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Leadership Strategies to Manage Workplace Conflict

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Omari Asante

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Leadership Strategies to Manage Workplace Conflict

by

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MS, New York University, 2008

BEd, University of Cape Coast, 2003

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2020

Abstract

Workplace conflict can be counterproductive to organizational goal attainment and can cause dysfunction and unhealthy competition among organizational members. When left unchecked, workplace conflict can negatively impact teams' performance and result in substantial financial losses to organizations. However, when properly managed, workplace conflict can lead to positive relationship building, peer learning, enhanced communication, innovation, and high motivation. Grounded in transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore leadership strategies senior account managers use to manage workplace conflict. Participants were 8 senior account managers who had successfully implemented leadership strategies for managing workplace conflict in New York City. Data collection occurred through a review of relevant organizational documents and in-depth semistructured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data and the emergent themes were collaboration among parties, the effect of conflict resolution on team/group performance, the cost of conflict resolution at the workplace, involving all parties in the conflict resolution process, and being mindful of employee behavior. A key recommendation is to explore how leaders can use collaboration as a significant conflict management strategy to reduce workplace conflict. The implications for positive social change include the potential to create empathetic individuals with a higher sense of tolerance, who will consider others' perspectives in decision-making. Further, study findings may serve as a blueprint for the development of social-intervention programs to deal with conflict situations.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my family, especially my wonderful boys, Kofi Asante, Kwadwo Asiedu, and Kofi Asante. Thank you all very much for allowing me the time to complete this journey. There were times when I could not help with homework, yet you guys never gave up. The lesson is never to give up in life; the journey might be long and difficult. However, there is always success for those who persevere.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Achieving organizational goals requires an environment that helps to promote harmony between peers (Saeed, Almas, Anis-ul-Haq, & Niazi, 2014); in other words, successful organizational leaders are those who help to create a harmonious work environment. Meng, Fulk, and Yuan (2015) further indicated that successful team performance depends on how well team members cooperate and share ideas. The responsibility of organizational managers is to ensure a workplace without conflict among team members (Saeed et al., 2014). However, Zhou and Shi (2014) highlighted the prevalence of team member conflict in the workplace. Zhou and Shi further indicated that such workplace conflict produces a net adverse effect on the individual as well as the team. Workplace conflict among team members can be dysfunctional and lead to unhealthy competition (Sheppard & Aquino, 2017). Schaeffner et al. (2015) also indicated that workplace conflict results in tension and performance-impeding behavior detrimental to successful team performance. For organizations to achieve stated goals, managers must implement strategies that help in managing workplace conflict and motivate team members to be cooperative in the discharge of their work responsibilities.

The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies that managers use to manage workplace conflict, and by so doing, understand the strategies that organizational managers need. Therefore, it was appropriate to explore the experiences of senior account managers in an organization to attain an understanding of the strategies that had been successful over the years. This study has potential implications for positive social change,

in that it may be useful in identifying the conflict-management strategies that have been instrumental in helping managers to effectively manage workplace conflict, determining how different strategies impact the internal and external environment of an organization, and deriving lessons that managers can learn to enhance their effectiveness.

Background of the Problem

In a research conducted by Danielsson, Bodin, Wulff, and Theorell (2015), 50% of participants indicated that they had been in some type of conflict situation with their coworkers. Conflict in the workplace might arise from differences of opinion with regard to a process or procedure and can affect organizational members' ability to build relationships, increase productivity, and enhance their job satisfaction (McKenzie, 2015). Negative effects of workplace conflicts arise because organizational members concentrate on reducing the threats of conflict or focus on enhancing their power rather than enhancing productivity (Danielsson et al., 2015).

Ayoko (2016) argued that this phenomenon is pervasive in the workplace and has a detrimental effect on individuals. Conflict situations can have an adverse effect on individuals' job performance, team performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and can enhance deviant behaviors among members of the organization (Chung, 2015). To Dundon and Dobbins (2015), conflict can act as a retrogressing factor in ensuring cooperation among team members. Therefore, Chung (2015) argued that because employees spend part of their day at the workplace, it is essential for team members to maintain cordial working relationship in the workplace.

Hopkins and Scott (2016) argued that managers have the responsibility to reconcile individual differences, create an environment that fosters coexistence, and direct individual energy toward group goal attainment. Of particular importance in a global marketplace is the need to gain competitive advantage (Brock, Eisengerich, Sharapov, & George, 2015). Bai, Harms, Han, and Cheng (2015) stressed the need for managers to ensure a high performance level in employees. Bai et al. indicated that, although conflict is inevitable in workplace relationships, a high level of employee performance is mostly a product of the strategies that managers employ to control workplace conflict.

Problem Statement

Conflict, though is an inevitable part of workplace life (Leon-Perez, Medina, Arenas, & Munduate, 2015) not only affects the productivity level and financial well-being of an organization, but also has an adverse net effect on the psychological and physical state of individual members (Ford, Myrden, & Kelloway, 2016). Maximin, Moshiri, and Bhargava (2015) noted that although it is difficult to price all hidden costs of conflict, the annual financial cost of workplace conflict to U.S. businesses is approximately \$359 billion. The general business problem is that workplace conflict negatively affects the productivity and financial sustainability of businesses. The specific business problem is that some senior account managers lack leadership strategies to manage workplace conflict.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the leadership strategies that senior account managers use to manage workplace conflict. The target population consisted of 25 senior account managers from 10 business-solution centers from the same organization who successfully implemented leadership strategies to manage workplace conflict in New York City (NYC). The findings of this study may lead to positive social change by providing managers with knowledge and skills for minimizing the potential cost of conflict to deliver products and services at a lower cost while creating a harmonious work environment. Other positive social change implications of the findings of this study include the potential to provide greater insight on the effects of conflict, which may inform the development of societal-welfare-enhancing programs that focus on enhancing solidarity and safety valves within society.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative approach using interviews was most appropriate for this study because, according to Sousa (2014), a qualitative approach provides an avenue to describe a phenomenon within a real-life context. Roszak (2015) suggested that a qualitative approach helps researchers gain insights into a phenomenon from the perspective of the target population. Roszak further explained the appropriateness of qualitative approach by indicating that researchers gain the opportunity to explain how members of a target population view the world around them. Therefore, to adequately answer the research question, the goal was to understand how participants perceived,

processed, and assigned meanings to the phenomenon. The quantitative method did not meet the needs for this study because it involves researchers examining relationships between variables, engaging in theory or hypothesis testing, and collecting numerical data (Madu, 2016). A mixed-method approach was also not suitable for this study because a mixed method is appropriate for studies in which either the qualitative or the quantitative method is not sufficient for understanding the phenomenon (Webster, 2017). For these reasons, the qualitative method was more appropriate for this study.

An exploratory single case study design was most appropriate for this study. With an exploratory case study design, I had the opportunity to understand the phenomenon by asking *how* and *what* questions regarding the phenomenon within a real-life situation (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) provided a compelling explanation of case study design, suggesting that case study allows a researcher to conduct an in-depth exploration into a phenomenon within a real-life setting. Furthermore, Lewis (2015) indicated that case study is useful when researching successful stories concerning a phenomenon. I considered other qualitative research designs such as grounded theory, phenomenology, and ethnography. However, case study was most appropriate for this study because, first, grounded theory researchers are concerned with discovering a new theory rather than seeking an understanding of a real phenomenon (Thomas, 2015). Second, phenomenological researchers relate to lived experiences of a group of people and phenomenological design does not afford the flexibility of using multiple data sources

(Roszak, 2015). Finally, ethnographic researchers relate to an extended exploration of a culture, and that was not the focus of this study.

Research Question

What effective leadership strategies do senior account managers use to manage workplace conflict?

Interview Questions

The study included the use of an interview protocol as a guide to ask each participant the following questions:

1. What leadership strategies have you used in managing workplace conflict?
2. What leadership strategies worked the best for you in managing workplace conflict?
3. What factors did you consider in deciding on the strategy to use in managing workplace conflict?
4. How did your followers respond to your strategy for managing workplace conflict?
5. What impact does conflict have on the overall health of your organization?
6. In your experience, what barriers interfere with the implementation of your strategy to manage workplace conflict?
7. What additional information would you like to provide regarding what leadership strategies you use to manage workplace conflict?

Conceptual Framework

The transformational theory of leadership served as the conceptual framework for this study. Downton was the first to introduce the concept of transformational leadership theory in 1973. However, this concept only became famous through the work of James MacGregor Burns in 1978 in research on political leaders (Spector, 2016). According to Burns (1985), *transformational leadership* is the ability of a leader to help followers improve their skills and talents with the overarching objective of developing followers into leaders. Burns stated the critical concepts of transformational leadership to be (a) individual consideration, (b) intellectual stimulation, (c) inspirational motivation, and (d) individualized influences. Thus, leaders who appropriately employ the concept of transformational leadership avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to relationship building.

Bass (1985) further developed the concept of transformational leadership by explaining the psychological processes that drive transformational leaders. According to Bass, the driving force in transformational leaders is the ability to motivate and influence followers. According to McCleskey (2014), followers transcend their individual needs by concentrating on organizational goals, while at the same time developing their capabilities to perform at a higher level. Salem (2015) identified the behavioral traits of a transformational leader to influence, recognize individual differences by offering personal consideration, motivate, and stimulate follower to channel their efforts toward the group or organizational goals. This theory was relevant for this study because by applying the concepts of transformational theory, leaders become conscious of the

individual differences of their followers and develop and implement different approaches for engaging each follower.

Operational Definitions

Conflict is an apparent difference in perspective arising from the interaction involving two or more individuals (Chung, 2015).

Emotional intelligence is the ability to be aware of, harness, and manage one's emotions and the emotions of others to promote growth in the workplace (Ghuman, 2016).

Leadership is the adoptive process whereby an individual uses his or her skills to influence another toward the attainment of a set objective (Swensen, Gorringer, Caviness, & Peters, 2016).

Organizational citizenship behavior is a discretionary set of actions exhibited by an employee beyond what is formally sanctioned in relation to his or her role but is essential to the success of the organization (Salehzadeh, Shahin, Kazemi, & Barzoki, 2015).

A *transformational leader* is a leader who can inspire followers' values, behaviors, morals, and attitudes of followers to channel followers' effort towards the attainment of organizational goals (Kroon, Woerkom, & Menting, 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions, which are elements that a researcher has no control over but are relevant to the study, are present in all studies (Mapesa, 2016). Marshall and Rossman (2016) pointed out that assumptions are things that a researcher considers to be true yet cannot verify. The first assumption for this study was that all participants were honest in their responses. The second assumption was that using interviewing as a data-collection technique was the most appropriate means to get relevant data to answer the research question. Another assumption was that participants were knowledgeable about the different strategies for the management of workplace conflict. Furthermore, it was assumed that with such knowledge, each participant would articulate the appropriateness of the various approaches and how they apply to different circumstances. Thus, with the appropriate approach, there is the potential to avoid mismanagement and reduce opportunities for conflict (Henderson, 2017).

Limitations

Limitations are issues that cannot be controlled by the researcher but have the potential to impact the result of a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This qualitative research study had limitations. First, the accuracy of responses from participants may have limited the results of the study because participants may not have provided any information that might have been detrimental to their various organizations. Moreover, the method of selecting participants, which was purposeful sampling, had the potential to

limit the representativeness of the findings in the sense that because workplace conflict has been proven to affect businesses negatively, participants may have attempted to provide responses that portrayed a particular image of their operations.

Furthermore, because this study was a business study, another limitation had to do with confining myself to selecting only managers from the identified business organization as participants. Selecting only participants from an identified organization was a limitation in the sense that, in as much as managers from other organizations might have had valuable data to contribute, it was imperative for me to be mindful that participation was not fungible. Hence, the focus of this study was on the target population. In a qualitative study of this nature, there exists the potential for the researcher's background and opinion to influence the discussion. As a result, the goal was to avoid impacting the debate through the use of member-checking.

Delimitations

In every study, some parameters help to define the scope of the inquiry; the delimitations of a study identify the parameters for establishing the scope of a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The scope of this qualitative case study was limited to only leaders from the chosen organization, rather than encompassing the numerous businesses within the NYC area. In addition, there was no collection of data from political or other business leaders, with the acknowledgment that although their input might be critical, such individuals might also be biased and politically oriented, thereby generating responses that were not business focused. Furthermore, no intention existed of using this

study to champion any political agenda; rather, I sought to highlight effective strategies for the management of workplace conflict in the business environment.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The study findings may be of value to businesses because highlighting the strategies that some managers have already effectively used to manage workplace conflict may serve as a learning tool for businesses. By highlighting successful business practices, it may be possible provide an understanding of the impact that workplace conflict can have on an organization and its members. For instance, Chung (2015) indicated that because employees spend part of their day at the workplace, it is vital for them to develop and sustain a positive work environment devoid of conflict. The absence of a positive work environment affects not only employee job performance but also the organizational citizenship behavior of employees (Ayoko, 2016).

Furthermore, business leaders need to be conscious of the financial cost of poorly managed conflict in the workplace. For example, Maximin et al. (2015) indicated that employees usually spend 2.8 hours of their weekly work time attempting to resolve conflict, and in cases in which conflict can escalate, the business usually absorbs the cost of litigation, which is more than \$100,000. Pyhältö, Pietarinen, and Soini (2015) also opined that poorly managed conflict has a significant effect on workplace bullying and can affect employee trust levels as well as employee perception of organizational leadership (Siebert, Martin, Bozic, & Docherty, 2015). Watty-Benjamin and Udechukwu

(2014) indicated that not all conflict is harmful; however, conflict can degenerate into a problem situation when leaders fail to manage conflict appropriately.

Implications for Social Change

Anastasio and Rose (2014) posited that workplace conflict has an adverse effect on relationship building. Modh (2014) also explained that conflict affects the behavioral disposition of the parties involved. Workplace conflict, therefore, affects the overall attitude of conflicting individuals, and sometimes people around them. Positive social change occurs through the reduction of the cost of resolving conflicts as alluded to by Rohani, Shafabakhsh, Haddad, and Asnaashari (2018). Therefore, positive social change may lead to a decrease in production cost and, by default, the cost of goods and services at the consumer level. In that conflict affects the performance levels of employees, applying an appropriate strategy for managing conflict can help in creating a harmonious work environment, improving performance, and ultimately enhancing the quality of products presented to the consumer (Meng et al., 2015). Further, positive social change implications of this study may include the potential to increase awareness of the effects of conflict and help institute welfare-enhancing programs to focus on improving solidarity and safety-values within the community.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

A review of the academic and professional literature on the subject of leadership, leadership theories, conflict, and workplace conflict served as the foundation for this study. My aim with this study was to explore the leadership strategies that leaders in an

organization use in managing workplace conflict. The literature is replete with studies on the definition of leadership, different types of leadership strategies, and the effect of leadership on organizational performance, and conflict, workplace conflict, and how workplace conflict can affect organizational outcomes. For example, Bang (2016) attempted in their study to highlight how leaders through their institutions can mediate the conflict. However, none of these studies researched how different leaders and their strategies perpetuate or help control workplace conflict. Hence, there exists a lack of research on leadership strategies for managing workplace conflict.

