

2020

Enhancing Leadership Strategies to Reduce Stress on Employees for Organizational Success

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Reginald W. Butler

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Enhancing Leadership Strategies to Reduce Stress on Employees for Organizational
Success

by

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MBA, Trident University International, 2010

BS, Mount Saint Mary College, 2008

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

October 2020

Abstract

Organizational leaders' inability to effectively manage complexity and implement leadership development strategies during intense situations creates work-related stress among employees. Stress contributes to emotional disorders, decreased job performance, high staff turnover that place the organization's health in jeopardy. Grounded in the expectancy theory of motivation, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore key leadership strategies to reduce stress in the workplace. The face-to-face, semistructured interviews were conducted with 3 senior leaders from a financial institution in the southern United States who had successfully implemented strategies that reduced stress on employees and improved their job performance. Their organizational documents were collected, organized, and analyzed to gain insights and thus be able to answer the research question. Three main themes emerged: a lack of trust in leadership, strategy development processes, and the implementation of leadership strategies. The key recommendations for leaders are to foster trust by treating employees with respect and constructing a strategy development process. Leaders should implement improved strategies in onboarding new employees, team-building activities, feedback focused on the individual, and public recognition. The implications for positive social change include the potential to reduce job-related stress, lower staff turnover rates, encourage motivation through promotion, create a healthy organizational culture, and improve social conditions outside the workplace.

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Dedication

I dedicate my doctoral study to all the people who have seen me struggle and to those who did not believe in me, but I believed in myself. I specifically want to thank my wife, Chisa Butler, who provided me with the motivation, inspiration, and words of encouragement throughout this process. I would also like to thank my five daughters, Chloe, Alexa, Maleah, Elisha, and Brianna, and son, Reginald Jr., who forgave my absences from events, vacations, and other special occasions when I needed to pursue my education. I will always appreciate their patience and hope that I acted as a role model and an example for them to follow.

I give special thanks to my mother, Lillian Hawkins, who brought me into this world and encouraged me to overcome the challenges as a child with a speech impediment, walking disability, and emotional instability. The love you provided and guidance in life as a single parent of five, taught me to believe in God, myself, trust in others, and to never give up on my dreams. You are the reason for my success and the rise of my childhood disabilities. You are my inspiration and a true testament to the values instilled in me. I would be remorse if I failed to mention my grandfather, the late Clifford Butler Sr., one of the most influential and inspirational role models, and a World War II Combat Veteran. Through stories and exemplary habits, he changed my life for the better. He taught me about the values of duty, honor, respect, courage, commitment, integrity, selfless service, and helped guide me to become another generation of soldiers to answer our Nation's call.

Acknowledgments

I want to give thanks to my committee members who provided their expertise, untiring efforts, and unwavering support. I wish to give special thanks to Dr. Edgar Jordan (Chair), Dr. Janet Booker (SCM), and Dr. Patsy Kasen (URR). Thank you for your guidance and commitment to motivate me across the finish line. It was a long and tiring journey, and I am thankful to close this chapter of my life. To my former chairs, Dr. John House, and especially Dr. Patricia Fusch, I am grateful to each of you for the encouragement, patience, personal sacrifice, wisdom, and support during the process of my doctoral study. You kept me inspired, informed, and motivated me to continue this program. I will always remember your words of wisdom – You can never go backward, only forward from here. Those inspiring words changed my life forever. I also wish to acknowledge and thank Dr. Yvonne Doll, DBA Core Course Consultant, and retired Army Military Police Lieutenant Colonel, who provided me with the knowledge to enhance my research, writing, and critical-thinking skills during both Academic Residencies. To the Almighty God, thank you for walking by my side.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	v
Section 1: Foundation of the Study.....	1
Background of the Problem	1
Problem Statement	2
Purpose Statement.....	2
Nature of the Study	3
Research Question	4
Interview Questions	5
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Operational Definitions.....	7
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations.....	7
Assumptions.....	7
Limitations	8
Delimitations.....	8
Significance of the Study	8
Contribution to Business Practice.....	8
Implications for Positive Social Change.....	9
A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature.....	9
The Expectancy Theory of Motivation.....	10
The Characteristics of Leadership	12
The Characteristics of Leadership Development.....	19

