing extraneous rows and columns in addition to removing rows with missing data. This removed several participants as they did not complete all survey questions.

Next, the variables were computed in Excel to score the instruments according to the instructions provided. For example, the 42-item Servant Leadership Assessment Index measures seven dimensions: Agapao Love, Altruism, Empowerment, Humility, Serving, Trust, and Vision. Agapao love is the sum of questions 2, 7, 17, 19, 21, and 27. Once the variables were all computed, the file was imported into SPSS version 28.

Subsequent analyses included the coefficient alpha to assess data reliability for each dimension, correlation, and regression tests. Each statistical test is discussed more in future sections of this chapter. Once the pilot test was complete, the final test was conducted with a new dataset.

Reliability

The coefficient alpha for the pilot test showed very high alpha levels. As a general rule of thumb, the goal is to have an alpha level above .70. Table 5 documents the alpha level for each dimension or subscale in the final study. Scores for the pilot study range from .82 to .95. Scores for the final study range from .81 to .94. The alpha is meant to

measure internal consistency or how closely related a set of items are in a scale. All the scales used were validated/ operationalized items used in scholarly research. Therefore, we did not eliminate any questions from the subscales.

Table 5 Coefficient Alpha – Final Study

Subscale	<i>Study</i>
Love	.94
Humility	.90
Altruism	.90
Vision	.93
Trust	.84
Service	.91
Empowerment	.90
OC Discrepancy	.87
OC Appropriateness	.88
OC Valence	.86
OC Principal Support	.88
OC Efficacy	.81
Intention to Quit	.92
Employee Engagement	.87

Correlation Analysis

The results of the final study were comparable to the pilot study in that many of the variables correlate with one another with significance levels at the .01 level. As shown in Tables 6 and 7, none of the variables correlated with sex. Only four variables correlated with OC Discrepancy (OC Appropriateness, OC Efficacy, OC Valence, intention to quit). Otherwise, love did correlate with all other variables at a .01 or less significance level with scores between .425 (intention to quit) and .896 (trust). Humility also correlated with all other variables, with scores ranging from .304 (intention to quit)

to .796 (altruism). Altruism scores ranged from .270 (intention to quit) to .892 (love). Vision scores ranged from .335 (intention to quit) to .848 (love). Trust scores ranged from .449 (intention to quit) to .896 (love). Service scores ranged from .379 (intention to quit) to .856 (love). Empowerment scores ranged from .341 (intention to quit) to .884 (love).

Table 6 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Sex	1.47	.51	-								
2. Love	31.23	7.85	0.021	-							
3. Humility	29.57	7.83	-0.056	.788**	-						
4. Altruism	28.82	7.94	-0.044	.892**	.796**	-					
5. Vision	25.66	6.35	0.025	.848**	.711**	.829**	-				
6. Trust	32.02	5.98	0.029	.896**	.762**	.803**	.819**	-			
7. Service	31.97	6.69	0.030	.856**	.755**	.841**	.796**	.842**	-		
8. Empowerment	31.72	6.80	0.006	.884**	.744**	.814**	.845**	.870**	.816**	-	
9. OC Discrepancy	26.65	4.81	-0.050	-0.050	-0.011	0.027	0.067	-0.041	-0.027	0.045	-
10. OC Appropriateness	25.36	5.31	0.005	.587**	.489**	.643**	.681**	.533**	.612**	.549**	.228**
11. OC Efficacy	27.76	4.23	0.035	.493**	.392**	.392**	.528**	.540**	.537**	.519**	.199**
12. OC Principal Support	25.31	5.50	-0.018	.724**	.650**	.732**	.774**	.676**	.756**	.675**	0.109
13. OC Valence	24.07	5.74	-0.029	.571**	.534**	.671**	.702**	.500**	.569**	.580**	.268**
14. Intention to Quit	11.58	5.76	0.060	.425**	.304**	.270**	.335**	.449**	.379**	.341**	-.347**
15. EE (Vigor)	5.21	1.64	-0.021	.618**	.485**	.570**	.667**	.570**	.561**	.604**	0.032
16. EE (Dedication)	5.12	1.61	-0.009	.673**	.545**	.614**	.732**	.656**	.612**	.658**	0.031
17. EE (Absorption)	5.18	1.48	0.017	.493**	.409**	.438**	.553**	.512**	.487**	.517**	0.082
18. EE	15.51	4.20	-0.006	.673**	.542**	.612**	.736**	.654**	.625**	.670**	0.053