This thematic literature review included an in-depth discussion of the term *leadership*, leadership approaches, conflict, workplace conflict, and conflict management strategies. To accomplish this review, I used relevant scholarly and professional literature on leadership, conflict, and workplace conflict. My approach involved using a host of online databases available in Walden University's library, the primary databases included but were not limited to SAGE, Emerald, ProQuest, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, LexisNexis, Dissertations and Theses, ABI/INFORM Complete, and Business Source Complete. The total number of references used for this study was 266. Of the 240 references, 211 were journal articles, 19 were doctoral dissertations, and 7 were books. Two hundred and twenty eight references (85.7%) out of the 266 references were published within the last 5 years, and 240 references were peer-reviewed (90.2%).

For orderly presentation, I have organized the literature review by theme, the first of which is leadership. In that first section, I examine the concept of leadership, provide

historical background, highlight leadership in 21st-century organizations, and point out the relevance of primal leadership in a modern business environment. The second theme is leadership approaches, including transformational, transactional, autocratic, participatory, and charismatic leadership. The next theme centers on the concept of conflict, including workplace conflict and how it can affect organizational performance. The final thematic subsection encompasses five main conflict management strategies (accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, compromising, and competing).

Leadership

Before discussing the concept of leadership and its approaches, it is imperative to indicate the relevance of leadership within this study on the strategies to manage workplace conflict. According to Copeland (2015), a leader's behavior has a significant impact on his or her followers' workplace behavior. Nichols (2016) also indicated that a leader's traits influence his or her attitudes towards work and followers. In the same way, a leader's leadership skills and approach are critical in enhancing the value and support that followers attach to the leader's performance (Pryce, 2016). Hence, leadership was critical in the current study, in that the enthusiasm and confidence that followers feel toward conflict management strategies depend on their perception of leadership.

Leadership as a construct has been a significant element of human society for centuries (Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018). Scholars such as John Dewey, Max Weber, Mary Parker Follett, Jean-Paul Sartre, Carl Rogers, Kent Lewin, and Abraham Maslow, to mention a few have contributed immensely to the literature on leadership (Duignan,

2014). Despite the contribution of eminent scholars, leadership remains one of the most researched and least understood concepts in today's academic environment (Witts, 2016).

The term *leadership* has many definitions (Witts, 2016), and, as indicated by Li, Gupta, Loon, and Casimir (2016), leadership has many different aspects. To Li et al., leadership is the ability to influence the behavior of others and prepare followers for strategic success; for Witts (2016), leadership is the outcome of a chain of interactions that results in a collective willingness of individuals to achieve stated goals. Sharma, Misra, and Mishra (2017) also explained that leadership involves creating an environment that fosters individuals' job satisfaction and ultimately results in championing group objectives. According to Zheng and Muir (2015), social interactions generate leadership roles that require leaders to emerge from a group, and the means of assuming such leadership roles, apart from inheritance or coup, include appointment, election, or emergence (Witts, 2016).

In explaining the great man theory, Spector (2016) noted that leadership was synonymous with masculinity, those good leaders are born, and for that matter, they demand obedience from their subjects. Such trait-based theories of leadership involve an assumption that the innate tendencies of individuals were the preamble for determining who is a leader (Offord, Gill, & Kendal, 2016). As Offord et al. (2016) explained, further studies on behavioral explanations for leadership resulted in the development of leadership style theories, which explain leadership as a function of an individual's response to environmental or situational stimuli.

The current globalized, boundary-less, competitive market landscape requires innovation to gain market advantage, and effective leadership behavior helps influence individuals to exhibit creative behaviors (Afsar, Badir, Saeed, & Hafeez, 2017). The type of leadership required in such an environment is one that transcends all divisions; such leadership has no boundaries and is culturally sensitive. The creative behavior of followers is, therefore, a function of a leader's follower psychological empowerment and motivational behavior (Afsar et al., 2017). Leadership behavior in this regard has a significant effect on followers' job satisfaction and motivational levels (Kiarie, Maru, & Cheruiyot, 2017). Furthermore, Hirst, Walumbwa, Aryee, Butarbutar, and Chen (2016) indicated that behaviors such as helping followers develop openness, trust, learn, build skills, and plan are among the responsibilities of effective leaders. In other words, effective leadership is necessary for addressing the various problems such as workplace conflict that organizations may encounter.

Leadership behavior that empowers followers results in improved job satisfaction and follower commitment to the organization (Kong, Sun, & Yan, 2016). Demirtas, Hannah, Gok, Arslan, and Capar (2017) further indicated that ethical leadership behavior leads to high performance, trust, extra effort, and affective commitment. In addition, ethical leadership behavior enhances follower attitudes such as motivation, voice behavior, organizational citizenship behavior, and relationship building behavior (Demirtas et al., 2017). By encouraging internal creativity and innovation, organizations

position themselves to gain a competitive advantage in a competitive market, and the role of leaders is critical in achieving any form of leverage (Kiarie et al., 2017).

Effective leadership is critical to organizational success, especially with the presence of a culturally diverse workforce (Huguet, 2017). Effective leadership enhances the level of entrepreneurial activities, outcomes of mergers and acquisitions, and employee behavioral attributes such as motivation, absenteeism, and engagement (Huguet, 2017). Therefore, effective leaders create a supportive work environment and culture that sustain organizational change and ultimately improve performance (Baškarada, Watson, & Cromarty, 2017). Furthermore, organizations must invest in developing the leadership skills of their employees (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016) to ensure optimum performance. For example, Baškarada et al. (2017) indicated that because manufacturing firms invest more in the production process than in other aspects of the firm, manufacturing firms have to invest in a high-level leadership structure capable of ensuring the delivery of a superior product compared to that offered by competitors.

Despite the numerous benefits of leadership behavior for organizational performance and success, it is worth noting that the self-disrupting behaviors of leaders have a negative impact on their organizations. For example, Hoption (2016) indicated that although leaders' use of humor can help to reduce stress, create a pleasant work climate, enhance cohesion, improve communication, and enhance positive outcomes, aggressive humor may result in self-deprecating leadership behavior that can negatively affect the work environment. The impact of such negative behavior is threefold: (a)

impact of the leader, (b) organizational cost, and (c) those harmed by such behavior (Williams, Campbell, McCartney, & Gooding, 2013). Consequently, active leadership is competency driven and critical for organizational success (Brogan-Baranski, 2018). Hence, although leaders may adhere to organizational principle, their behavior defines their effectiveness or ineffectiveness.

Primal leadership. *Primal leadership* is the ability of leaders to create a feeling in followers that results from the creation of *resonance*, which involves factors that induce followers to exhibit positive behaviors (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). According to Goleman et al. (2002), primal leadership is most effective when expressed through a leader's emotional intelligence. In the context of leadership, emotional intelligence is the ability leaders to manage their own emotions and those of others to enable followers to channel all efforts towards the attainment of a common goal (Dafeeah, Eltohami, & Ghuloum, 2015). Researchers such as Kearney et al. (2017) indicated that leaders who exhibit emotional intelligence achieve more beneficial outcomes in comparison to their peers who do not. Hence, emotional intelligence enables followers to maintain a high level of positive behaviors and to develop their creative attitudes through such positive behaviors (Kaufmann & Wagner, 2017).

Most organizational leaders recognize the importance of developing and exhibiting emotional intelligence in the workplace to the extent that about 75% of Fortune 500 companies attempt to build employees' emotional intelligence by offering products and services to that effect (Joseph, Jin, Newman, & O'Boyle, 2014). Emotional

intelligence affects work performance by impacting the physical and cognitive-behavioral potential of workers (van der Linden et al., 2017). Emotional intelligence is an aspect of an individual's actual intelligence (Schlegel, Mehu, van Peer, & Scherer, 2018), that in effect is a predictor of behavior. Schlegel et al. (2018) also indicated, however, that despite its popularity, emotional intelligence remains controversial within the field of psychology. One reason for this controversy is that there has been no consensus in defining the term, coupled with the fact there is also difficulty in measuring emotional intelligence and establishing its validity (Joseph et al., 2014).

According to Goleman et al. (2002), there are four domains of emotional intelligence into which a leader's behavior is categorized. These four domains as posited by Goleman et al. are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. The presence of self-awareness indicates a leader's ability to exhibit (a) emotional self-awareness, which is the ability to recognize how their emotions affect their decisions; (b) accurate self-assessment, which is the ability to identify their strengths and weaknesses and understand when to seek help; and (c) self-confidence, which is the ability to use their strengths to their advantage (Goleman et al., 2002). Self-management, on the other hand, embodies personal characteristics such as a leader's ability to self-control, be transparent, adapt to different situations, have a high sense of achievement, be initiative, and be an optimist (Jamshed, Nor, & Bakar, 2017). Social awareness also helps leaders become empathetic toward followers, foster a high sense of organizational awareness, and improves their ability to recognize and understand

the politics of their organizations, and such leaders continually create a conducive environment for the delivery of services aimed at satisfying customers (Oke, 2018). Finally, relationship management encompasses a leader's ability to inspire, influence, develop others, serve as an agent of change, manage conflict, and promote teamwork and collaboration (Khan, Masrek, & Nadzar, 2017).

The effectiveness of primal leadership is, therefore, dependent on the leader's emotional intelligence, which ultimately reflects on a leader's ability to manage him or herself and followers (Goleman et al., 2002). In this regard, Goleman et al. (2002) developed six leadership styles: visionary, coaching, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting, and commanding leaders. These leadership styles were based on the work of Goleman's (2000) previous categorization of leaders into coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting, and coaching leadership styles. Of the styles of leadership mentioned, visionary, coaching, affiliative, and democratic styles of leadership have the potential to produce a net positive effect on followers and climate and thus create resonance (Goleman et al., 2002). Pacesetting and commanding, although they can be effective leadership styles, have an immense potential to produce negative effects and should be used sparingly (Goleman et al., 2002).

Leadership approaches. Drawing lessons from the work of Goleman et al. (2002), what follows is a discussion on the significant leadership strategies. According to Gatling, Kang, and Kim (2016), organizational leadership directly or indirectly defines the organization, and the dominant leadership strategy shapes the internal dynamics of

the organization. Therefore, leaders must be cognizant of the impact that their strategy might have on the work environment because the leadership strategy of a leader can have an effect on the level of participation and contribution of followers (Gatling et al., 2016).

Irrespective of the importance of leadership strategy to the effectiveness or lack thereof within an organization, the effectiveness and acceptance of any leadership strategy is culturally dependent (Rossberger & Krause, 2015). In other words, a leader's approach is a product of his or her cultural background and may be explained within the context of the culture within which he or she operates (Hertwig, 2016). Furthermore, the strategy adopted by a leader is the result of the demands of the role performed by the leader (Hertwig, 2016). In that regard, leadership strategy refers to the outward behavior that a leader exhibits in his or her interactions with followers, and, as indicated by Schuh, Zhang, Morgeson, Tian, and Dick (2018), that leadership strategy becomes a factor in driving follower action. A leader's behavior, therefore, has the potential to impact followers' decisions to exhibit positive or negative responses toward the implementation of a strategy.

In as much as there exist leadership strategies, Clark and Waldron (2015) indicated that leadership strategies are never mutually exclusive and that even as a leader may exhibit qualities of a leadership strategy, that same leader has the potential to exhibit qualities of different leadership strategies. However, the strategy that a leader exhibits has a direct correlation with employee job satisfaction (Ren & Chadee, 2017). Thus, a leader's behavior is a factor in motivating employees' actions toward the attainment of

organizational goals (Dartey-Baah & Ampofo, 2016). The following is a discussion of some leadership strategies after a review of the literature.

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership refers to the ability of a leader to influence, inspire, motivate, and stimulate the actions of followers while providing individualized attention aimed at elevating the activities and the thought process of followers to transform these followers for higher-level roles (Kroon et al., 2017). Transformational leadership involves the process of influencing the behavior of followers to prioritize group/organizational goals over individual interest, and thus positively induce followers to improve efforts so that they exceed the requirements of the formal organization (Berkovich, 2016). According to Nohe and Hertel (2017), transformational leadership encompasses the attributes that encourage a leader to influence inter and intra-role performance of followers in preparing followers for higher responsibilities.

Through transformational leadership behaviors, leaders transform the perception of followers by influencing follower organizational life, values, expectations, and aspirations (Salem, 2015). Such is their influence that transformational leaders serve as the agents of change in their groups and are proactive and decisive in their decision-making process (Berkovich, 2016). The ability to create a conducive work environment, enhance group cohesion, and promote group identity, is the hallmark of a transformational leader (Liang, Chang, Ko, & Lin, 2017). Transformational leaders have to adequately and responsibly respond to environmental changes because they promote

relationship building and knowledge sharing in their organizations to respond to environmental changes and demands (Nohe & Hertel, 2017).

Through their intellectual stimulation techniques, transformational leaders can instill in followers an understanding of the need for change, and effect of the change on organizational performance and image (Baškarada et al., 2017). Subsequently, transformational leaders can develop a supportive work culture that reinforces the need for collective involvement in every change process (Baškarada et al., 2017). Like charismatic leaders, transformational leaders can elicit higher effort from employees by inducing extraordinary performance (Suifan, Abdallah, & Janini, 2018). Suifan et al. indicated that an essential characteristic of transformational leadership is the need to uphold ethical and moral standards. Setting ethical and moral standards, therefore, becomes an avenue for assessing employee performance, and the creation of a reward system that commensurate such performance (Baškarada et al., 2017; Suifan et al., 2018).

As employees observe and imitate the behavior of their leaders, their attitudes, and psychological processes are impacted, and employees subsequently amplify their commitment levels, as well as develop pride in their leaders (Hutchens, 2018). Upon the development of pride in their leader through his or her behavior, employees further establish self-determined motivation by engaging in behaviors prerequisite for higher roles (Sterk, 2017). The back and forth learning process between leaders and followers are vital in building relationships between all members of the group because, as noted by

Pryce (2016), transformational leadership involves the ability to build a relationship with follower towards a shared vision.

Transformational leaders can improve the innovative work behavior of followers by psychologically empowering followers to generate new and novel ideas (Afsar et al., 2017). Encouraging followers to be innovative in retrospect implies ensuring the existence of a creative workforce with the aim of accelerating growth and enhancing market competitiveness (Afsar et al., 2017). Through their empowering behavior, transformational leaders can impact the psychological state of followers concerning their perceived effectiveness, which intends enhances follower job satisfaction (Sterk, 2017). However, Angell (2017) indicated that an essential output of transformational leadership is the mediating role of transformational leaders in encouraging low-level performers, and this output is possible through the inspirational and motivational skills of such leaders.

Through the imposition of demands and provision of resources, transformational leaders positively affect the emotional strains of followers, however, low ambition followers may not have such positive effect (Svendson & Joensson, 2016). Therefore, this supports the idea presented by Angell (2017) that leaders affect follower behavior differently. However, through their individualized considerations, transformational leaders have the potential to influence the behavior of each follower positively or negatively through one-on-one relationships (Imran, Ilyas, Aslam, & Rahman, 2016).