The Leadership Strategies to Help Strengthen Leaders and Organizations.....	25
Job Performance and Expectations	28
Tools to Ensure Employee Satisfaction	30
How a Stressful Working Environment Could Damage an Employee’s Health.....	32
Summary and Transition.....	35
Section 2: The Project.....	36
Purpose Statement.....	36
Role of the Researcher	36
Participants.....	38
Research Method and Design	39
Research Method	40
Research Design.....	41
Population and Sampling	43
Ethical Research.....	44
Data Collection Instruments	47
Data Collection Technique	49
Data Analysis	51
Reliability and Validity.....	52
Reliability.....	53
Validity	53
Summary and Transition.....	55

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and	57
Implications for Positive Social Change.....	57
Introduction.....	57
Presentation of the Findings.....	58
Theme 1: Lack of Trust in Leadership.....	60
Theme 2: Strategy Development Processes	62
Theme 3: Implementation of Leadership Strategies	65
Applications to Professional Practice	71
Implications for Social Change.....	72
Recommendations for Action	72
Recommendations for Further Research.....	73
Reflections	74
Conclusion	75
Appendix A: Semistructured Interview Questions	117
Appendix B: Member Checking Protocol.....	118
Appendix C: Interview Protocol	119
Appendix D: Consent Form	120
Appendix E: CITI Human Subjects Protection Certificate.....	124
Appendix F: Letter of Cooperation.....	125

List of Tables
Table 1. Participants' Responses that Yielded Themes63

List of Figures

Figure 1. *Participants' Responses to Leadership Strategies Word Cloud*.....69

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

It is essential for business leaders to use measurable objectives to develop the appropriate skills to see beyond the present, to articulate a strategic mission and vision, and how to motivate employees to enhance performance (Christensen, Paarlberg, & Perry, 2017). Many business leaders fail to meet the goal because of their inability to manage their organizations to profitability. (Chen, Zeng, Lin, & Ma, 2017). Leaders can produce a deal of stress on their employees, cause them to function at a low level of mental efficiency, and make it impossible for employees to determine the importance of their position (Stixrud, 2012).

Background of the Problem

A leader is one who can motivate their employees to change an organization by providing purpose, direction, and motivation (Mayfield, Mayfield, & Sharbrough, 2015). Based on expectancy theory, leaders need to motivate their employees to help them to believe they will succeed and that their efforts will be worthwhile (Mayfield et al., 2015). Leaders who do not create a relationship with their employees tend to generate patterns of distrust, lower levels of productivity, and more stress on the workforce (Findler, Jacoby, & Gabis, 2016).

Leadership comprises the elements of trust, which consist of consistency, creating positive relationships, and have a depth of experience (Franklin & Marshall, 2019). Successful exchange relationships are likely to exist when leaders are caring, trustworthy, honest, open, and genuinely concerned about the well-being of their subordinates (Engelbrecht, Heine, & Mahembe, 2017). The most dynamic leadership characteristics to

predict outcomes, particularly motivation in the workplace, are personality traits, capabilities, and preferences (Lamm, Sheikh, Carter, & Lamm, 2017). Ultimately, subordinates may increase satisfaction and perceive greater meaning in the workplace if their leaders possess the essential skills needed to produce a stress-free environment (Liborius, 2017).