Table 7 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
11. OC Efficacy	27.76	4.23	.530**	-						
12. OC Principal Support	25.31	5.50	.822**	.557**	-					
13. OC Valence	24.07	5.74	.843**	.489**	.816**	-				
14. Intention to Quit	11.58	5.76	.185**	.237**	.267**	0.101	-			
15. EE (Vigor)	5.21	1.64	.564**	.452**	.616**	.602**	.337**	-		
16. EE (Dedication)	5.12	1.61	.629**	.487**	.689**	.648**	.402**	.812**	-	
17. EE (Absorption)	5.18	1.48	.524**	.434**	.503**	.501**	.303**	.581**	.644**	-
18. EE	15.51	4.20	.640**	.516**	.682**	.660**	.393**	.906**	.928**	.826**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Hypotheses Testing

In evaluating the first hypothesis, servant leadership positively correlates with employee engagement with Pearson scores mostly in the high degree of correlation. High levels of correlation between servant leadership and employee engagement included the

independent variable of love with the dependent variables of vigor, dedication, and the overall employee engagement scale (the sum of all questions). The servant leadership construct of humility had high correlations with employee engagement constructs of dedication and the overall scale. Altruism had high levels of correlation with vigor, dedication, and the overall scale. Vision, trust, and empowerment had a high correlation with all constructs of employee engagement. Service had a high correlation with vigor, dedication, and the overall scale. The humility and EE (vigor) score was in the moderate range at .485. The variable EE (absorption) also had four moderate relationships with love (.493), humility (.409), altruism (.438), and service (.487). **Therefore, H1 is accepted. Servant leadership correlates positively with frontline employee engagement.**

In testing employee engagement and change readiness, OC Discrepancy did not have any relationship with employee engagement variables. However, OC Appropriateness, OC Principal Support, and OC Valence all correlated with a degree of scores ranging from .501 - .689. OC Efficacy and employee engagement variables of vigor, dedication, and absorption had moderate relationships. These findings support H2. **Employee engagement correlates positively with the change readiness belief of the employee.**

The third hypothesis was tested by examining employee change readiness and frontline employees' intention to quit. There was a small negative relationship between intention to quit and OC Discrepancy (-.347). There was a small positive relationship between intention to quit and OC Appropriateness (.185), OC Efficacy (.237), and OC Principal Support (.267). There was not a relationship between intention to quit and OC

Valence. These findings partially support H3. **Frontline employee change readiness belief negatively (partially) correlates with frontline employees' intention to quit.**

Regression Analysis

The final analysis for this study advanced the correlation test one step further by evaluating relationships for predictive power. This was not a requirement for the research questions and hypotheses; however, it adds to the robustness of the findings. The first hypotheses focused on the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement. The correlation findings in Table 6 showed a correlation between all of the servant leadership constructs and employee engagement constructs. The second-order factor of Employee Engagement is the overall scale where all three questions for employee engagement were totaled. As shown in Table 6, the servant leadership constructs of love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, service and empowerment had high correlation values with the overall scale for employee engagement. **Table 8 shows there is predictive power between the servant leadership dimension of vision with the dependent variable of employee engagement.**

Table 8 Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Variables

Variable	Employee Engagement			
	B	SE	β	p
SL Love	.100	.065	.186	.129
SL Humility	-.011	.037	-.021	.760
SL Altruism	-.090	.052	-.171	.083
SL Vision	.386	.055	.584	<.001**
SL Trust	.028	.070	.040	.688
SL Service	.036	.054	.057	.503
SL Empowerment	.053	.059	.086	.366