Inspiring, encouraging, and motivating followers' efforts in attaining organizational goals have the potential to enhance the self-efficacy of followers (Svendsen & Joensson, 2016). By influencing follower behavior, transformational leaders affect the psychological process of self-belief and self-confidence (Arnold, Loughlin, & Walsh, 2016); hence, the ability to induce performance improvement behaviors. A long-term effect of self-efficacy is career satisfaction because, according to Svendsen and Joensson (2016), when transformational leaders provide supportive environments and resources for success, they indirectly enhance the psychological state of follower's sense of achievement. This influencing relationship between leaders and their followers subsequently enhances the emotional competencies of both leaders and followers because according to Wang, Wilhite, and Martino (2016), both parties adequately equip themselves to manage their emotions, while motivating themselves.

Transformational leadership behavior stands on a moral foundation that elicits a favorable follower perception (Arnold et al., 2016); therefore, through such perceptions leaders motivate followers into embracing the overall vision and mission of the organization. Resultantly, a follower's positive perception of a leader becomes obvious in the form of personal identification with or emulation of a leader's behavior. Thus, followers internalize leader's values and beliefs while building social exchange relationships with their leaders (Nohe & Hertel, 2017). As indicated by Nasra and Heilbrunn (2016), the attainment of a quality social exchange relationship is critical in the development of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB); a discretionary behavior by

followers to exceed their basic job requirements in the interest of their organization.

Nasra and Heilbrunn further indicated that transformational leaders have much success in developing organizational citizenship behavior in their organizations because of the positive perceptions their behaviors elicit from their followers.

Transactional leadership. In a transactional leadership strategy, the leader articulates organizational goals and then manages by expectations by providing rewards for task completion and punishment for noncompliance (Baškarada et al., 2017), all with the purpose of meeting the self-interest of both leaders and followers (Ding, Li, Zhang, Sheng, & Wang, 2017). In effect, the basic tenets of transactional leadership are the extent to which the behavioral exhibition between leaders and their followers leads to a maximization of effort and performance (Afshari & Gibson, 2016). According to Pryce (2016), transactional leaders provide rewards contingent on performance and are both active and passive managers by exception. Transactional leaders set targets, monitor follower performance by comparing to set goals and acknowledge the achievements of followers (Baškarada et al., 2017). They are active managers by exception in the sense that transactional leaders monitor and offer directions, while, at the same time, they are passive managers by exception because they act only upon the occurrence of a problem (Kim & Shin, 2017). Thus, transactional leaders can assume a hands-on or hands-off approach depending on the situation.

When transactional leaders articulate organizational goals and provide a reward for compliance, Furtner, Rauthmann and Sachse (2015) claimed that transactional leaders

promote self-leadership in their followers in the same manner that transformational leaders would in their followers. Transactional leaders subsequently can influence the behavior of their followers using power, rewards, and punishment (Pryce, 2016). Unlike the individualized attention rendered by transformational leaders, transactional leaders are more concerned about task behavior and task accomplishment (Kim & Shin, 2017); thus, whereas transformational leadership is person-based, transactional leadership is task-based (Baškarada et al., 2017). Transactional leadership, therefore, results in the exploitation of knowledge, while transformational leadership results in the exploration of knowledge (Waddell & Pio, 2015). Thus, whereas transformational leaders engage with and encourage follower to develop, transactional leaders are goal oriented and not necessarily the individual.

An essential component of transactional leadership is that transactional leaders are task oriented and result focused (Semarco & Cho, 2018). Their active monitoring of performance ensures the avoidance of task deviation, and the creation of a structured course of action within the organization (Semarco & Cho, 2018). Transactional leaders help in building trust among followers because they reward and punish based on set goal (Schneider, Gonzalez-Roma, Ostroff, & West, 2017), and an enhancement of the leader-member exchange (LMX) process (Liao, Wayne, Liden, & Meuser, 2017).

Despite the difference in approach, both transactional and transformational leadership styles are critical to organizational success; transactional leadership style may serve as the base for transformational leadership (Nohe & Hertel, 2017). Effective

leaders, therefore, strike a balance between transactional and transformational leadership styles. Shava and Ndebele (2017) indicated the most successful organizations are those in which their leaders find a meaningful balance between transactional and transformational leadership styles. Tan, Hee, and Piaw (2015) further suggested that effective leaders are those that can be flexible by exhibiting qualities of numerous leadership styles under different circumstances.

Autocratic leadership. Autocratic leadership refers to the behavioral exhibit of a leader whereby the leader assumes complete command and control leaving no room for autonomy within the leader-follower relationship (Siddiqui, 2015), and a dominant characteristic is the existence of individual decision-making by the leader (Imhangbe, Okecha, & Obozuwa, 2018). The primary rationale for adopting an autocratic leadership style is the assumption that followers lack motivation and need direction. However, researches have indicated that the unintended negative consequences in choosing this style of leadership may far outweigh the intended benefits. For example, Siddiqui indicated the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi that resulted in the Arab Spring was only a proximate cause and that repressive autocratic leadership prevalent in the Arab region was a significant cause leading to the Arab Spring.

Significantly, it is essential to indicate that the behavior of an autocratic leader affects the moral of the followers, and this is illustrated in a study conducted by Hogg (2014) in which participant indicated their preference for non-autocratic leaders. Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci, and Burke (2017) discovered that when leaders engage

followers in the decision-making process, there is a positive effect on follower job satisfaction. In addition, Köhler, Cortina, Kurtessis, and Gözl (2015) indicated that follower job satisfaction is enhanced when they perceive to gain organizational support. In retrospect, the behavioral exhibit of an autocratic leader produces an adverse effect on the job satisfaction of their employees (Köhler et al., 2015).

Autocratic leaders do not necessarily concern themselves with relationship building and for that matter can elicit negative behavioral tendencies from employees (Kim, Beehr, & Prewett, 2018). As indicated by Carsten, Uhl-Bien, and Huang (2018), conflict and managerial breakdown may manifest from negative behavioral tendencies such as anger, low morale, and dissatisfaction. Furthermore, followers of autocratic leaders tend to experience negative emotions as compared to followers of transformational leaders (Lee, Wang, & Piccolo, 2018).

Charismatic leadership. Charismatic leadership refers to a leader's ability to use the power of words to influence follower's reality and thought process (Lee et al., 2018), and to perform beyond their regular duties (Tuan, 2019). Hence, the central tenets of charismatic leadership are an idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Tuan, 2019). By rhetorically influencing follower thought process, followers intend internalizes the vision and goals of the leader and are therefore motivated in exerting effort towards set goals (Yeung, Wu, & Liu, 2018). Lee et al. (2018), and Yeung et al. (2018) described charismatic leaders as possessing some form of *magnetic* charm that enhances their powerful abilities in

influencing followers. Bligh and Kohles (2014) further indicated that charismatic leaders usually emerge in times of crisis by capitalizing on such crisis situations to galvanize support from follower; an example is the leadership style of President George W. Bush immediately following the September 11, 2001 terror attack.

Charismatic leaders build on the emotional sentiments of their followers by creating a sense of safety, and in return, followers become devoted, dependent, and build trust in the leader, which ultimately results in authority increasing mechanism for the leader (Yeung et al., 2018). Charismatic leaders galvanize followers by promising what seems rationally impossible or implausible, and they achieve this by their charisma (Dick, Fink, Steffens, Peters, & Haslam, 2018). Charisma is a personality trait that distinguishes an individual from others (Weber, 1947). Charismatic leaders can therefore use their charisma as a call to worship in convincing, inducing, or motivating followers to buy into the leader's vision and goals. In retrospect, Lee et al. (2018) posited that charisma does not necessarily degenerate into charismatic leadership, but rather, followers ascribe leadership status because of the effect of charisma on follower actions. That is, charisma as a personality trait is not equivalent to leadership, however, an individual with charisma gains leadership status once those around such an individual begin to follow his or her commands, orders, or directions,

The view indicated above by Lee et al. (2018) gets credence from Jamal and Bakar (2017) who argued charismatic leadership is an emergence rather than formal appointment, and charismatic leaders distinguish themselves from other leaders based on

their communicative skills. Svendsen and Joensson (2016) also argued that charismatic leadership is an ascription of follower perception emanating from a set of behavioral exhibits. By effectively creating based on high quality interpersonal communicative skills, charismatic leaders create a link between the organizational brand and follower brand attachment (Liu, Chapleo, Ko, & Ngugi, 2015). Thus, followers emotionally become attached to the organization's brand by identifying with the brand as their own and are therefore motivated to ensure group or organizational success (Liu et al., 2015).

Follower identification with their organization's brand illustrates that similar to transformational leadership; charismatic leadership also generates high commitment levels in followers (Carasco-Saul, Kim, & Kim, 2015). Through their behavioral exhibits, charismatic leaders elicit a passionate response from their follower, which ultimately enhances their commitment to organizational success (Shulman & Sullivan, 2015). Bullough and Luque (2015) argued that charismatic leadership influences follower's motivation, performance, and teamwork.

In as much as the literature abounds with the positive effects of charismatic leadership, there is also the potential for adverse effects in some cases (Joosse, 2017). Robinson and Topping (2013) indicated the type of rhetoric employed by a charismatic leader could be detrimental in achieving positive results. For example, a comparison between Dr. Martin Luther King and Adolf Hitler revealed that whereas Dr. King used optimistic language, Hitler's language was more about power and aggression (Robinson & Topping, 2013). Cocker and Cronin (2017) also indicated that charismatic leaders

could become liabilities for their organizations because of their propensity to take risk, which results from their belief in themselves and their high confidence levels. Furthermore, charismatic leaders through their power to mobilize can become destabilizing factors in disrupting or disturbing the peace within groups or organizations; an example is provided by Shah (2013) on the influence of Abdul Ghaffar Khan in the 1930 civil disobedience movement in the Peshawar Valley of India.

Participatory/participative leadership. Participative leadership refers to the type of leadership whereby the leaders serve as a facilitator by involving all stakeholders in the decision-making process (Gessler & Ashmawy, 2016). Unlike autocratic leadership in which the leader commands and demand compliance, Gessler and Ashmawy indicated that participatory leaders are seek the opinion of all stakeholders in both the decision-making and day-to-day operational process. Interestingly, Hassan, Wright, and Park (2016) alluded to the fact that participatory leadership results in a diffusion of power among individuals even though they fall within different levels on the organizational hierarchy. In effect, participatory leadership is a decentralized or democratic form of leadership where power and decision-making authority resides in both a leader and his or her followers.

Akin to managerial coaching, participatory leadership enhances the development of healthy relationships, ensuring a positive emotional environment and improving performance through immediate feedback and training (Kim & Kuo, 2015). By so doing, participatory leadership leads to the empowerment and ultimately the job satisfaction

levels of followers (Hassan et al., 2016; Wong & Giessner, 2018). Besides, Gupta and Singh (2014), and Muammar (2015) indicated that because participatory leadership involves all stakeholders in the decision-making process, there arises perception of justice in the workplace. Furthermore, Gupta and Singh (2014) stated that follower perception of justice heightens their perception of respect from the leader and their commitment towards their job performance.

In addition, Sharma and Kirkman (2015) further indicated that once followers gain empowerment through participatory leadership, they also enhance their ability to make their decisions. Enhancing follower decision-making abilities are indicative of the transformational qualities of participatory leaders. A fact is that empowering followers to take decisions is a contributing factor in follower development, and a further positive impact on the leader-member exchange (LMX) relationship (Chong et al., 2015). However, Sharma and Kirkman (2015) differentiate participatory leadership from transformational leadership by stating that whereas participatory leaders share power through their empowering abilities, transformational leaders might not necessarily share power even though transformational leaders also empower their followers.

Research by Bullough and Luque (2015) provided credence to the importance of participatory leadership by suggesting that leaders; specifically, women leaders are more effective in a participatory environment because of their nurturing and consultative qualities. Rossberger and Krause (2015) also stated that participatory leadership is significant in the innovative culture present among teams. Poel et al. were more specific

in stressing that not only do participatory leaders enhance innovative team culture, they also positively impact performance and conflict. However, Rossberger and Krause indicated the intended consequence of participatory leadership to be dependent on the knowledge and acceptance of the leader; in other words, a leader is less successful if he or she lacks experience and recognition.

Effects of Leadership Approaches

Employee effects. There is a strong correlation between how employees perceive their leader and their work behavior; for example, employees enhance their self-efficacy if they view their leader to provide inspirational motivation (Waheed, Hussin, & Daud, 2018). Research has proven that a leader's style can be a source of motivation for employees especially in times of change and uncertainties (Gumusluoglu, Karakitapoğlu-Aygün, & Scandura, 2017). However, in what Gumusluoglu et al. (2017) referred to as the dark side of leadership, inappropriate leadership style at any point can be detrimental to the overall survival of an organization.

Kim and Kim (2017) indicated that a leader's style correlates with follower satisfaction. Leaders who empower their employees help release the latent resources of employees, and by default, enhance employee involvement in activities (Wong & Giessner, 2018). Leaders through their behavior can appeal to follower moral standards and improve the overall ethical tone in the workplace (Kim & Kim, 2017). Furthermore, Yang and Fry (2018) indicated that leaders improve honesty and integrity when they

enhance their interpersonal relationship with employees, promote the meaning of life, and exhibit behaviors and attitudes essential for mutual human co-existence.

Buch, Martinsen, and Kuvaas (2015) conducted a study on the mediating role of economic leader-member exchange, and follower commitment and results from their research implied that leadership behavior correlates with follower commitment. For example, when leadership behavior is destructive, it affects employee's dedication and attitude towards work and thus can have a devastating effect on the organization because such attitudes are counterproductive to goal attainment (Buch et al., 2015). However, through positive leader behavior, leaders influence employee identification with their organization because of the impact a leader's behavior has in shaping employee view about the organization (Blader, Patil, & Packer, 2017). Furthermore, a favorable view of the organization enhances the perception of an attractive organization; hence employee identification is an enhancement of employee self-image, and thus a strengthening of their commitment (Blader et al., 2017).

The level to which employees get engaged in organizational activities is a product of the current leadership style. Furthermore, through the dominant leadership style, organizations create a supportive work environment and motivation that goes beyond the four walls of the workplace (Ding et al., 2017). However, the dominant leadership style is a personal concept of the leader (Coffman, 2017). Thus, the leader provides the platform for cultivating an engaging environment (Ding et al., 2017) and that helps in employee

mobilization, goal alignment, and encourages total participation in the decision-making process (Coffman, 2017).

Coffman (2017) indicated the shift from the conventional leader as the sole decision-maker to a more democratic decision-making process. Therefore, leaders must ensure their styles do not alienate any follower but rather increase the learning potential of followers (Sterk, 2017). For example, whereas researchers discovered transformational leadership to mediate the organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) of employees (Wang, Lu, & Liu, 2017), autocratic leadership may prove toxic to organizational climate and culture (Alom, 2018). As alluded to by Gumusluoglu et al., (2017), the appropriate leadership style has the added benefit of providing support that helps in reducing employee's emotional stress. Therefore, leadership styles significantly affect employee commitment and contribution, and Hutchens (2018) confirmed this assertion by bespeaking that leadership styles such as transformational leadership enhance follower pride levels and follower affective and normative commitment.