Problem Statement

The inability of organizational leaders to effectively communicate and manage complexity during intense situations creates work-related stress and uncertainty among employees (Kipfelsberger & Kark, 2018). Stress prevention strategies in organizations have consisted of 50 and 80% of high-risk failure, which contributed to staff turnover, reduced productivity, and days lost due to illness, with estimated annual healthcare costs of up to \$190 billion in the United States (Jacobs, Johnson, & Hassell, 2018). The general business problem is that some leaders fail to understand how to accomplish a goal. The specific business problem is that leaders of financial institutions lack leadership strategies to reduce employee stress and lack knowledge of how to improve employees' job performance.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore key leadership strategies of leaders of financial institutions to reduce stress in the workplace and thus improve individual as well as organizational performance. The participants were leaders of one financial institution in the southern United States, who had implemented successful strategies to reduce stress on employees and improve their job performance. The findings

may affect positive social change as leaders apply the strategies useful to reduce job-related stress, lower staff turnover rates, encourage motivation through promotion, create a healthy organizational culture, and improve social conditions outside the workplace.

Nature of the Study

Three research approaches were reviewed: quantitative, mixed methods, and qualitative. A quantitative approach uses closed-ended responses during the interview and observation process (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A mixed method approach is when quantitative and qualitative approaches are combined to generate in-depth data through statistics to provide a better understanding of a problem (Blomberg, Lindwall, & Bisholt, 2019). A quantitative or mixed method approach was not appropriate because this study explored the leadership strategies to reduce stress on employees and did not test hypotheses required of a quantitative or a mixed method study.

The qualitative approach makes it possible to capture first-person perspectives; it is used to obtain insights on social reality (De Ruyscher, Vandeveld, Vanderplasschen, Maeyer, & Vanheule, 2017). Qualitative research may consist of data from multiple sources, including interviews, archives, and observations. This allows readers to view the world through the experience of informants (Fusch & Ness, 2015). A qualitative design was the best methodology for this research because it allowed me to explore the strategies to reduce stress in the workplace and thus improve job performance.

Four qualitative designs were reviewed for this study: ethnography, narrative, phenomenology, and case study (Ospina, Esteve, & Lee, 2018). Ethnography focuses on the observation of any particular community by studying artifacts, behaviors, languages,

institutions, rituals, and interactions (Berthod, Grothe-Hammer, & Sydow, 2017). But ethnography was not appropriate for this study because ethnography focuses on cultural groups and social interactions (Urquhart, Ker, & Rees, 2018). Narrative can take on different forms but is used primarily to collect information such as personal narratives (Bruce, Beuthin, Sheilds, Molzahn, & Schick-Makaroff, 2016). However, narrative was not appropriate for this study because it requires collecting data from a few participants through the form of storytelling and one's experience.

A phenomenological study consists of data from semistructured interviews of people's lived experiences (Sun, Long, Tseng, Huang, You, & Chiang, 2016). But phenomenology was not appropriate for this study because phenomenologists explore the experience of an individual and do not seek to identify the phenomenon. A case study is the most used qualitative method for collecting data from a variety of sources to explore leadership strategies to reduce stress on employees and improve job performance. It presents data from a collection of semistructured interviews, documentary analysis, and observation (Darke, Shanks, & Broadbent, 1998). A case study design bounds the study in time and space; the research and results are based on collecting data from multiple participants but focused on producing the same findings (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018). A case study was the best approach to produce the results needed to address the research problem.

Research Question

In this study, I sought to explore the leadership strategies that leaders of financial institutions use to reduce employee stress in the workplace and improve job performance.

Interview Questions

1. What has contributed to stress in the workplace?
2. How have employees react to a stressful environment?
3. How has the climate been in your current workplace? How have your leaders treated you and your peers daily?
4. What events or circumstances caused employees to stress on the job?
5. How have leaders facilitated change?
6. What methods or strategies have your organizational leaders incorporated to reduced stress in the workplace?
7. What leadership strategies helped subordinates improve their job performance?
8. What were the limitations of developing various effective leadership strategies?
9. Would you like to address any relevant information about the subject in question that will help me understand the approach to reduce stress?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation (Vroom, 1964), which concerns the probability that a particular act will create a specific outcome. Expectancy theory describes motivation; it suggests that an individual's determination will lead to performance and that performance leads to desirable rewards and employee participation for organizational success (Purvis, Zagenczyk, & McCray, 2015). According to expectancy theorists, extrinsic motivation

means that acting will produce an outcome or reward in the form of a monetary bonus, prize, or intangible skill that increases one's social status (Hansen & Levin, 2016).