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The second hypothesis included multiple dependent variables for change readiness. As shown in Tables 6 and 7, most of the change readiness and employee engagement variables correlated to some extent, except OC Discrepancy. Each dependent variable has its own table to examine the independent variables and any predictive capacity of those variables on the dependent variable. Tables 19 - 23 show the results of the examination between employee engagement and change readiness. The employee engagement variable of valence was excluded as the collinearity statistics showed a zero-tolerance level. **Table 9 examines OC Discrepancy and employee engagement. There were no predictive variables in this analysis.**

Table 9 Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Variables – H1

Variable	OC Discrepancy			
	B	SE	β	p
EE Dedication	-.124	.563	-.042	.825
EE Absorption	.338	.407	.104	.407
EE Total	.007	.293	.06	.981

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 10 examines OC Appropriateness and employee engagement. **One employee engagement independent variable (EE Dedication) had predictive capacity with OC Appropriateness.**

Table 10 Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Variables - H2

Variable	OC Appropriateness			
	B	SE	β	p
EE Dedication	.939	.473	.285	.048*
EE Absorption	.289	.343	.080	.399
EE Total	.398	.247	.315	.107

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 11 examines OC Efficacy and employee engagement. **None of the independent variables showed significance with a p-value of less than .05.**

Table 11 Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Variables - H2

Variable	OC Efficacy			
	B	SE	β	p
EE Dedication	.332	.424	.127	.435
EE Absorption	.213	.307	.74	.488
EE Total	.339	.221	.337	.126

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 12 examines OC Principal Support and employee engagement. **Two independent variables (EE Dedication and EE Total) showed predictive capacity with the dependent variable (OC Support).**

Table 12 Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Variables – H2

Variable	OC Principal Support			
	B	SE	β	p
EE Dedication	1.231	.462	.361	.008**
EE Absorption	-.193	.335	-.052	.564
EE Total	.511	.241	.390	.035*

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 13 examines OC Valence and employee engagement. **One independent variable (EE Total) showed predictive capacity with OC Valence.**

Table 13 Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Variables – H2

Variable	OC Valence			
	B	SE	β	p
EE Dedication	.731	.501	.26	.146
EE Absorption	-.229	.363	-.059	.528
EE Total	.709	.261	.518	.007**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The third hypothesis focused on frontline employee change readiness and intention to quit. **Table 14 shows that none of the independent variables had predictive capacity with the dependent variable.**

Table 14 Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Variables – H3

Variable	Intention to Quit			
	B	SE	β	p
OC Discrepancy	-.461	.064	-.386	-.588
OC Appropriateness	.149	.113	.138	-.074
OC Efficacy	.276	.084	.203	.111
OC Principal Support	.285	.107	.273	.075

OC Valence	-.234	.105	-.233	-.440
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* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter reviewed the findings of the research study. In answers from a total of 303 participants were analyzed to understand the relationships between servant leadership and employee engagement, employee engagement and change readiness, and change readiness with an intention to quit. In the final study, each hypothesis was accepted or partially accepted. This chapter took the analysis one step further to examine if the relationships had predictive power with regression testing. Some but not all of the independent variables had significance with a prediction of the dependent variables. The next chapter focused on the research findings, weaknesses in the development of the study, strengths and limitations, practical and theoretical implications, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Frontline employees (FLEs) are experiencing insurmountable amounts of change, especially since the COVID Pandemic began in 2020. This type of employee (Frontline) traditionally earns low income and experiences high turnover. While frontline workers have been accustomed to being less engaged, they are very pricey to replace (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013a; Tempkin & Lewis, 2013). Neglecting the frontline worker could greatly limit access to merchandise and/or service to the consumer. Disengagement of frontline employees reached a loss of \$328 billion to companies (Gallup, 2013). Therefore, this study is significant as it focused on the engagement of frontline workers along with organizational change and servant leadership traits.