Organizational effects. Leadership approaches have an enormous impact on organizational performance and outcomes (Lappalainen, 2017). Martinko et al. (2018) commented that not only does the style of a leader impact the organization, but also the authenticity of the leader irrespective of style influences organizational effectiveness. Gipson et al. (2017) argued that organizational effectiveness should be evaluated on the current leadership, which by implication correlates with Lappalainen's (2017) assertion that not only does a leader's behavior affect follower motivation and performance; it also

affects the team and organizational goal attainment. In effect, the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a leader depends on how influential he or she is to organizational outcomes (Cheung, Keung, Kwan, & Cheung, 2019).

Employees exemplify their commitment to an organization through the level at which such employees enthusiastically exhibit organizational citizenship behavior (Joo & Jo, 2017). To this end, Jacobsen and Andersen (2017) explained that employee commitment and organizational citizenship behavior is an upshot of the extent to which they feel influenced by their leader's behavior. Thus, the extent to which a leader serves as a source of inspiration becomes a tool for measuring employee's motivation and satisfaction (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2017). Goal attainment is a product of employee commitment, and organizations that ensure total commitment, also reduce the turnover rate (Sethibe, 2018). Therefore, Sethibe (2018) concluded the dominant leadership style affects employee's level of dedication and attaining set goals.

Leadership behavior has an impact on organizational performance; in fact, organizational outcomes such as the culture and performance in some way are a product of leadership behavior (Schneider et al., 2017). For example, Gupta, Briscoe, and Hambrick (2017) indicated that leader's decision to engage in corporate socially responsible acts is not only a moral decision but also the acknowledgment that such actions will ultimately enhance business opportunities and performance. Hence, leadership styles have a bearing on an organization's strategic initiatives and operational

processes (Sethibe, 2018). Thus, leadership style drives the ability to adequately and efficiently meet multiple shareholder needs (Rowley, Shipilov, & Greve, 2017).

Pedersen and Stritch (2018) determined from their study that a leader's ability to build trust in followers signals a blueprint for improving teamwork and organizational performance. Building trust in followers affords a leader the luxury of influencing the behavior of followers, as well as altering the work climate and corporate culture (Nolan-Arañez & Ludvik, 2017). Although indirect, when leaders through their leadership styles build trust, they also improve performance by eliciting positive follower attitude, reduction in monitoring (timesaving), enhance organizational citizenship behavior, and an increase in follower cooperativeness (Pedersen & Stritch, 2018). For example, Ding et al. (2017) suggested that in times of change and uncertainty (a period when trust is critical), transformational leadership skills can be used to augment transactional leadership (contingent reward) skills to take advantage of the individualized relationship inherent in transformational leaders.

Conflict

Conflict is an ensuant of social interaction, and according to Ayoko (2016), conflict is the product of the cooperation between two or more parties that indicates the lack of compatibility in goals and interest. To Modh (2014), not only are the goals and interests of conflicting parties discrepant, their behavior commensurate those differences. Hopkins and Yonker (2015) added that conflicting parties are interdependent and perceive each other as interfering in pursuit of their goals. In other words, conflict is the

behavioral manifestation of the observed differences that conflicting parties have about each other. It occurs when one party perceives the actions and inactions of the other to be an obstruction (Al-Sibaie, Alashwal, Abdul-Rahman, & Zolkafli, 2014)

Conflict in the workplace. The workplace is one of the most critical places in an employee's work life, and Chung (2015) noted that because of the importance of the workplace to the employee, leaders must ensure a positive work relationship to promote a positive work attitude and behavior. Saeed et al. (2014) also explained that harmony is a prerequisite condition for success within an organization. However, Bai et al. (2015) indicated that workplace conflict is inevitable in the interactions between team members. Thus, although conflict can be detrimental to an organization, it is impossible to avoid its occurrence altogether. Babalola, Stouten, Euwema, and Ovadje (2016) also indicated that although conflict is inevitable, the way team leaders address conflict situations determine the effect that conflict can have on teams and the organization at large.

Researchers pointed out the detrimental effects that open conflict can have on teams and its members. For example, Al-Sibaie et al. (2014) pointed out that conflict is significantly correlated with performance. Jungst and Blumberg (2016) further explained that when team members differ in their perception of core values, there is the probability of conflict, which ultimately affects the way in which they relate with each other. The result is their different behavior negatively impacts on their willingness to work as a team, and the outcome is apparent low performance and outcome. Jehn, De Wit, Barreto, and Rink (2015) explained this behavioral dynamic by indicating that when team

members engage in *task conflict* (disagreement over the execution of a task), it impacts their interpersonal relationships, and ultimately, their job performance. Babalola et al. (2016) further stated that when conflict erodes the harmony and camaraderie that exist between individual team members (relationship conflict), individual's focus shifts from work task/duties/roles, thereby negatively affecting work outcome and performance.

According to Hopkins and Yonker (2015), conflict is expressed by the emotional disposition of conflicting members, and for that matter, such negative emotions influence an individual's emotional intelligence. Once conflict produces an adverse effect on an individual's emotional intelligence, Meng et al. (2015) argued there is also an adverse effect on the effectiveness of team communication. Hence, conflicting members undermine their ability and willingness to work together as team members to achieve team objectives. In addition, workplace conflict has the potential to negatively impact an individual's organizational citizenship behavior (Saeed et al., 2014). According to Chung (2015), because conflicting parties are unwilling to share an idea, communicate, and cooperate with each other, their willingness to exhibit deviant behavior is enhanced, and for that matter, their willingness and ability to perform non-functional roles.

Conflict can be costly to organizations if the conflict is left uncontrolled or not adequately resolved. Researchers have many times indicated the financial cost of workplace conflict. For example, Watty-Benjamin and Udechukwu (2014) noted that unchecked conflict leads to job dissatisfaction and subsequently increase employee turnover rate. Once there is a turnover, organizations spend about 75% to 150% of the

departed employee's salary in an attempt at finding a replacement (Maximin et al., 2015). Ford et al. (2016) further noted that other financial costs of workplace conflict to an organization do manifest in the cost associated with low productivity, absenteeism, litigation and in some case violence. Added to the aforementioned is the value related to delays in delivery, miscommunication, cumbersome, and uncoordinated processes (Al-Sibaie et al., 2014). Thus, although individuals engage in conflict at the workplace when such conflict escalates, the financial cost is almost always absorbed by the employer.

The financial cost is not the only cost manifestation of workplace conflict as alluded to by Jungst and Blumberg (2016). According to Jungst and Blumberg (2016), workplace conflict leads to an increase in the stress and anxiety levels of individuals because of the psychological effect arising from the perception of tension. Therefore, Ford et al. (2016) stressed the cognitive state of conflicting parties' results in anger, which is manifested in the aggressive behavior exhibited by the individuals involved.

In as much as there is a paucity of the positive effects of workplace conflict in the literature, organizations benefit from workplace conflict when organizations manage conflict properly (Reade & Lee, 2016). The functional or dysfunctional nature of conflict is a product of conflict management (Ayoko, 2016). Vollmer (2015) insisted that although conflict can stifle innovation, the constructive management of conflict can be the catalyst to enhance workplace innovation. According to He, Ding, and Yang (2014), the cognitive aspect of conflict enhance innovation because organizations are offered the opportunity of synthesizing the competing ideas of the conflicting parties. In effect, the

divergent perspectives of conflicting parties become apparent, meaning the availability of alternative conceptions (He et al., 2014).

When conflict is constructive, individuals enhance their innovative behavior because of their exposure to different ideas and approaches (Reade & Lee, 2016). Batra (2016) advocated for some form of cognitive conflict because the quality of ideas is low whenever team members think alike; hence, stifling innovation. Way, Jimmieson, and Bordia (2016) therefore noted that by constructively managing conflict, not only does that encourage and enhance the innovative behavior of individuals; it also reinforces the empowerment, commitment, and teamwork levels of individuals. Therefore, the impact of conflict is a direct reflection of how leaders manage workplace conflict.

Conflict Management Strategies

Conflict management scholars alluded to the fact that conflict is an inevitable part of human life. According to Ayub, AlQurashi, Al-Yafi, and Jehn (2017), conflict is an indication of the disagreements that exist between team members, and thus require the employment of effective conflict management strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of conflict. Ezeugbor et al. therefore defined conflict management strategies as the set of processes needed to resolve conflict, build peace, and direct all efforts towards goal attainment. In this regard, the purpose of any conflict management strategy is to help conflicting parties to return to already established goals (Yang, Yin, Cheng, Shen, & Tan, 2016).

The positive or negative effect of conflict is a result of the strategy that a manager selects when resolving any conflict situation (Beitler, Machowski, Johnson, & Zapf, 2016). Furthermore, the selection of any conflict management strategy depends primarily on the role of the conflicting parties (Yeung, Fung, & Chan, 2015). Beitler et al. (2016) stated the dual concern theory is the bedrock of the different conflict management strategies. The dual concern theory illustrates the concern for all conflicting parties in the selection of an approach (Beitler et al., 2016). That is the concerns for one's aspirations and the concern for others in building a healthy working relationship.

From the dual concern theory, scholars have therefore indicated five main conflict management strategies namely, accommodating (obliging), avoiding, collaborating (integrating), compromising, and competing (dominating) (Goncalves et al., 2016). According to Bonache, Gonzalez-Mendez, and Krahe (2016), using the appropriate strategy in conflict management enhances relationship-building by strengthening all channels of communication. To Beitler et al. (2016), these strategies can be either active or passive. Conversely, the strategy can be constructive or destructive. In other words, the selection of a strategy might either help a manager to confront or avoid conflict or in the same way, ensure that conflict produces a constructive or destructive effect on team relationship. Thus, each strategy depending on the dynamics can produce a different outcome as illustrated by Goncalves et al. (2016).

Accommodating. Referred to as obliging (Yeung et al., 2015) or yielding (Beitler et al., 2016), accommodating as a conflict management strategy is the practice whereby

concern to resolve a conflict is high on satisfying others than one's self (Vollmer, 2015); that is, you win, I lose. The fundamental philosophy underlining this strategy is the protection of existing relationships by demonstrating more concern for others than one's self (Burgos-Cienfuegos, Vasquez-Salgado, Ruedas-Garcia, & Greenfield, 2015).

According to Yeung et al. (2015), this strategy is useful when the relationship between the conflicting parties is that of a superior and a follower. In addition, Goncalves et al. (2016) also indicated that when it comes to gender roles, women are more likely to adopt this strategy because they are more cooperative. Furthermore, Beitler et al. (2016) also pointed out that older employees are more likely to adopt this strategy because they are more likely to engage in passive response to conflict. In effect, this strategy results in one party appeasing the other by deciding to ignore their concern, and instead focus their attention on others and ensure the maintenance of a positive work environment to achieve a common purpose.

Avoiding. Avoiding is a conflict management strategy whereby the manager or person resolving conflict has no concern for either conflicting parties (Bonache et al., 2016). Avoidance results in no winners or losers because as implied by Bang (2016), managers avoid addressing the situation by either withdrawing or sidestepping. To Beitler et al. (2016), this strategy is relevant in circumstances in which there arises a need to minimize the importance of the various individuals. The significance of the avoiding approach of conflict management is that we prevent escalating conflict when one avoids confronting the situation head-on (Bang, 2016). This strategy is, therefore, useful when a

managers see the need to resolve other significant issues, rather than spend precious time attempting to address a conflict situation (Yeung et al., 2015). In other words, this strategy is indicative of the importance that one places on conflict. Avoidance is much appropriate when a leader intends to avoid resolving a conflict that has a minimal potential of having a negative impact on goal attainment.

Collaborating. Referred to as integration (Vollmer, 2015) or problem-solving (Beitler et al., 2016), is the conflict management strategy that is synonymous with teamwork and cooperation on the part of all conflicting parties' (Beitler et al., 2016). Collaboration is a win-win situation for all parties', and the onus is on all parties working through their differences. According to Bang (2016), as conflicting parties work through their differences, they enhance their creative potential as they work to find mutually beneficial solutions to their problems. To Bang, using this strategy to resolve conflict does not only enhance the creative potential of conflicting parties, but it also enhances their learning social change abilities. Yeung et al. (2015) also explained that collaboration between conflicting parties' results in parties' reaching an effective solution to their problems because this strategy encourages open communication, exchange of information, and ultimately problem-solving. However, Beitler et al. (2016) did indicate that for this strategy to be effective, both conflicting parties' need to trust each other and be ready to work together. Hence, the keywords are trust and willingness.

Compromising. Compromising is the strategy whereby there arises a mutual concern for both conflicting parties (Yeung et al., 2015). It involves the situation where

all conflicting parties need to find common ground to ensure a peaceful environment (Vollmer, 2015). According to Gbadamosi, Baghestan, and Al-Mabrouk (2014), this strategy is assertive as well as cooperative and is the common ground between competing and accommodating. Wu, Zhang, Imran, Lu and Hu (2018) further explained the use of this strategy allows all parties involved to recognize and evaluate the cause of conflict and then develop solutions that are mutually beneficial to all parties. Instead of trying to force a solution on one party, compromising strategy allows all parties to generate their solution by making concessions (Gbadamosi et al., 2014). This strategy also encourages negotiation since the parties to conflict find themselves in an environment in which they must talk about the issue, have trade-offs, and finally make concessions on their values to arrive at a solution (Wu, Zhao, & Zuo, 2017). However, Wu et al. (2018) indicated that parties are reluctant to use this strategy when the issue hinges on their core values. The reluctance is that people find it difficult to give up on characteristics, attitudes, and attributes central to their identity (Wu et al., 2018).

Competing. Referred to as dominating (Yeung et al., 2015) or forcing by Beitler et al. (2016) and involves assertiveness. Competing is the strategy where one party asserts his or her concern over others to resolve conflict (Gbadamosi et al., 2014). Rather than showing some concern for others within the conflicting situation, one party insists on what he or she considers right for that situation (Beitler et al., 2016). According to Goncalves et al. (2016), this strategy hinges on a high concern for self and a low concern for others because as Nischal and Bhalla (2014) alluded to, it involves one person

imposing his or her will over others. Furthermore, Beitler et al. branded this strategy as active destructive because it consists of a win at all cost, which is not only inimical but also maniacal to relationship building.

Transition

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the leadership strategies that senior account managers use to control workplace conflict. The conceptual framework underlining this study is the theory of transformational leadership; the leadership strategy in which leaders motivate and influence followers to become leaders themselves (Kroon et al., 2017). Section 1 included the research question, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, significance of the study and implication for social change. I ended section 1 with a literature review in which I provided and explained key components of leadership strategies (approaches) such as transformational, transactional, autocratic, charismatic, and participatory approaches to leadership. As indicated by Shava and Ndebele (2017), effective leaders know how to strike a balance between different leadership strategies. Thus, for an effective management of conflict at the workplace, leaders need to cognizant of their environment and know when and how to apply each leadership strategy. Perception is critical in effective management of workplace conflict because according to Waheed et al., (2018), the perception that followers have of their leader influences their behavior towards that leader. Hence, leaders have to be mindful of the effects of their leadership strategies on followers as well as the organization. I concluded the literature review by explaining conflict management strategies such as

accommodation, avoidance, collaboration, compromise, and competing. Beitler et al., (2016) indicated that a successful management of conflict is an output of the conflict management strategy employed.