According to Vroom, expectancy is the belief that better performance will come from better efforts, efforts that are influenced by obtaining the right resources and skills to complete the job (1964).

This theory helped address the gaps in strategies that use motivation, which is the mental process of employees to make choices that will lead to the desired outcome (Vroom, 1964). The expectancy theory is directly related to the work environment under the assumption that employee rewards yield overall satisfactory performance (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). This theory focused on the aspect of employee motivation and the level of productivity (Vroom, 1964).

The expectancy theory of motivation applies to this study because leaders are directly responsible for motivating their employees to reach the company's goals (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016). Leaders can transform employees by building commitment through shared values, by increasing their motivation, and by empowering them to accomplish organizational goals by crafting a vision for higher achievement (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Empowering leadership through a shared decision-making process of open communication among leaders can enhance employee's motivation and performance regarding products, services, and procedures (Hao, He, & Long, 2018).

Motivation is a strong predictor of self-development and is critical to employee performance (Porter, Riesenmy, & Fields, 2016). Employees lack motivation because supervisors do not understand the motivational process in the workplace (Olafsen,

Halvari, Forest, & Deci, 2015). I have highlighted the expectancy theory of motivation as it applies to the leadership strategies for motivating employees to improve job performance in financial institutions.

Operational Definitions

In-group collectivism: In-group collectivism relates to leaders or groups that are a part of the organization of businesses, institutions, and societies that practice and value loyalty, pride, and cohesiveness in one's organization (Bullough, Renko & Abdelzaher, 2017).

Institutional collectivism: Institutional collectivism reflects on the expense of the individuals in a group that practice and encourage pride, loyalty, and cohesion over personal achievement for a collective interest in their organization (Rode, Huang, & Flynn, 2016).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions in research are essential issues, ideas, or perceptions that are so important that the research problem could not exist without them (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Violating these assumptions would produce invalid results in the study. This study was based on two assumptions: the participants provided honest responses and that they might offer the same leadership strategies to reduce stress for organizational success. Additionally, I assumed leaders in the financial institution selected for the study recognize the importance of employee motivation.

Limitations

Limitations within research are the underpinning methods affecting internal and external validity, such as the level of understanding participant responses, low response rate, and the absence of participants (Greener, 2018). This qualitative case study posed a possible weakness of a sample population of only three participants in one geographical area, which impacts findings. Researchers may pursue further qualitative research studies on leadership styles and characteristics when providing purpose, directions, or motivation.

Delimitations

Delimitations are a set of boundaries or limitations of a study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The scope of this qualitative study was to explore leadership strategies to reduce stress and motivate employees to improve job performance in financial institutions. I conducted semistructured interviews with three leaders from financial institutions who reside in the southern United States. The study did not consist of any leaders outside of Tampa, Florida. I pursued leaders with more than 10 years of experience, thereby delimiting the scope to a small population of three participants who embrace the strategies to reduce stress and motivate employees to improve job performance.

Significance of the Study**Contribution to Business Practice**

The purpose of this study was to explore the key leadership strategies in financial institutions to reduce stress in the workplace and improve employees' performance. This

study sought to contribute to business practice by providing leaders with effective leadership strategies to motivate employees to excel. Exploring organizational change that seeks to envelop employee attitudes and behaviors significantly affects their ‘commitment to the organization (Shah, Irani, & Sharif, 2017). Understanding these strategies help leaders to see the importance of growth and value through rewards and loyalty in the organization (Shah et al., 2017). Employee behaviors affect employee engagement, attendance, and low turnover rate. Implementing effective leadership strategies are expected to facilitate a healthy working environment and improve job performance (Linton & Kask, 2017).