Leadership methodologies have been studied for many years now. This study addressed a crucial manager's predicament of how to keep FLEs from leaving, which is very costly to the organization and remaining engaged during times of change. Given the current climate of organizations with FLEs and not being able to obtain talent without an incentive (bonus, gift, etc.), This study explored to what extent a relationship exists

between the Front Line Employees' (FLEs) perceptions of his/her leader's servant leadership style, their perceived engagement, organizational change readiness belief, and their intent to quit. The results of this study demonstrated that there are correlations and predictive powers between the constructs of Servant Leadership, Employee Engagement, Organization Change Readiness belief & Intention to Quit.

The three research questions of this study explored the relationship between leadership, engagement, change readiness belief, and intent to quit. The research questions and hypotheses developed were intended to address the critical problem with keeping engaged FLEs from quitting during times of rapid change. This significant study adds to the existing literature in that it focuses entirely on frontline workers during the COVID pandemic.

Servant Leadership and Employee Engagement

R1: Is there a relationship between perceived servant leadership and employee engagement of frontline employees?

H1: Servant leadership correlates positively with frontline employee engagement.

The findings of this study confirmed that servant leadership constructs of love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, service, and empowerment are correlated to employee engagement constructs of vigor, dedication, absorption, and the overall employee engagement scale with moderate and high correlations. A post hoc analysis of servant leadership and employee engagement found that vision was predictive of engagement based on the overall employee engagement scale ($p = <.001^{**}$).

Employee Engagement and Change Readiness

R2: Does employee engagement levels impact the change readiness belief of the employee?

H2: Employee engagement correlates positively with the change readiness belief of the employee.

The findings of this study confirmed three of the four change readiness constructs are related to employee engagement. OC Discrepancy was not related to any of the employee engagement variables; however, OC Appropriateness, OC Efficacy, OC Principal Support, and OC Valence did show moderate and high correlations to employee engagement constructs of vigor, dedication, absorption, and the overall employee engagement scale. A post hoc regression analysis found a significant value of .048 for EE Dedication and OC Appropriateness. There was also a significant value of .008** for EE Dedication and OC Principal Support and .035* for EE Total and OC Principal Support. EE Total could also predict OC Valence ($p = .007^{**}$).

Change Readiness and Intention to Quit

R3: Does frontline employee change readiness belief impact the frontline employees' intent to quit?

H3: Frontline employee change readiness belief negatively correlates with frontline employees' intention to quit.

The findings of the correlation test on the independent variables of change readiness and the dependent variable of intention to quit were mixed. First, there was an inverse relationship between OC Discrepancy and intention to quit ($-.347^{**}$). There was a low correlation between OC Appropriateness ($.185^{**}$), OC Efficacy ($.237^{**}$), OC Principal

Support (.267**), and intention to quit. And there was no relationship between OC Valence (.101) and intention to quit.

Scholarly Implications

Schneider (2020) called for potential research on servant leadership style and FLE engagement during times of change. I brought in the intent to quit variable as it is common for frontline workers to have high levels of turnover. The servant leadership style of leadership can drive engagement with frontline workers. Xu and Thomas (2011) analyzed the relationship of task-oriented and relationship-oriented leader style and employee engagement and found favorable correlations. Centering on servant leadership vs. transformational leadership will provide additional information and lessen the gap using a different leadership style focused on FLEs (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Xu & Thomas, 2011). While servant leadership is not commonly utilized with frontline employees in the retail sector, this research, from the frontline employee's perspective, shows there is predictive power between servant leadership dimension of vision with the dependent variable of employee engagement and that all constructs of servant leadership correlated with employee engagement.

History shows an effective methodology for dealing with change begins with leadership. The change readiness scale has not been used in many studies, but as companies are continuing to progress and modify to keep up with the changing retail environment, understanding change readiness belief, from the FLEs perspective, is essential for long-term success and sustainability. There was one engagement variable, EE Dedication, which had predictive power with the change readiness variable of OC Appropriateness. Employee Engagement (all three questions together) showed predictive

capacity with change readiness of Valence. The findings of this study confirmed three of the five change readiness constructs are related to employee engagement. The variable of discrepancy was not related to any of the engagement variables.