Section 2 included a discussion of the role of the researcher, parameters for selecting participants, description of methodology and research design for the study. The data collection method was a review of company documents and a face-to-face semistructured interviews, analytical approach for understanding the leadership strategies for managing workplace conflict, and other research strategies such as reliability and validity. Section 3 included a presentation of data analysis, research findings, application to business practices, recommendations for further studies, and reflections.

Section 2: The Project

Workplace conflict has the potential to cause enormous harm to organizations whenever managers fail to manage properly. For U.S. businesses, according to Maximin et al. (2015), the financial cost of workplace conflict is \$359 billion per year. Additionally, workplace conflict affects the performance level of employees and subsequently the level of competitiveness of businesses (Al-Sibaie et al., 2014). However, when managed effectively, workplace conflict is not necessarily detrimental. For example, as Vollmer (2015) noted, it may contribute to innovative drive of an organization. Indeed, workplace conflict can be beneficial when managers provide appropriate strategies to manage it whenever it occurs. Hence, there is a need to explore the strategies that senior account managers use to address workplace conflict. This section contains an explanation and justification for the measure and methods for the research design, data collection, analysis, and presentation of this study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the leadership strategies that senior account managers use to manage workplace conflict. The target population consisted of 25 senior account managers from 10 business-solution centers from the same organization who successfully implemented leadership strategies to manage workplace conflict in New York City (NYC). The findings of this study may lead to positive social change by providing managers with knowledge and skills for minimizing the potential cost of conflict to deliver products and services at a lower cost

while creating a harmonious work environment. Other positive social change implications of the findings of this study include the potential to provide greater insight on the effects of conflict, which may inform the development of societal-welfare-enhancing programs that focus on enhancing solidarity and safety valves within society.

Role of the Researcher

According to Nilson (2017), the role of the researcher includes serving as a facilitator, coordinator, participant observer, direct observer, and interviewer. In the view of Collins and Cooper (2014), the researcher performs the role of collecting and analyzing data, developing themes, and reporting results. The role that a researcher performs within data collection has an impact on the quality of research data (Nelson, London, & Strobel, 2015). Furthermore, because there can be challenges in the relationship between a researcher and participants, it is important for the researcher to serve in the role of a facilitator with the goal of ensuring a relationship driven by mutually agreed-upon processes (Nelson et al., 2015). Additionally, the knowledge and skills of the researcher are critical in the researcher's quest to collect and analyze quality data (Moon, 2015). As the primary data collection instrument, I designed and implemented all tools needed for conducting this study. The tools included the interview questions, interview protocol, consent form, and data collection technique.

The practice of ensuring ethical standards in research involves avoiding undue influence of research participants (Brear, 2018). To Head (2018), adhering to ethical standards in research means that researchers position themselves to identify and resolve

ethical dilemmas during the research process. Furthermore, researchers avoid harming research participants by adhering to established ethical standards (Mahoney & Kearon, 2017) such as the Belmont Report. The Belmont Report includes three basic ethical standards for research, which are beneficence, respect of participants, and justice (Call-Cummings, Dennis, & Martinez, 2019). I, adhered to the three ethical principles by having each participant read the consent form providing explanations where possible. In using an interview protocol (see Appendix A), I followed the same steps in each interview session to ensure consistency and orderliness in the data collection process.

Although insider knowledge of a research topic can lead to trust and openness, it may also have unexpected consequences such as role confusion, bias, ethical concerns, and assumptions (Wolgemuth et al., 2015). In this regard, my role in avoiding research bias was to follow the advice of Takhar-Lail and Chitakunye (2015) that researchers should highlight only the experiences of participants as reflected in the data collected. Furthermore, not influencing participants enhances the quality of data (Roszak, 2015). As such, I upheld a high ethical standard by ensuring that my background did not influence my view of participants to avoid any assumptions. Moreover, the study included the use of the same interview protocol for all participants (see Appendix A), and the goal in using this protocol was to stay focused on the main points to address in the interview and to relay relevant information to participants during the interview process (Banasik, 2016).

According to Fusch, Fusch, and Ness (2018), avoiding or mitigating bias is very important in research, and using an interview protocol is a useful means to mitigate

research bias. With an interview protocol, it is possible to avoid the possibility of misunderstanding between researcher and research participants during the interview process (Fusch et al., 2018). Thus, the rationale for using an interview protocol is to ensure uniformity in the data collection, analysis, and presentation process in an attempt to mitigate factors that might compromise the consistency and reliability of a study (Foley & O'Connor, 2013). I, therefore, used an interview protocol during the data collection process (see Appendix A), and I used NVivo to analyze the data. NVivo is a software program that researchers use in sorting, coding and analyzing data to generate the information needed to answer their research question (Morse, Lowery, & Steury, 2014).

Participants

Robinson et al. (2016) indicated that the criteria for selecting participants for a study are critical to the quality of data for the study. To Mapesa (2016), having people with the requisite knowledge, expertise, and experience serve as participants is critical in achieving the purpose of any study. Therefore, the eligibility criteria for this study applied to senior account managers who had been successful in implementing leadership strategies for managing workplace conflict in NYC. In addition, each participant needed to have had at least 3 years of leadership experience. Having participants with similar knowledge provides the advantage of using relevant data relating to the topic under study (Palinkas et al., 2015). Furthermore, involving participants who can provide high-quality data is critical to the effort to understand a phenomenon (Beauchamp, Benson, & Daniel,

2014); hence, there was a need in this study for participants who had achieved success in implementing leadership strategies for managing workplace conflict. It is particularly important to have a small sample when relying on an in-depth interview process to obtain high-quality data from participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Clarke et al. (2015) stressed the importance of using a database as a source of relevant information on potential participants; such databases include company websites, electronic databases, and company records. Thus, to gain access to participants, I used a contact list generated by the Department of Small Business Services, the organization responsible for the operations of the various workplaces of participants. Upon receiving IRB approval (07-12-19-0351342), I reached out to potential participants through an invitation letter (see Appendix D) either in person or by email. Upon establishing eligibility, I followed the recommendation of Lolis and Goldberg (2015) and had each participant sign a consent form. After deciding who qualified to participate in this study, I established working relationships with participants through biweekly phone check ins. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), establishing a working relationship with participants is critical in the success of qualitative research. As such, I formed and maintained working relationships with participants by keeping communication channels open through ongoing biweekly communication by phone, email, and in person contact whenever possible.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

The research method for this study was qualitative, and the goal was to explore the leadership strategies that managers use to manage workplace conflict. As indicated by Kapoulas and Mitic (2012), a study that follows the interpretivist paradigm fits well into the qualitative method of research. In employing the qualitative method, researchers use context-bound knowledge analysis (Guercini, 2014); thus, the content base knowledge of participants becomes the preamble for gaining an understanding of the phenomenon (Morse, 2015). A qualitative method was most appropriate for this study because, as noted by Guercini (2014), researchers gain the advantage of using context-specific knowledge rather than context-independent knowledge in the data analysis process. A qualitative research method enables a researcher to explore a phenomenon by focusing on the experiences of the target population (Lee, 2014). The study required a research method to highlight the experiences of the target population. For this reason, a qualitative approach was more appropriate than quantitative or mixed-method research.

Heggestad, Nortvedt, and Slettebø (2015) used qualitative methodology to undertake a study with the aim of enhancing the knowledge base for the improvement of care for the vulnerable in society. Heggestad et al. indicated that to understand and deliver appropriate care to participants, it is essential to give the targeted population a voice by including its members in a study. Similarly, Scull, Khullar, Al-Awadhi, and Erheim (2014) undertook a qualitative study to understand the experiences of mental

health patients with the Kuwaiti healthcare system, concluding that having confidence in the healthcare system reduces stigma, shame, and secrecy, and by default encourages patients to seek healthcare. These studies illustrate that qualitative methodology allows a researcher to position the targeted population at the center of a study, thereby allowing the stories and experiences of the people to provide the narrative of the research conclusions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

In the discussion above, I indicated the appropriateness of the qualitative method for this study and hence the inappropriateness of quantitative or mixed methods. Qualitative methods encourage descriptive analysis (Pugach, Mukhopadhyay, & Gomez-Najarro, 2014), whereas the focus of quantitative method is statistical and data quantification and not appropriate for understanding human experiences (Letourneau, 2015). Furthermore, quantitative research is about establishing a relationship between variables or engaging subjects in experimentation (Robinson, 2014). The quantitative research method is appropriate for using numerical data to test a hypothesis (Madu, 2016). I also considered mixed-method research, which allows a researcher to apply qualities of both qualitative and quantitative methods (Sparkes, 2015). Unfortunately, the quantitative attributes inherent in the mixed method made it less appropriate for this study. Given the purpose and central research question of this study, a qualitative method was the most appropriate.

Research Design

The choice of a research design depends on the study's purpose and research question (Yin, 2018). The research design for this study was the case study approach. Case study design emanates from an interpretative paradigm concerned with understanding the *why* and *how* aspects of a real-life phenomenon over which the researcher has no control (Singh, 2014). Case study design is appropriate whenever a researcher intends to study real life and current issues (Anderson, 2016). Yin (2018) observed that it is much more effective to use case study design in instances in which there exists a lack of clarity between a phenomenon and its content. Case study is helpful to those seeking an exhaustive understanding of a phenomenon and its processes (Anderson, 2016).

Case study design also helps to enhance a study in many ways. One advantage of case study is that researchers have the benefit of using two or more data collection sources; additionally, case study helps in identifying operational links within a phenomenon (Yin, 2018). With a case study, a researcher has the luxury of collecting data through interviews, observation, document review, and/or image review (Yin, 2018). By relying on data collection methods such as interviews and observations, a researcher can enhance the quality of a study by analyzing data that fall outside of the general historical context (Mooney, 2016). Furthermore, with this design, researchers have the flexibility of conducting single or multiple case studies (Madu, 2016). Moreover, as Webster (2017) stated, to adequately understand events, it is essential to focus on the

meanings and significance that people attach to them while being mindful of the socio-cultural factors that impact experience.

Before deciding to conduct a case study, I considered other qualitative research design approaches such as phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography. In phenomenological studies, researchers have the opportunity to explore concepts and practices by focusing on the past and present experiences of a group of people (Letourneau, 2015). In other words, the essence of phenomenological study centers on the lived experiences of the population under study (Pugach et al., 2014). Conversely, grounded theory involves theory development through personal interaction with participants (Reich, 2015). Researchers use grounded theory design to develop theories by studying the actions and interactions of a target population (Reich, 2015). Finally, ethnographic designs entail analyzing a culture over a period (Letourneau, 2015). Because the purpose of this study was not to highlight the lived experience of people, to develop a theory, or to study an identified culture, phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography were not appropriate. A case study was the most appropriate research design in light of the purpose of this study.

Morse (2016) indicated the importance of data saturation in qualitative research. To Hennink, Kaiser, and Marconi (2017), data saturation is the point in data collection at which researchers do not gain new information or insight from added data. Data saturation involves presenting analyzed data to participants and seeking participants' validation of the data as representative (Tran, Porcher, Falissard, & Ravaud, 2016). To

Fusch and Ness (2015), it is important for researchers to seek data validation from participants for the purpose of accuracy. Therefore, in determining when data saturation occurred, I first paid attention to participants to determine the point during the interviews at which I did not gain new information, themes, or ideas from their responses. Next, I reviewed the interview responses in the transcripts and crosschecked the review with notes I took during the interviews. Finally, I presented participants with a copy of their interview transcript and asked them to validate the transcript as being representative of their intentions. Researchers must stop collecting data upon realizing that new data do not lead to the identification of further information, themes, or ideas (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). Hence, data saturation occurred once I realized that collecting more data yielded no new information, at which point data collection ended.

Population and Sampling

In an uncertain and ever-changing marketplace, it is imperative that leaders exhibit qualities and behavioral potentials that enhance the creative potential of followers (Rose, 2018). Similarly, the exhibition of appropriate leadership behavior(s) can serve to motivate followers and promote organizational well-being (Hassan, Mahsud, Yukl, & Prussia, 2013). Therefore, in a study of the strategies that leaders use to manage workplace conflict, it is essential that the population represent a group of managers who have a proven record of exceptional leadership (Castiglioni, Lozza, & Bosio, 2018). As such, the population under examination in this study consisted of senior account managers with a minimum of 3 years of proven leadership experience.

I pursued a sample size of eight participants. The depth and knowledge of participants and their professional experiences lead to the collection of credible data (Jones, 2016). Furthermore, when the goal is quality and not quantity of data, it is best to have a small sample size (Castiglioni et al., 2018). Unlike a quantitative study with a large sample, a case study may involve the collection of data through avenues such as interviews, observation, and document review, which do not require a large sample size (Yin, 2018). Dworkin (2012) indicated that qualitative studies need between five and 50 participants to reach saturation. I expected to reach saturation by employing the strategy of member-checking and transcript review. Member checking involves presenting copies of analyzed data to participants and seeking participants' validation of the data as representative of their intentions (Fusch et al., 2018).

The sampling method for this study was purposeful sampling. Frank, Beales, de Wildt, Sanchez, and Jones (2017) indicated that purposeful sampling is the best method for representativeness in a targeted population through the intentional selection of those with the required information. By using purposeful sampling, researchers position themselves to avoid the shortfalls of probability sampling by ensuring that all relevant members of the population receive representation in the sample (Gentles & Vilches, 2017). By undertaking purposeful sampling, a researcher gains the luxury of ensuring that all corresponding segments of a population are represented in his or her study (Bungay, Oliffe, & Atchison, 2016). Bungay, Oliffe, and Atchison further noted that researchers have an added advantage in using purposeful sampling because by strategically selecting

participants, they position themselves to collect rich information that they would not collect by using other sampling methods. As the primary data collection instrument, I purposefully selected participants based on the purpose of the study.

Upon selecting participants, I conducted interviews within a comfortable environment devoid of any form of inducement or duress that guarantees comfort and convenience for participants (Dikko, 2016). The interview process was face-to-face, and each participant contributed in choosing a location for their interview. Conducting interviews in a comfortable setting and at the behest of the interviewee minimizes distraction and time wasting (Dikko, 2016). Furthermore, the interview process was semistructured with follow up questions. Researchers encourage free flow of information during the interview process when they avoid strict structured interview settings (Castiglioni et al., 2018). Castiglioni et al. further indicated that by ensuring a non-restrictive interview setting, researchers encourage participants to ask questions when possible and ensure flexibility.

Ethical Research

Researchers must be mindful of the ethical considerations that underpin their studies (James, 2017). As Ferreira and Serpa (2018) indicated, honesty, confidentiality, written informed consent, and the right to privacy are the four main ethical standards that researchers must follow. By being ethically considerate, researchers protect all of the components of a study such as a study itself, participants, an institution that approves the study (James, 2017;). As part of the process of enhancing the ethical standards on this

study, participants received the following by email followed by in-person delivery: (a) an invitation to take part in the study, which outlined the purpose of the study, right to withdraw from the study, and measures to ensure confidentiality; (b) a consent form that indicates the purpose of the study, participants' right to privacy, participants' right to refuse participation or withdraw during the process, and contacts for the researcher and educational institution; and (c) interview questions (see Appendix C). Included in this consent form, was a statement that indicates an Institutional Review Board approval number, showing approval from the educational institution to undertake such a study.