Implications for Positive Social Change

Leaders can become more productive by identifying strategies that are effective at influencing job satisfaction, employee engagement, and that prevent significant employee burnout (Kim, Ra, Park, & Kwon, 2017). Leaders who focus on employee engagement have generated business-unit level success with a significant increase in employee service performance and customer loyalty intentions (Wang et al., 2017). The findings of this qualitative case study contribute to social change as leaders apply the strategies useful to reduce job-related stress, lower staff turnover rates, encourage motivation through promotion, create a healthy organizational culture, and improve social conditions outside the workplace.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the key leadership strategies in financial institutions to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job

performance. It was crucial to understanding the published academic literature to achieve a certain standard on the topic of improving job performance in a stressed environment. The purpose of this literature review was to explore the works on organizational leadership development, leadership strategies, job performance, employee satisfaction, and employee stress. The sources for the review were peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, and books published from 1964 to 2020.

To search the literature, I used the following databases: ABI/INFORM, ProQuest, Business Source Complete, EBSCO Host, and Emerald. Within these databases, I used the following concepts: *leadership strategies, organizational leadership, job performance, employee satisfaction, employee stress, leadership effectiveness, leadership models, motivation theories, human resource management teams, and employee development.*

The review consisted of six categories: (a) the expectancy theory of motivation, (b) the characteristics of leadership development, (c) the leadership strategies to help strengthen leaders and organizations, (d) job performance and expectations, (e) tools to ensure employee satisfaction, and (f) how a stressful working environment could damage an employee's health. The conceptual framework throughout this literature review was the expectancy theory of motivation (Vroom, 1964).

The Expectancy Theory of Motivation

The expectancy theory of motivation is the assumption that people join organizations with the expectations that a particular act will create a particular outcome (Vroom, 1964). Organizational leaders need to establish and maintain a sufficient level of

motivation to improve employee relations and increase performance (Selvarajan, Singh, & Solansky, 2018). Motivation and morale drive people to accomplish their personal goals, and the same applies to an organization to be successful (Wyatt, Brand, Ashby-Pepper, Abraham, & Fleming, 2015). It is often challenging to maintain a level of success if employees are not comfortable in their environment. Managers are ultimately responsible for motivating their employees and fostering a healthy working environment with incentives to stay.

This theory consists of employees who engage in coping behaviors to perform and achieve the desired outcome (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2017). The levels of motivation, performance, and determination of the expectancy theory are task-driven (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2017). The context of motivation in an organization will increase employees' values, abilities, and competencies (Gould-Williams, 2016). Intrinsic motivation related to performance refers to employees' traits, which play a substantial role in the positive effects of overall activity (Malik, Butt, & Choi, 2015).

The expectancy-value theory of motivation centers on extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and interest to achieve the task and performance (Wu & Fan, 2017). Extrinsic motivators are the act of motivating employees to participate in an activity for enjoyment and satisfaction (Purvis et al., 2015). The expectancy theory of motivation is the behavioral process of employees' performance and what motivates them to achieve and minimize stress within an organization.

Leadership and commitment to the organization are significant factors that motivate employees to achieve the intended results (Bum, 2018). The challenge in an

organization is to form a healthy working and respectful environment where employees communicate and share their experiences (Kim, Park, & Park, 2016). Organizational leaders expect their employees to understand their behaviors and attitudes that lead to job satisfaction (Shah et al., 2017). Motivated leaders tend to have extremely high levels of moral competence and consistently strive to fulfill their roles and responsibilities (Sturm, Vera, & Crossan, 2017).

The Characteristics of Leadership

The definition of effective leadership is an individual with the traits and skills associated with intelligent, energetic, confident, charismatic, courageous, and likable (Anglin, Wolfe, Short, McKenny, & Pidduck, 2018). The influence of leaders is critical for a group of people to accomplish a common goal (Anninos, 2018). The behavioral theories believe that people can learn to be authentic leaders through development programs and the sense of whether leadership is through behavioral genetics or environment factors (Issac, 2019). Leaders are expected to have specific characteristics such as self-confidence, integrity, innovation, willingness to change, ethics, and portray empathy, systemic thinking, and motivation to their subordinates (Anninos, 2018). From the highest level of the organization to the lowest level through psychological means, authentic leadership can have a positive impact on employees' behavior to help shape the culture (Liu, Fuller, Hester, Bennett, & Dickerson, 2018).