The findings on the variables of change readiness and intention to quit were mixed. The retail industry is employing a high number of frontline workers and increasing every year. Hiring frontline workers in retail is confronted with a high rate of costly turnover compared to many other sectors such as transport, education, and agriculture (DeConinck, 2009; Shari, 2007; Suhartanto & Brien, 2018; L. Williams, 2018).

Practical Implication

After the year of the pandemic (2020), the retail industry experienced more complexity and change. The retail industry is transforming dramatically due to customer demand, shopping habits, innovation, and progressing digitalization (Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman, 2015). Retailers should proceed to change and adjust their business methodology to stay aware of shopper interest in an omnichannel retail climate (Verhoef et al., 2015). Retailers are currently putting more accentuation on their online stages, shipment times, and making a consistent effort for their purchasers to stay aware of rivalry.

Constant improvement initiatives, driving change, and workplace learning are essential in order for a retail business to remain viable (Tharenou et al., 2007). Sung and Choi (2014) explained the importance of having highly motivated and engaged employees as a critical part of

continued organizational innovation. While the focus in the industry is on the customer & technology/innovation, this research and the research of Schneider (2020) suggest a focus on leadership styles and styles around relationship-building vs. transactional completion. FLE's are a must, and this research gave the leadership style from the FLE's perspective. Servant leadership is worth looking at since there is a strong correlation between this leadership style and engagement. As well, vision (one of the seven variables of servant leadership) provides a predictive element to FLE engagement. Employee engagement displayed a positive correlation with certain dimensions of organizational change readiness.

Limitations & Recommendations for Future Research

Several limitations can occur with any type of self-reporting data. Data collected by a third party limits the amount of clarification needed from the participants. Social suitability could also have portrayed a role in this research and can create erroneous interactions between the constructs and subsequent variables (van de Mortel, 2008). Mturk was the chosen third party to assist with finding research participants. Each participant was paid \$2 to take the survey. Although it was costly to use this service, it expedited the process, and the alpha scores show the data collected from the participants is reliable.

Research is recommended for other variables between leadership style and engagement. The same would be for other variables between engagement and change readiness and finally readiness for change and intention to quit. This study only focused on servant leadership style; however, future research recommendations are to measure other leadership styles, such as authentic leadership style with frontline worker

engagement & organizational change readiness. It would be worth looking at any moderating effects of change readiness on the style of leadership and engagement. It is also recommended that future research focus on participants in specific retail companies involved in large-scale change, such as Amazon, Walmart, Target, etc.

Conclusion

The focus of this study aimed to add understanding to industries that employ frontline workers and provide an example of how servant leadership style variables can predict employee engagement. Employee engagement variables can predict change readiness from the frontline worker's perspective. Finally, this study sought to understand if the frontline worker's perception of their organizational change readiness can predict their intent to quit. This research examined the connection between the constructs of servant leadership style, employee engagement, organizational change readiness belief, and frontline worker intent to quit the organization. The results demonstrated strong correlations between each of the constructs.

It is the goal of this research to assist industries with frontline workers to retain their frontline workforce and not experience costly turnover. Intrinsically, it refers to modifying the current retail leadership style to embrace retail change while maintaining or increasing engagement. As an operational auditor in the retail industry for 18+ years, I was looking for an answer through this research to reduce turnover, increase engagement, and help frontline employees with the constant change they face in their careers. This study helps see that servant leadership style traits of agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, service, and empowerment are all related to employee engagement, and vision may be an essential competency for retail leaders to enhance in the future months

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Mturk Invoice

INVOICE



Mturk Data
1631 Elizabeth LN, Clearwater, FL 33755, UNITED STATES
joe@mturkdata.com; Website: http://mturkdata.com

Invoice No#: 203053
Invoice Date: Aug 24, 2021
Due Date: Aug 24, 2021



CANCELED

\$835.91
AMOUNT DUE

BILL TO

ap*****@ostatemail.okstate.edu

#	ITEMS & DESCRIPTION	PRICE	AMOUNT(\$)
1	Frontline Worker Survey 300 surveys	\$600.00	\$600.00
2	Amazon Fee 20%	\$120.00	\$120.00
3	Mturk Data Fee 13%	\$93.60	\$93.60
4	Invoice Fee	\$39.70	\$39.70
5	Item for separate invoice	-\$17.39	-\$17.39
	Subtotal		\$835.91
	Shipping		\$0.00
	TOTAL		\$835.91 USD

NOTES TO CUSTOMER

We need to receive payment before we can publish.