A cardinal point in ethical research is the treatment of participants; it is the responsibility of the researcher to protect the rights of all participants (Gomes & Duarte, 2018). These rights include the right to anonymity and confidentiality, which, helps to protect any emotional, mental, physical, and professional damage to participants (Oye, Sorenen, Dahl, & Glasdam, 2019). Researchers must show maturity and integrity in relating with participants, and that includes divulging all information regarding the use of participants' information (Ferreira & Serpa, 2018). Therefore, participants received assurance that none of the information collected will be available to third parties. Furthermore, participants received a guarantee that the information will only be used for no other purpose aside from the purpose of this study; because according to Prosser (2015), honesty in data usage helps in building trust with participants. If the participants' information becomes relevant for another study, the researcher will first seek the consent of participants. Participation in this study was voluntary with no reward and participants

could withdraw at any stage in the process by verbal or written indication with no repercussions.

According to Brear (2018), accuracy in reporting information is critical in meeting the ethical standards of research; hence, participants had the opportunity to review their information. In addition, data retention aids in the protection of privacy and confidentiality (Ferreira & Serpa, 2018). Therefore to protect the names of participants and the organization, I coded all data using numerical values and I alone know the number that correlates with each participants. Coding data by using a strategy identifiable by only the researcher enhances the possibility of protecting participants in a study (Zulu et al., 2018). In addition, participants received assurance the data collected will be stored in both hard and soft copies and that these copies will be available only to the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher will store the data for a minimum of 5 years before destroying all copies.

Data Collection Instruments

The researcher serves as the primary data collection instrument qualitative studies (Fusch et al., 2018). Woodgate, Tennent, and Zurba (2017) further explained that because of the significant role of the researcher in qualitative studies, researchers must be ethically mindful in the data collection process. To Yin (2018), there are six possible data origins in case studies; the six data origins are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts. I collected data through interviews and company records (archival records). Thus, the technique for

collecting data included a face-to-face interview with open-ended questions, and a review of company records such as performance appraisal records, employee handbook, disciplinary records, and Account Manager peer-review records.

Upon receiving IRB approval, I began conducting the interviews. Using an interview protocol (see Appendix A), I electronically recorded each interview for later transcription, and I took pen-and-paper notes to capture any themes that developed. This practice was critical because, as Anyan (2013) contended, interviews and observations are most appropriate for qualitative data collection; note taking will offer the opportunity to keep a record of the nonverbal communication of participants. Following the method employed by Thomas (2015), I occasionally conducted checks on the recording device to ensure the device continued to work correctly. In their recommendations concerning interview length, Wahyuni (2012) advised a maximum of 90 minutes, and Folta, Seguin, Ackerman, and Nelson (2012) recommended a maximum 45 – 60 minutes. Based on the recommendations by Folta et al., each interview for this study lasted for a maximum of 60 minutes. Instead of conducting interviews from a single location, I conducted interviews at different locations at the convenience of participants.

Researchers must think through the interview process (Lampropoulou & Myers, 2013), and piloting the interview process helps to ensure the effectiveness of an instrument in eliciting high-quality data. I ensured instrument reliability by using the expert validation strategy, whereby I sought expert opinion on the interview questions as recommended by Ekekwe (2013). After that, I revised to enhance the effectiveness of the

interview questions. However, the responses from experts was only a tool to improve the quality of the research instrument. Furthermore, there was no pilot study.

Researchers must ensure reliability and validity in their work (Wahyuni, 2012). As such, in addition to using an expert validation strategy, I ensured validity by informing participants of their rights and informing them about the electronic recording of the interview process. In addition to the electronic record, I followed a standard interview protocol and took pen-and-paper notes to assist the data transcription and analysis process. During this process, I took note of any themes that developed. I also used member checking as part of the validation process.

I further ensured reliability and validity by member-checking and transcript review data with participants. Member-checking is the process of presenting analyzed data to participants with the purpose of having participants confirm the accuracy of the data (Abdalla, Oliveira, Azevedo, & Gonzalez, 2018). To Harvey (2015), member-checking encompasses the process of seeking the validation of participants on the accuracy in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), member-checking involves reviewing and transcribing data, summarizing data on each question, and presenting the summarized data to participants for their confirmation for accuracy. As such, I went back to participants with a summary of copies of the data collected to confirm if my gathering, analysis, and interpretation of their information is representative of their intentions.

Data Collection Technique

According to Yin (2018), case study researchers have the opportunity to collect data from techniques such as documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts. Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, and Kangasniemi (2016) had indicated that interviews (semistructured) are useful techniques for collecting data for case study research. Hanson, Balmer, and Anyan (2013) also indicated that for optimal results in qualitative studies, interviews, document review, and observation are most appropriate for collecting data. Therefore, the techniques for collecting data for this study were semistructured interviews and company records (archival records). The interview process was in the form of face-to-face semistructured interviewing with open-ended questions. I also used an interview protocol as a guide during the interview process (see Appendix A), and the purpose of the interview protocol was to ensure that I ask the questions in the same order to all participants. For clarity in case study data collection, asking follow-up questions helps avoid any form of confusion or misinterpretation (Wahyuni, 2012).

Reviewing company records (archival records) is the other technique for collecting data for this study. According to Feldman and Lowe (2015), researchers reviewing archival records can focus on sources such as accounts statements, sales documents, news letter, and company website. To Feldman and Lowe, the sources just mentioned above are critical in providing valuable information about an organization. For this study, I, therefore, reviewed performance appraisal records, employee handbook,

disciplinary records, and Account Manager peer-review records to understand how senior account managers manage conflict at the workplace.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Data Collection Techniques

According to Thomas (2015), qualitative case study researchers typically use interviews as their primary data collection instrument. More importantly, conducting interviews in a case study offers the interviewer the opportunity to understand the lived experiences of participants (Thomas, 2015). As indicated by Wahyuni (2012), the use of semistructured interviews affords a researcher the advantage of collecting data that reflect shared perspectives and experiences of the participants. Furthermore, Roszak (2015) opined that in as much as semistructured questions offer direction in the interview process, the open-endedness of the questions ensures flexibility by encouraging participants to bring their experiences to the fore. Importantly, open-ended questions enhance the level of detail necessary for gaining high-quality qualitative research data (Jones, 2016). Furthermore, participants have the opportunity to provide answers from varying directions, and thus increase the range of possibilities (Thomas, Oenning, & de Goulart, 2018).

Some disadvantages of the data collection techniques include the possibility of participants providing responses that are not necessarily accurate but assume that is what researchers expect (Harvey, 2015). Furthermore, because researchers carry with them their personal values, their personal value can serve as a bias in the research and amplify the subjectivity of the study (Fusch et al., 2018). There is also the possibility of gathering

a lot of data through interviews or archival review which makes the process of analyzing and interpretation challenging (Thomas et al., 2018).

Wahyuni (2012) alluded to the need for interviewers to undertake pre and post-interview debriefing. Thus, I conducted member-checking and transcript review to enhance the quality of the data. Frohmader, Lin, and Chaboyer (2016) explained that member-checking involves the process of checking the accuracy of data, and having participants validate research data. When interviewers share their analysis and interpretations of interview data with participants, they gain the advantage of validating their findings (Frohmader et al., 2016). As such, I conducted member checking by sharing my analysis and interpretations of each the interview data with the respective participants. The process of member-checking involved emailing softcopies of the transcripts and a follow up telephone conversation.

Data Organization Technique

Feldman and Lowe (2015) indicated that researchers must keep a date tracking system to help manage collected data. To Hennink et al. (2017), researchers can use journals, logbook/notebooks, as well as computer software to track data for their studies. For this study, the devices for recording and transcribing data included audio recorders (both phone and cassette), laptop, logbook, and research journal. Dooly, Moore, & Vallejo (2017) contended that the coding of data in qualitative studies helps researchers to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Therefore, while using the data tracking system described above, each each participant had their own number code (1-8). Afterward, I

created an electronic file for each participant using the participant's assigned number code as the file title; each file contained the consent form, voice recording, written notes, and transcribed interview data as recommended by Alase (2017). Furthermore, Google documents was another storage device for storing data for this study. For data management, the study included the use of NVivo 10 Software; I used the same software to help in inputting and storing data as described by Castleberry & Nolen (2018). To protect participants' confidentiality, data included storage of all data on a password-protected external hard drive, which will be kept in a locked cabinet for 5 years, and to be purged after the 5-year period.

Data Analysis

Triangulation refers to the process of using multiple data sources to investigate a phenomenon (Ashour, 2018). Triangulating any data set helps to pinpoint, improve, and enhance the validation of the data set (Ashour, 2018). To Fusch et al. (2018), researchers can use data triangulation to reduce bias and enhance the data saturation process. Methodological triangulation is a type of triangulation in which researchers use multiple methods to investigate a phenomenon (Abdalla et al., 2018). With regards to analyzing data for this study, the preferred method was to triangulate data collected through face-to-face interviews and company document methods. To Fusch et al. (2018), triangulating face-to-face interview and archival documents data collection methods is referred to as within-method triangulation. Abdalla et al. (2018) added that researchers who employ

within-method triangulation process position themselves to mitigate bias in the data analysis process.

Data collection, analysis, and interpretation are crucial in qualitative studies because of the absence of hypothesis testing and the establishment of relationships (Jones, 2016). Consequently, Derr, Lindhorst, and Moylan (2015) stressed the complexity of qualitative data collection. However, Yin (2018) indicated the importance of open-ended interview questions in qualitative data collection. Expert validation, therefore, serves as the strategy to determine the reliability of my interview questions. By this strategy, a researcher seeks the advice the advice of experts on the interview questions and the information received helps to enhance the quality of the interview questions.

Yin (2018) noted the need for thematic categorization when analyzing qualitative data. Therefore, I began the data analysis process by using NVivo 10 software to help find themes in the data and coded these themes by using words and phrases. Data analysis included (a) creating list of experiences, (b) testing of each experience, (c) clustering like experiences into a theme, (d) reviewing the compatibility of the themes, and (e) constructing a description of the essence of the themes (Vizzuso, 2015).

Next was data transcription, and the process was based on the suggestion by Finfgeld-Connett (2014) that researchers should avoid forming preconceived notions about the direction of the data. As such, data transcription took the form of using Microsoft Word document by playing back the interview recordings, and afterward store the data in a password protected external hard drive device as suggested by Roszak

(2015). Yin (2018) further advises on using multiple data sources in triangulating data to achieve consistency (Denzin & Lincoln, 2014) and juxtapose all responses to the various questions. Each participant's response was then uniquely colored by highlighting all important themes that emerge, compare to each interview notes, and codify the emergent themes.

Data analysis, therefore, occur in five stages. First is data compilation, a process that Yin (2018) referred to as *data organization*. The next step included disassembling the data and group the data by coding into various themes as recommended by Anderson (2016). The next step was to reassemble the data to ensure that no new themes emerge (Yin, 2018). The next stage had to do with interpreting the data by indicating the meaning of the data, and finally, provided a conclusion based on the meanings derived from the data (Anderson, 2016). By using transformational leadership theory to help in data interpretation and help to juxtapose data with already established academic facts.

Following the thematic coding of data, there was a process of member checking to ask participants to validate their responses by providing them with my transcription and interpretation as suggested by Winter and Collins (2015). The final stage was to present my findings and explain how the collected data helps to answer the central research question. This data analysis process included data triangulation to ensure consistency and reliability about the research question, as described by Dillworth, Victoria, Reventovich, and Shedlin (2019). According to Sagiya, Matta, and Ohta (2018), data triangulation involves the use of different data sources to ensure the data collected is consistent with

the issue under study. To enhance the validity of the study, data was crosschecked with other data sources to ensure the information in the collected data is consistent with other sources as recommended by Flick (2015).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability is the degree at which research results remain consistent in different settings (Noble & Smith, 2015). However, reliability is not germane in qualitative studies because reliability is appropriate in quantitative studies whereas dependability is appropriate in qualitative studies. Therefore, the first step to ensuring dependability of this study was to conduct a code- recode procedure. Code-recoding procedure involves an initial coding of the data and waiting for about a week to recode the same data to ensure the two sets coding do conform to each other (Kimble, Momary, & Adewuyi, 2018). The next and final method to achieve dependability was by member checking analyzed data, interpretations, and presentations with participants. Thus, participants perused the data as analyzed to ensure the interpretations and presentations of data do conform to what they intended for their information to represent. The advantage of member checking as expressed by Li and Zhang (2015) allows participants to authenticate the accuracy of data. Further, member checking offers participants the opportunity to ascertain data interpretations (Thomas, 2015).

Expert validation of the interview questions served as the process of ensuring the reliability in this study, and experts' input was to enhance the quality of the data

collection instrument. Furthermore, it was essential to ensure accurate documentation and process standardization, which will help in ensuring research reliability (Barbosa-McCoy, 2016).

According to Lewis (2015), researchers enhance the reliability of their study by ensuring accuracy in data recording, transcription, and coding. Noble and Smith (2015) also emphasized on taking detailed notes during the interview process and performing complete documentation of interviews to help ensure reliability. As such, detailed notes taking and recording full interviews served the purpose of enhancing the reliability of the study; a process also supported by Anderson (2016). In using NVivo 10, the goal was to strengthen the reliability of this study by ensuring consistency in the data coding process.

Validity

Whereas quantitative researchers use the term *validity*, qualitative researchers commonly use the term *credibility* (Malakoti-Negad, 2016), a term that refers to the accuracy of the findings of a study (Barbosa-McCoy, 2016). As indicated by Anderson, ensuring research credibility is significant to researchers. My first measure for ensuring the credibility of this study pertained to the participant selection process. Wolff et al. (2014) opined that a vague eligibility criterion for selecting participants could result in the selection of participants with a predetermined orientation. Therefore, the benchmark for selection as a participant for this study was that each participant should be a “C” level manager with at least 3 years of management experience. According to Suter and Suter (2014), memory distortion that arises after the data collection stage negatively affects the

credibility of qualitative research. To avoid such memory distortions, there was an electronic recording of the interview process in addition to a pen-and-paper note taking to ensure that I capture complete data.

Another means that to ensure research credibility was to pass the analysis through a process of methodological triangulation, which is analyzing data collected from two or more methods to generate similar results (Abdalla et al., 2018). In this study, the data collection methods for undertaking the methodological triangulation were face-to-face interviews and documents review. Mariotto, Zanni, and Moraes (2014) stressed the need to quote participants whenever a quotation would enhance the credibility of a study. Therefore, there was the use of participant quotes as much as possible in the event they offer credibility to the study findings.