Authentic leadership is a self-perception of behavior motivated by an internal obligation about their strengths, weakness, and emotions (Sendjaya, Pekerti, Hartel, Hirst, & Butarbutar, 2016). Proven legitimacy, authentic leaders are genuine, someone who

leads from the heart and makes a decision based on their beliefs (Sendjaya et al., 2016).

An authentic leader impact followers' behaviors and attitudes, are true to self and promote favorable ethical climate to accept greater self-awareness and self-development (Liu et al.,2018).

Authenticity originated from the ancient Greek philosophy and traced to the work, authentic, reflecting the idea of authentic functioning as a person that is original, genuine, and self-understanding (Lehman, O'Connor, Kovács, & Newman, 2019). Authentic leaders act in a manner that is genuine and consistent with their values, beliefs, and personality (Oc, Daniels, Diefendorff, Bashshur, & Greguras, 2019). Leaders have agreed to the idea that authentic leaders influence team performance and help subordinates create their authenticity by focusing on self-reflection, self-observation, feedback (Lyubovnikova, Legood, Turner, & Mamakouka, 2017). Feedback is beneficial for promoting self-awareness and impacting behavior, which can lead to outstanding performance (Seidle, Fernandez, & Perry, 2016).

Leadership is a never-ending process of influencing and directing the performance of another person or a group of people to accomplish an objective (Renko, Tarabishy, Carsrud, & Brännback, 2015). The definition of leadership is the ability to inspire others in a direction to achieve a common goal and shared vision (Gregoire & Arendt, 2014). Leaders who articulate model behavior and instill attitudes, beliefs, and core values can enhance performance (Hensel & Visser, 2018). Leadership is an essential factor in facilitating spirituality and wisdom through purpose, direction, discipline, and goals in the workplace (Bouhali, Mekdad, Lebsir, & Ferkha, 2015). The most researched

approach to leadership is transformational leadership, a form of leadership that motivates and inspires employees to follow a course of action (Ribeiro, Yücel, & Gomes, 2018).

Transformational leadership consists of four types of leader behavior associated with daily operations in organizations: intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence (Ribeiro et al., 2018). Leaders focus on organizational commitment to creating a healthy environment to decrease the negative impacts of organizational stress. The communication process is critical to organizational success because it sends a message to the workforce, which drives the vision statement down to the lowest level of the organization. Leaders at all levels are responsible for communicating organizational vision and goals and addressing problems that may arise. The lack of clear decisions and responsibilities by the leadership on what to develop hampers the organization (Viitala, Kultalahti, & Kangas, 2017).

Leaders who demonstrate intellectual stimulation behavior energizes employees' intelligence to analyze problems on the job to think outside the box to solve old problems with new solutions (Peng et al., 2016). Managers develop subordinates through coaching and mentoring to improve confidence and performance (Woo, 2017). Coaching and mentoring is the best method leaders can use to positively promote and influence their employees (Jones, Woods, & Guillaume, 2016). The inspirational motivation behavior is communicating with staff through the form of inspiration and motivation to reach ambitious goals (Jiang, Gao, & Yang, 2018). The idealized influence behavior is a charismatic leader who influences employees through dedication, respect, trust, intuition, and role modeling (Mehdinezhad & Mansouri, 2016).

Shared leadership is an informal and internal process with the distribution of empowering leadership to enhance team performance (D’Innocenzo, Mathieu, & Kukenberger, 2016). The importance of shared leadership as the ability to engage in the collaborative decision-making process with other members of a team to foster motivation, influence across different team members, and to take ownership for outcomes that can affect organizational performance. Although a single designated leader is overall responsible, multiple leadership of equal responsibility occurs during shared leadership behavior to influence team members.