APPENDIX B – Recruitment Letter



This communication is part of the survey

Your participation in this research is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time.

Respondents must answer a question as to whether they work in a retail frontline position. For those who do not qualify to respond to the survey, the survey will end.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things: Complete an online survey that will take ~ approximately 10 minutes.

Confidentiality: The information you give in the study will be anonymous. This means that your name will not be linked to the data in any way. The researchers will not be able to remove your data from the dataset once your participation is complete.

This data will be stored in a password-protected computer indefinitely. The research team will ensure anonymity to the degree permitted by technology.

If you agree to participate in this research, please click “I Agree” to continue

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FrontlineWorkers>

Compensation: Mturk will pay participants \$2.

APPENDIX C - Informed Consent



University Research Compliance

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM Evaluation of IRB Procedures Regarding

You are invited to participate in the one-time online survey study on job crafting conducted by Dr. Todd Arnold, Ryan Paul, Greg Wickman and April Lawson. This study focuses on how Salespeople and Sales Managers complete their work and if job crafting leads to improved performance, gains realized and if job crafting is in conflict or harmony with company controls.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things: Complete an online survey that will take 20- 30 minutes.

http://okstatebusiness.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cG5RJlbI5CFPEQR

Compensation: All participants will be entered into a drawing for a \$25 Amazon gift card. There will be 15 winners out of 250 completed surveys.

Confidentiality: The information you give in the study will be anonymous. This means that your name will not be collected or linked to the data in any way. The researchers will not be able to remove your data from the dataset once your participation is complete. This data will be stored in a password protected computer indefinitely. The research team will ensure anonymity to the degree permitted by technology. Your participation in this online survey involves risks like a person's everyday use of the internet. If you have concerns, you should consult the survey provider privacy policy at <https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/>.

Contacts and Questions: If you have questions about the research study itself, please contact the Principal Investigator at 918-594-8596 todd.arnold@okstate.edu If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, please contact the OSU IRB at (405) 744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

If you agree to participate in this research, please click "I Agree" to continue.

APPENDIX D - Successful Defense

Name: April N. Lawson

CWID: A20172537

Dissertation Approved:

**FRONTLINE RETAIL EMPLOYEE – EXTINCT OR EVOLVING: A LOOK AT THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVANT LEADERSHIP, EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT,
ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE RECIPIENTS’ BELIEF AND EMPLOYEE INTENT TO
QUIT**

Todd Arnold

Dissertation Advisor **Dr. Todd Arnold**

Rathin Sarathy

Dr. Rathin Sarathy

Marlys Mason

Dr. Marlys Mason

Tom Brown

Dr. Tom Brown

VITA

April Lawson

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: FRONTLINE RETAIL EMPLOYEES – EXTINCT OR EVOLVING: A LOOK AT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN, SERVANT LEADERSHIP, EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT, ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE RECIPIENTS' BELIEF AND EMPLOYEE INTENT TO QUIT

Major Field: BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 2021.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Business Administration in Leadership & Ethics at John Brown University, Rogers, Arkansas in 2016.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration at University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Mississippi in 2001.

Experience:

Investigative Manager – Walmart Global Governance – May 2021 – Present

Senior Manager – Walmart Internal Audit – September 2014 – April 2021

Operations Manager – Walmart Supply Chain – April 2012 – September 2014

Accountant – Kansas State University – May 2010 – March 2012

Audit Manager – Triton Management – April 2008 – March 2010

Senior Auditor – Walmart Internal Audit (Inventory) June 2001 – March 2008

Professional Memberships:

Academy of Management

PhD Project

Institute for Internal Audit