A study's findings should be transferable to other populations (Malakoti-Negad, 2016). Transferability is the extent to which a research is applicable in other settings (Jones, 2016). According to Abdalla et al. (2018), researchers establish transferability by providing evidence to prove that findings from the study are applicable in other situations, scenarios, or settings. Thus, although the researcher has the responsibility to submit or provide the evidence to support a study's transferability, external parties are the ones to decide if elements to support transferability are present in a study (Abdalla et al., 2018). As such, transferability was ensured by providing an in-depth description of participants and areas for future research as indicated by Roszak (2015), and further, give a description of the procedure for conducting this study. Thus, I indicated the number of

organizations and number of participants involved in this study, indicated if there were any restrictions on participants, provided a detailed description of the data collection procedure, and the method for analyzing data. Furthermore, presentation included a comprehensive finding of the study to ensure I provided enough evidence to support and enhance the transferability of this study.

Comparable to objectivity in quantitative research, confirmability in qualitative research refers to the degree to which outcomes of a study are neutral, devoid of bias, and can be collaborated by others (Abdalla et al., 2018). According to Le Roux (2016), researchers can enhance the confirmability of their study by ensuring objectivity in the process of collecting, analyzing, and presenting data. To Le Roux, one can ensure confirmability by collecting data from multiple sources, member checking, and avoiding bias in a study. The first step in ensuring confirmability in this study was to undertake a comprehensive documentation of the data collection process, and allowed participants to confirm the analysis and presentation of data to be a true representation of their intentions (member checking). According to Abdalla et al. (2018), researchers must ensure that the ideas and experiences of participants serve to inform the outcome of a study rather than the effects of the researcher. Thus, going through a member checking process allows me to avoid having my thoughts and experiences influence the study. I further ensured confirmability by using open-ended interview questions and document review as the method of choice for collecting data as recommended by Jones (2016). Where necessary, I asked follow-up questions to gain further understanding.

The quality of a study has an impact on the validity of a study and avoiding bias helps in this regard (Abdalla et al., 2018). To Jackson and Mazzei (2013), a strategy for enhancing the quality of a study is to engage participants throughout the data collection, data analysis, data coding, and data presentation phases. Jackson and Mazzei also advocated for the undertaking of member checking, note taking during interviews, and triangulation to enhance the quality of a study. Data saturation which is the point at which collecting and analyzing more data will lead the same information also enhances the quality of a study (Lowe, Norris, Farris, & Babbage, 2018).

Furthermore, the strategy for ensuring data saturation involved handing over copies of interview manuscripts to participants and asking them to crosscheck their responses for accuracy. Also, data saturation means avoiding the generation of new themes, codes, and information when such generation will add no value to the current themes, codes, and information (Tran et al., 2016). Tran et al. further indicated the need to crosscheck data generated through interviews with documented data. As such, I crosschecked participants' responses with archival documents to ensure no new themes, codes or information can emerge. The process of crosschecking information with participants continued until achieving data saturation. Thus, the data collection, analysis, and presentation processes ended upon attaining data saturation to avoid repeating or duplicating data.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 has contained a description of my role as the researcher, the method and designed of the study, the study population and the rationale for participant selection. In addition, the data collection and analysis process have been discussed, including the instrument chosen, techniques for collecting data, the process of organizing data, and the process of analyzing data. Moreover, presented in this study is the process of ensuring the study findings are credible and can be replicated in a different setting. The discussion in Chapter 3 includes the analysis of data collected, data interpretation, and how these interpretations apply to businesses.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the leadership strategies that senior account managers use to manage workplace conflict. Conflict can have a significant impact on businesses, and the impact can be positive or negative, depending on how managers handle the situation (Reade & Lee, 2016). The conceptual framework for this study was transformational leadership. The results yielded strategies that senior account managers use in managing workplace conflict.

The participants were eight in number and were all senior account managers who had been successful in implementing strategies to manage conflict at their various locations. Additionally, each participant had at least 3 years of leadership experience. I collected data by conducting semistructured face-to-face interviews and reviewing company documents on conflict resolutions and strategies. Data saturation occurred when participants' responses did not generate any new information, and when review of the archival data yielded the same information. After analyzing the data, I found that the strategy that most senior account managers use in managing workplace conflict was collaboration.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study was the following: What leadership strategies do senior account managers use in managing workplace conflict? To answer this question, I conducted eight semistructured face-to-face interviews with senior

account managers who had a minimum of 3 years of leadership experience (see Table 1). I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) as a guide during the interviews. To ensure that participants' identities remained confidential, I assigned codes such as PT1, PT2, to PT8 as a means to conceal their identity and distinguish each participant from the others.

Table 1

Years of Leadership Experience

Years of experience	Frequency
3-5	3
5-10	3
10+	2

To help code the data and identify themes, I used NVivo 10 software. Morse et al. (2014) explained that NVivo software is useful when researchers want to sort, code, and analyze data to generate the information needed to answer research questions. Using seven interview questions, I found that five main themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) collaboration, (b) effects on performance, (c) involve all parties in resolution process, (d) cost of the conflict, and (e) employee behavior. Most of the interview responses conformed with the principles of transformational leadership theory, and the themes were in line with the peer-reviewed articles in the literature review section of this study.

Theme 1: Collaboration

Questions 1 and 2 directly related to the strategy/strategies that participants used in managing workplace conflict, and the overwhelming theme was collaboration.

Although the participants were from different locations, it was evident that the strategy of choice was to have the conflicting parties collaborate in resolving conflict, as illustrated in Table 2. Seven of the participants representing 87.5% indicated that the strategy that they mostly used was collaboration, and as indicated by Beitler et al. (2016), collaboration hinges on teamwork and cooperation. Thus, when managers allow conflicting parties to collaborate, they provide an opportunity for the parties to iron out their differences and enhance teamwork. According to Bang (2016), as conflicting parties work through their differences, they enhance their creative potential in working to find mutually beneficial solutions to their problems.

According to Interviewer 2 (PT2), there are no winners and losers in collaboration; instead, the goal is to provide an impartial platform to help the parties by first allowing each party to state their case, and then engaging the parties in a conversation. For Interviewer 5 (PT5), conflict mostly arises from communication breakdowns, and for that matter, the first stage of collaboration is listening. Thus, a manager needs to do much active listening and then help conflicting parties work together to map out a plan for resolution. The organization has a six-step conflict resolution process, which involves (a) identifying the problem, (b) setting goals, (c) forming a strategy for meeting goals, (d) identifying barriers to meeting goals, (e) developing a resolution plan, and (f) assigning responsibilities. This conflict resolution process was encapsulated in a response by PT3, who stated that “the keyword in collaboration is communication; you have to act with all quickness by accessing the

situation and deal with the conflict head-on” before conflict becomes a miasma and the parties become pariahs.

There was, however, an interesting opinion from Interviewer 1 (PT1) who intimated that the most successful strategy had been avoidance and termination when indicators of the cost of conflict were high. PT1 explained that the primary goal is to provide a quality product/service at a lower cost; hence, any act that adds to the cost of production should be avoided. In the opinion of PT1, there should be zero tolerance for conflict in the workplace, so if addressing conflict will be time-consuming and costly, it is better to terminate the employment of those involved (see Table 2).

Table 2

Strategy for Managing Conflict

Participant	Strategy 1	Strategy 2
PT1	Avoid/termination	Collaboration
PT2	Collaboration	Accommodation
PT3	Collaboration	Compromise
PT4	Collaboration	Collaboration
PT5	Collaboration	Collaboration
PT6	Collaboration	Compete
PT7	Collaboration	Avoid
PT8	Collaboration	Compromise

Table 3

Frequency of Strategy

Strategy	Frequency	Weighted % of occurrence
Collaboration	10	62.5
Accommodation	1	6.25
Compromise	2	12.5
Compete	1	6.25

Avoidance	2	12.5
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Theme 2: Effects on Performance

Effects of performance emerged as a theme when participants were asked for the factors they considered when deciding on the strategy to use in managing workplace conflict. As shown in Table 4, all of the participants indicated that the first factor that they considered in choosing a strategy to manage conflict was the effects that the said conflict had or could have on team performance. Furthermore, PT1, PT6, and PT7 also indicated that the second factor that they considered was again the effects of conflict on performance. PT1 explained that once a manager can determine the extent to which conflict can impact performance, that manager should further decide if the benefit of keeping the parties around outweighs the cost of terminating their employment. To PT1, “it is better to eliminate the ‘bad apples’ than to allow their behavior to fester and infect everyone.” Furthermore, PT3 highlighted the psychological impact that conflict can have on the performance levels of team members. According to PT3, conflict affects the motivational levels of team members, making them perform below required levels.

The emergent theme that the effect of conflict on performance is critical in choosing a conflict management strategy aligns with the work of Jehn et al. (2015), who indicated that conflict affects the interpersonal relationship between conflicting parties, ultimately having an impact on their ability or willingness to work as a team. Babalola et

al. (2016) also stated that conflict erodes the harmony and camaraderie that exist between team members, and as a result, individuals' focus shifts away from work tasks/duties/roles, thereby negatively affecting work outcome and performance. In that individual members are the various pieces of the puzzle that comprise a team, any disruption between any two or more members has a corresponding overall effect. Therefore, knowing or assessing the potential impact of conflict on performance is beneficial in deciding on the appropriate strategy to manage said conflict.

Table 4

Factors to Consider in Choosing a Strategy

Participant	Factor 1	Factor 2
PT1	Effects on performance	Effects on performance
PT2	Effects on performance	Cost of the conflict
PT3	Effects on performance	Cost of the conflict
PT4	Effects on performance	Cost of the conflict
PT5	Effects on performance	Cost of the conflict
PT6	Effects on performance	Effects on performance
PT7	Effects on performance	Effects on performance
PT8	Effects on performance	Cost of the conflict

Theme 3: Cost of the conflict

This is another theme that emerged when participants were asked for the factors they considered when deciding on the strategy to use in managing workplace conflict. Of the eight participants interviewed for this study, five (62.5%) of the participants (see Table 4) indicated that the cost of the conflict was the second factor they considered in deciding on an appropriate strategy for managing conflict in the workplace. PT8 stated that “I have a dual responsibility as a leader; first is towards my employer, which is to

reduce cost and enhance profit. The second responsibility is towards my followers, which is to create an environment for them to be successful.” As such, any activity or action that serves to add to the cost of operation should be a relevant consideration in conflict management. According to PT3, low performance has a corresponding monetary effect in that conflict serves as a disincentive to conflicting parties.

Ford et al. (2016) noted that some of the financial costs of workplace conflict do manifest in the cost associated with low productivity, absenteeism, litigation, and in some cases, violence. Watty-Benjamin and Udechukwu (2014) also intimated that workplace conflict results in job dissatisfaction and subsequently increases the employee turnover rate. When there is an increase in turnover rates, businesses spend a minimum of 75% of employees’ salary in finding replacements (Maximin et al., 2015). PT8 noted that the level of involvement of the conflicting parties in the collaborative process depends on the extent to which conflict impacts performance and operational cost. Thus, all of the participants emphasized the vital role of performance and cost in organizational profitability and success. For that matter, it is critical to address any issue that negatively affects team performance and cost of operation, and in this case, as supported by the literature, conflict can potentially have negative effects on performance and cost of operation.

Theme 4: Involve All Parties in the Resolution Process

Involving all parties in the conflict resolution process emerged as the theme when participants responded to the question of how their followers responded to their strategy

in managing conflict. As shown in Table 5, the overwhelming response was that followers responded positively to the leadership strategy/strategies adopted by the participants. Apart from PT1, who indicated that followers had no choice with regards to the chosen strategy for managing conflict, all seven of the other participants reported a positive response. According to PT1, positive or negative feelings (response) are irrelevant in this process, especially when “they had already been made aware during their hiring orientation that the organizational goals are more important than personal goals, so for any two people who have issues between them, can decide to solve it or face the door.”

Table 5

Follower Response to Strategy

Follower Response	Positive	Negative	No choice
PT1			Yes
PT2	Yes		
PT3	Yes		
PT4	Yes		
PT5	Yes		
PT6	Yes		
PT7	Yes		
PT8	Yes		

This *no choice* response by PT1 is consistent with the main idea in using “avoiding” as a strategy for managing conflict. According to Bonache et al. (2016), avoiding is a strategy whereby the manager or person resolving conflict has no concern for either conflicting party. In such a scenario, parties to a conflict have only two choices: resolve the conflict among them or face termination. It is worth noting the consistency in

the responses of PT1 by referring to Table 2, where PT1 indicated that the preferred strategy for managing conflict is avoidance/termination. Thus, instead of confronting the situation and possibly escalating the issue, PT1 indicated that it is better to avoid the situation and allow it to fade into oblivion (Bang, 2016). Rather than spending precious time resolving conflict, PT1 chose to focus on more essential management activities geared toward increasing productivity.

Seven (87.5%) of the eight participants noted “Yes,” as seen in Table 5, to indicate a positive follower response to their strategy for managing conflict, and this response was consistent with the responses in Table 2, where the same group of participants noted collaboration as their strategy for managing workplace conflict. The participants who reported a positive response attributed this response to the fact that they involved all conflicting parties in the conflict resolution process. They provided each party with the opportunity to listen to each other and seek their opinion in mapping a plan to resolve the conflict. PT2 stated that “I seek the help of all the conflicting parties by listening and seeking their input while making frequent reference to the company policy on conflict resolution.”

It is, therefore, accurate to note that the importance of involving the conflicting parties in the resolution process is that this makes it possible to gain acceptance of the process by the parties and have the parties take ownership of the process. That is because all of the conflicting parties are involved in the decision-making process to resolve the conflict; they subsequently buy into the process and implement it as their process or plan.

PT 4 and PT7 noted because they involved the conflicting parties in the resolution process, they took ownership of the process and put in the effort to make it work as a team. According to PT3, involving all conflicting parties in the resolution process had resulted in an improvement in the understanding among team members and encouraged patients. PT8 also noted that members communicated more among themselves, which had led to more sharing of information.

Leaders must consider the concerns for all parties in conflict management to enhance teamwork and cooperation on the part of all conflicting parties (Beitler et al., 2016). Bang (2016) also opined that involving the conflicting parties in the resolution process enhances the creative potential of conflicting parties as well as their ability to learn and enhance their social change abilities. Pedersen and Stritch (2018) also determined that a leader's ability to build trust in followers signals a blueprint for improving teamwork and organizational performance. In this regard, PT5 intimated that involving conflicting parties had resulted in enhancing the trust that the parties had in the process because they acknowledged that the process is based on fairness, impartiality, and organizational goals.

Theme 5: The Behavior of the Employee Towards Conflict Resolution

An essential component of a successful conflict resolution process is managers' cognizance of the potential barriers to the resolution process (Ulug & Cohrs, 2017). The purpose of Question 6 was explicitly to highlight some barriers to conflict management, and the theme that emerged was the behavior of the employees towards the conflict

resolution process. According to Boss, Boss, Dunford, Perrigino, and Boss (2018), the behavior exhibited by the parties can be disproportionately beneficial or harmful for any conflict resolution process. Some behaviors have the potential to cause minimal hindrance to the resolution process, while other behaviors may cause significant harm to conflict resolution.