Some leaders act in ways that are detrimental to the organization and that more knowledge is necessary regarding what triggers abusive leaders (Guay et al., 2016). An ideal leader is a person who is concerned about the morale of people and worried about the accomplishment of organizational goals. Leaders thrive on chaos and seek out different approaches to achieving goals; managers find order and control and eliminate conflicts to accomplish daily activities (Gregoire & Arendt, 2014). Organizations that conduct leadership training and development programs on how to do one-on-one interactions through collaboration, goal-setting, and reflectiveness will achieve professional outcomes that benefit the organization (Jones et al., 2016).

Leadership styles, strategies, and behaviors instill pride and respect in employees that encourage inspirational motivation (Choi, Kim, & Kang, 2017). Leaders that act as role models and practice ethical leadership will decrease employee’s deviant behavior and improve the employee’s commitment (Aryati, Sudiro, Hadiwidjaja, & Noermijati, 2018). Leaders who are compassionate, honest, trustworthy, transparent, and responsible

role models are the link between effectiveness and moral integrity to build a positive working relationship (Lim, 2017). The moral obligation of leaders is to have excellent judgment and enhance employee motivation with higher intensity (Caldwell & Hayes, 2016). Shared team leadership facilitates trust, cohesion, and builds stronger bonds among team members (Hoch, Bommer, Dulebohn, & Wu, 2018). Developing individuals into leaders involves a complex set of intrapersonal and interpersonal processes (Epitropaki, Kark, Mainemelis, & Lord, 2017).

Leadership behavior plays a fundamental role in employee outcomes. Acts of authentic leadership occur when leaders are honest, truthful to others, and behave in a way that reflects personal values (Maximo, Stander, & Coxen, 2019). Empowering employees through leadership behaviors of trust and confidence underscores the development of future growth and development that could help the well-being of employees (Muchiri, McMurray, Nkhoma, & Pham, 2019). Key determinants to achieve organizational success could stem from leadership styles and strategies.

The two styles of leadership consist of transactional leader that practices tangible rewards and transformational leader that performs intangible rewards (Afsar, Badir, Saeed, & Hafeez, 2017). Transactional leadership refers to the exchange process between the leader and the subordinate, in which the leader pays the subordinate with money or other forms of tangible rewards for completing a particular goal or assignment (Epitropaki et al., 2017). Transformational leadership encompasses charismatic and inspirational type leaders with positive attitudes, expectations, perceptions, and values to bring about positive change within the organization (Andersen, Boye, & Laursen, 2018).

Transformational leaders motivate subordinates by the inspiring vision of the future to create an emotional attachment between the two (Haider, Bao, Larsen, & Draz, 2019).

There are two additional leadership styles known as authoritarian and paternalistic (Tian & Sanchez, 2016). Authoritarian leadership is altogether demanding and strict, where leaders take control of employees and expect to display more mobbing behaviors (Tian & Sanchez, 2016). Authoritarian leadership is full control and exploitation over employees, in which this response illustrates signs of disrespect and retaliatory responses (Mansur, Sobral, & Goldszmidt, 2017). Paternalistic leadership is the total opposite of authoritarian leadership, which involves a governing authority in a hierarchical relationship where leaders provide care, a family of atmosphere, protection, and expect loyalty from employees (Tian & Sanchez, 2016). Paternalistic leadership is also noted as a position of authority and displays kindness, discipline, self-discipline, and moral integrity to members of a team (Mansur et al., 2017).

Leadership ethics play an active role in effective employee engagement. Leaders are role models and display appropriate behavior toward employees, such as demonstrating consistency, integrity, honesty, and taking responsibility for one's actions (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). Ethical leaders use different ways to influence employees and send explicit messages about expectations of rewards and consequences to hold individuals accountable (Nejati, Salamzadeh, & Loke, 2019).