For conflict resolution to be successful the behavioral disposition of the conflicting parties must be one of empathy; failure on the parties to be empathetic to each other can be a significant barrier to successful conflict resolution (Ulug, Odag, Cohrs, & Holtz, 2017). Culturally ethnocentric behavior indicating a complete disregard for the cultural values, norms, and beliefs of others can impede the success of an attempt at resolving workplace conflict (Wang, 2018). For example, PT5 intimated that the mindset of the parties is significant in the success or failure of conflict resolution. Furthermore, PT4 indicated that the attitude and level of tolerance of the parties have a significant impact on the outcome of any conflict resolution process. To PT4, resolving conflict is more likely to succeed when parties show a positive attitude towards the various stages of the process and have a high tolerance threshold to entertain the actions and feels of others.

When parties exhibit strong opposition toward the conflict resolution process, the likelihood of the process having its intended purpose is minimal (Ulug & Cohrs, 2017). In the same vein, conflict resolution is almost impossible when parties are not honest in their behavior, and this was exemplified by PT3 and PT7, who indicated that lack of

honesty from the parties made proper conflict management almost impossible. Furthermore, the commitment levels of parties are critical in ensuring the success of conflict resolution (Miller, 2017); this is important more so when there is the need to get two or more individuals to work in unison to achieve a common goal. To this effect, PT6 emphatically noted that “You need all parties to be fully committed to seeing the back of the conflict if you are to make any progress.” Thus, it is certainly not impossible yet challenging to resolve conflict when the parties involve exhibit behavior depicting a lack of commitment towards a successful conflict resolution.

Leadership Strategies and Conceptual Framework

The goal of choosing transformational leadership theory as the conceptual framework for my study was to help me enhance my comprehension of the leadership strategies for managing workplace conflict. A comprehensive review of the existing literature on transformational leadership theory helped answer the overarching research question. Subsequently, the findings from the study were congruous with the existing literature, as well as the general research question and the conceptual framework. The emergent themes were consistent with the critical concepts of transformational leadership, which Burns (1985) noted to be (a) individual consideration, (b) intellectual stimulation, (c) inspirational motivation, and (d) individualized influences. For example, PT3 and PT4 alluded to the significance of leaders in considering the individual difference (individual consideration) of followers in the success or failure of conflict resolution. Furthermore, all the participants, except PT1 indicated that by involving all

conflicting parties in the resolution process helps enhance their creativity and innovative (intellectual stimulation) levels, and also ensure the parties take ownership (inspirational motivation) of the process.

According to Bass (1985), the driving force in transformational leaders is the ability of leaders to motivate and influence followers. There is, therefore, the need for leaders to identify the individual differences between followers and offer roles tailored to the capabilities of each follower. Findings from the study indicated that managers must adopt elements of transformational leadership theory to be successful when managing workplace conflict. The key elements or themes that emerged from this study were collaboration, effects on performance, involve all parties in the resolution process, and employee behavior. Thus, a successful strategy in managing workplace conflict has to involve a holistic approach whereby each party is considered significant in organizational success, and for that matter, the input of each party considered in the conflict resolution process. It is therefore relevant to note that all eight participants implemented elements of transformational leadership theory in their management of workplace conflict.

Applications to Professional Practice

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the leadership strategies that senior account managers use to manage workplace conflict. The participants were all senior account managers with at least 3 years of leadership experience, and although they are all with the same organization, they work from different locations. Responses from participants and a review of company documents

provided a basis for a holistic comprehension of the phenomenon, and the findings reinforced the existing literature that although conflict is inevitable, the way team leaders address conflict situations determine the effect that conflict can have on teams and the organization at large as stated by Babalola et al. (2016).

The findings from this study that indicated that leaders must ensure collaboration among parties, consider the effect of conflict on performance, involve all parties in the conflict resolution process, and be cognizant of employee behavior during the implementation of the conflict resolution process, do point to best practices that when replicated by other entities, may serve as a springboard for successful conflict management at the workplace. For example, the findings from the study indicated that collaboration is the primary strategy that leaders use in managing conflict. With this strategy, PT2, through to PT8, noted that by applying collaboration as a conflict management strategy, they gain the added advantage of enhancing communication between team members. Therefore, business leaders, in their attempt at managing conflict, should adopt a strategy that encourages open communication, one whereby the parties get the opportunity to listen to each other and develop a plan of resolution.

Furthermore, and from the findings in this study, the conflict has a significant impact on performance. In this regard, business leaders should always assess conflict and its corresponding effects on performance and develop an appropriate strategy to resolve the conflict. Thus, leaders should consider each conflict situation as unique, develop a specific resolution process, and avoid a one-size-fit-all (cookie cutter) approach to

conflict management. Also, business leaders should consider and involve the views and ideas of all the conflicting parties in the development of any conflict resolution plan. When leaders involve the conflicting parties in developing a plan for conflict resolution, leaders automatically get everyone to accept the plan, help in implementation, and ensure the success of the plan. PT3 exemplified the idea of involving all parties developing a conflict resolution plan by stating that “by involving everyone in the conflict management process, I get to unpack and identify the nature of the conflict, parties present their ideas for resolution, take the lead in implementing the agreed plan, and I serve as a facilitator.”

From the findings in this study, the behavior of employees is critical in any successful conflict management process. In this regard, business leaders should always be mindful of the behavior of their employees at the workplace. PT4 noted that the most disturbing aspect of conflict resolution has to “babysit” the parties involved and ensure they do not deviate from the stated plan. Thus, leaders should keep track of employee behavior in any conflict management process to ensure that each behavior conforms with the terms of the plan set up for resolving any conflict. By observing the behavior of employees, leaders may also identify areas that need change. The specific behavior exhibited towards the achievement of a set of goals will determine if those goals can be achieved or not. When leaders observe such behaviors, they place themselves in a position to identify areas that need change, enhancement, or modification. In summation, the findings from this study point to four primary areas of application to business

practice, and those areas are; 1. Business leaders should encourage more collaboration between conflicting parties, consider the effects of conflict on performance, involve all parties in conflict management activities, and be mindful of employee behavior in the conflict management process.

Implications for Social Change

Four main themes emerged from the findings of this study, and those themes were collaboration, the effect of conflict on performance, involving all parties in the conflict resolution process, and being mindful of employee behavior during conflict resolution. Therefore, if the findings of this study are implemented, it can lead to positive social change by creating an empathetic workforce who will consider the feelings and desires of others around them when making decisions. PT8 indicated that empathy is critical in conflict resolution because “when I share in your feelings, I am less inclined to protract conflict.” There will, hence, be a cascading effect when employees go back into society and replicate their new sense of tolerance resulting from being empathetic to others.

Furthermore, the cost of conflict is both tangible and intangible. The tangible cost is easily quantifiable and corrected; however, the intangible cost, which is difficult to identify, quantify, and corrected, can have the most devastating effect of an individual. A disgruntled employee is not only a lousy ambassador for an organization but also a societal member who does not represent the values of that society. Thus, this study can lead to positive social change by educating the society on the various ways that workplace conflicts affect an individual and the myriad of ways that such an individual

can negatively impact the community. The findings can, therefore, serve as a blueprint or a platform for the society to develop social intervention programs to deal with conflict situations.

Recommendations for Action

The analysis of the data for this study led to the emergence of four main themes. Those themes are that (a) leaders must ensure collaboration among parties, (b) consider the effect of conflict on performance, (c) involve all parties in the conflict resolution process, and (d) be cognizant of employee behavior during the implementation of the conflict resolution process. Aligned with the conceptual framework, the findings of this study, therefore, supports three main recommendations that might help business leaders avoid or reduce the negative impact of workplace conflict of their organizations.

I, therefore, recommend that business leaders pay particular attention to the individual differences of their followers and tailor activities to take advantage of the strengths of each follower. It is quite easy to employ a cookie-cutter approach at problem-solving; however, results from this study indicated that when leaders consider each follower as a unique individual in conflict management, it leads to a better understanding, cooperation, and empathy on the part of followers. If transformational leaders are those leaders who can train followers to be leaders, then an essential aspect of human development is knowing how and when to present stimuli to an individual to elicit a desired response. Being cognizant of the differences between individuals is the first step in combating any undesired response.

Furthermore, leaders should encourage collaboration among their followers and involve them in decision-making at the workplace. Leaders should realize that their followers are not robots or machines; instead, followers are human beings with feelings and levels of motivation. By this realization, leaders are more inclined to consider how a decision may affect their followers. Thus, to avoid any adverse reactions toward a decision, leaders should as much as possible involve their followers when making decisions at the workplace. In the same vein, leaders should encourage collaboration among their followers to enhance understanding, communication, and empathy levels of their followers while also reinforcing the competitive and innovative levels of followers.

Finally, I recommend that leaders place the cost of conflict at the top of the factors to consider when deciding on how to manage workplace conflict. The tangible cost of conflicts, such as turnover, absenteeism, and property damage, are readily quantifiable. However, the intangible cost, such as emotional and psychological effects are difficult to quantify. Since conflict is a result of human interaction, the intangible effects are those that have the potential to impact relationship building negatively and, by default, negatively impact performance. Just as high-performance results in higher profitability and growth, low performance results in low profitability, and a possible collapse of a business. Thus, leaders should, at all times, consider the cost of conflict and its subsequent impact of performance, and make a concerted effort to manage conflict to minimize any adverse effects.

The findings and recommendations of this study are relevant to business leaders, business stakeholders, investors, community leaders, and academics. Therefore, I will enhance the dissemination of this study by using various channels. Academic researchers can have access to this study on the ProQuest database. Other researchers may also help increase the reach of this study by referencing this study in their works. I will also provide a summarized copy to each of the participants to help them in their various leadership roles.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the leadership strategies that senior account managers use in managing workplace conflict. Thus, the sample population was limited to the experiences of senior account managers in the New York City area. I, therefore, recommend future research on a similar topic with a different population sample. For example, it will be interesting to know the extent to which future researchers can add to the body of knowledge on the topic when future researchers conduct a similar study with a focus on a different population. The one exciting or eye-catching response from the study was the responses provided by PT1. It was abundantly clear that PT1 was more inclined to terminate the employment of conflicting parties and save the cost of conflict management. Therefore, another recommendation is for a future study to explore the extent to which an industry impacts a manager's strategy at managing workplace conflict. I also recommend a quantitative study in which more participants partake in the study. Finally, I recommend a future study to explore the

relationship between leadership strategy in managing workplace conflict, performance, and job satisfaction.

Reflections

I have gained tremendous and unforgettable experience from the conduct of this doctoral study. By conducting semistructured interviews, I gained a deep insight into how managers implement their various strategies at managing workplace conflict. Of particular significance to me was having a participant agree to a face-to-face interview. I went into this study with the preconception that targeted participants will willingly agree to a face-to-face interview to share their experiences. Unfortunately, I was wrong in my thinking because although almost all my intended participants welcomed the idea of sharing their experiences, not all were forthcoming once I indicated there would be a face-to-face interview. I also went into this study with the assumption that a doctoral study was akin to previous academic endeavors where I was able to complete every task within the stipulated time frame. Unfortunately, this experience was markedly different from previous experiences: such studies do not follow conventional time frames. From my experience, five 900 classes are certainly not a possibility.

However, I have to indicate that this has been a life-changing experience: having to go past my intended completion time has taught me valuable lessons such as patience, being meticulous about work, discipline, time management, and determination. I also gained the added benefit of gaining a deeper understanding of how their background and status quo sometimes influence the decision of managers. In this regard, I will always

refer to PT1, who kept stressing on employee termination as a good strategy at managing workplace conflict, and at one point PT1 intimated that his manufacturing background played a significant role in how to handle such situations. This study has been an eye-opening, and my curiosity is further aroused to further enhance my insight into other areas of workplace conflict management.

Conclusion

Ayoko (2016) argued that workplace conflict is pervasive in organizations and has a detrimental effect on individuals. Jungst and Blumberg (2016) further suggested that conflict results in a breakdown in relationships, which ultimately impacts negatively on a team and organizational performance. Conversely, Babalola et al. (2016) indicated that although conflict is inevitable, the effect of conflict is a product of how leaders manage conflict. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the leadership strategies that senior account managers use in managing workplace conflict. All the participants were senior account managers from the New York City area who had at least 3 years of leadership experience, and the conceptual framework for this study was transformational leadership theory. Using a face-to-face interview strategy, I conducted eight semistructured interviews, and all participants voluntarily agreed to first partake in the interviews and second to have the interviews electronically recorded.

The findings of this study suggest that most leaders employ collaboration as their conflict management strategy. In applying collaboration as the strategy for managing conflict, leaders have to ensure they consider the effect of conflict on performance and

involve all parties in the conflict resolution process. The purpose of involving all parties in the conflict management process is to ensure all parties buy into the process and take ownership of the process. Finally, leaders should, at all times, be cognizant of employee behavior during the implementation of the conflict resolution process. The findings of the study, therefore, confirm the central tenets of charismatic leadership are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, as indicated by Tuan (2019). These findings are also reflective in the recommendations of this study, and particular significance is that leaders should always be mindful of the cost of conflict on the organization. Leaders have to be conscious of the cost of conflict because any added cost negatively affects profitability, which is the ultimate goal of shareholders.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Participants

Participation in this study is limited to 10 Senior Account Managers in the chosen organization in New York City. Each participant must have at least three years leadership experience. Prior to conducting the interviews, each participant will receive a consent form which they will have to sign to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. They will also receive explanation on the purpose and nature of the study, and they will also receive all relevant contact information.

Type of Questions

Questions for this study are open-ended and in two parts. The first part basic questions that helps to gain insight into the background of each participant. I will therefore ask questions such as participants' job title, level of education, etc. The second set of questions is those that seek information relevant in answering the research question. These questions will focus on the strategies that participants use in managing workplace conflict.

Location

Interviews will be done face-to-face and at an appropriate and secured location choice of each participant.

Audio Recording & Transcription

Before commencing each interview, I will inform each participant of my intention to audio record the process. After that, I will transcribe and present the data to each participant for verification for accuracy.

Length of Interview

The length of time for each interview is about an hour.

Appendix B: National Institute of Health Course Certification



Appendix C: Interview Questions

Based on the research question, I will ask the following interview questions:

1. What leadership strategies have you used in managing workplace conflict?
2. What leadership strategies worked the best for you in managing workplace conflict?
3. What factors did you consider in deciding on the strategy to use in managing workplace conflict?
4. How did your followers respond to your strategy for managing workplace conflict?
5. What impact does conflict have on the overall health of your organization?
6. In your experience, what barriers interfere with the implementation of your strategy to manage workplace conflict?
7. What additional information would you like to provide regarding what leadership strategies do you use to manage workplace conflict?

Appendix D: Email Invitation

Dear _____

My name is Omari Asante, and I am a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) candidate at Walden University. I am conducting research to complete my DBA degree. You are being invited to take part in a research study to determine the leadership strategies managers use in managing workplace conflict. In this study, I will investigate the strategies used by senior account managers in managing workplace conflict. There are some specific criteria for participants to be included in this study. First, a participant must be a senior account manager. Second, the participant must have at least 3 years leadership experience.

If you meet the above criteria and agree to be in this study, please contact me via email at omari.asante@waldenu.edu or by phone at 7187723758. I will ask you to sign a consent form (attached to this email). I will schedule an appointment convenient for you, respecting your busy schedule. The interview should last no more than 45 to 60 minutes.

Thank you so much for this opportunity for me to involve you in this important study.