Laub's six essential variables of leadership effectiveness are (a) to build a strong working relationship; (b) provide learning, growth, affirmation, and encouragement; (c) be non-judgment listeners to others; (d) take the initiative and establish goals; (e) display

authenticity by being accountable and open; and (f) to facilitate shared leadership (Laub, 2018). Effective leadership involves developing and integrating three types of skills that consist of (a) creativity to generate capabilities in leadership capabilities and concepts; (b) intelligence to analyze great ideas; and (c) wisdom to produce a common good, which is an essential role in the decision-making process (Epitropaki et al., 2017).

Charismatic leaders display behaviors that increase employee satisfaction and their desire to commit to the organization (Afsar et al., 2017). To promote leadership behavior that will empower employees, leaders should communicate a vision to clarify goals, clearly specify rewards, responsibilities, and tasks to build trust and confidence (Afsar et al., 2017). A vision is an element that contributes to this behavior and a fundamental strategy for organizational growth. The vision statement is an idealized picture of the organization's objectives and goals shared between leaders and subordinates (Jantz, 2017).

Researchers from the 1950s identified the Big Five model as a personality trait to define leadership, which is one who has a deep concern for mission accomplishment and shows genuine interest for people (Gregoire & Arendt, 2014). The personality traits are agreeableness, intelligence, adjustment, conscientiousness, and surgency (Gregoire & Arendt, 2014). Personality traits manifest in people's behavior and reflect that way people differ through patterns of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors (Bleidorn, Hopwood, & Lucas, 2018).

Agreeableness signifies to individuals that are trustworthy, kind-hearted, likable, and concerned about the well-being of others (Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2015). Individuals

who are high in agreeableness tend to be supportive, cooperative, and strive to connect and communicate with others about their social activities (Marshall, Lefringhausen, & Ferenczi, 2015). Effective leaders use emotional intelligence and adjustment, such as self-awareness, self-esteem, self-confidence, and open-minded, to lead subordinates (Gregoire & Arendt, 2014). The five personality traits to include, conscientiousness and surgency identify the characteristics of a successful leader.

The Characteristics of Leadership Development

Leadership development is a complex topic and established on following expert skills development (Epitropaki et al., 2017). The studies of leadership are vital for understanding and advancing in leader development, in which leaders gain the knowledge needed to enhance leadership roles to adapt successfully and overcome during job transition (Hussain, Abbas, Lei, Haider, & Akram, 2017). Leader development is the influence of employees to bring the best out of themselves to enable and support others, ensuring they achieve the highest level of work ethics towards a common goal (Polizzi, Ofem, Coyle, Lundquist, & Rushton, 2019). The fundamental skills of leading teams, creating a shared vision, managing performance, interaction, and driving for results (Hofhuis et al., 2018). The key components of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, flexibility, and tolerance are the learning and innovative skills and competencies to excel in the realm of executive development in a rapidly changing workplace (Ahmadi & Besançon, 2017).

Leader development is oriented towards an individual to expand the skills in leadership roles by developing levels of knowledge through self-determination (Solansky,

2015). The purpose of interpersonal trust in leaders and employees show a significant part of the performance and open communication to enhance the quality of exchange relationships with all echelons of the organization (Mo & Shi, 2017). Trust is critical, and all members are trustworthy and reliable until leaders are given a reason not to trust their team members, which creates freedom of fear and communication of doubt (Meyer, Le Fevre, & Robinson, 2017).

The strategy of leader development is to help employees understand the relationship between others, build organizational commitments, coordinate their efforts, and develop social networks by applying self-understanding to social imperatives (Allen, Attoh, & Gong, 2017). The 360-degree feedback approach is a process where managers direct reports for peers and subordinates to complete assessments of leadership competencies for senior leaders' concerning strength and developmental needs (Karkoulian, Assaker, & Hallak, 2016). A 360-degree development feedback approach has a significant effect on participant's resilience, well-being, and goal-achievement (Karkoulian et al., 2016).

The investigation of leadership provides senior leaders a proper evaluation concerning the core competencies about the subordinate's character and integrity, communication skills, passion, authenticity, and strategy skills for goal accomplishment (Bellack, 2018). The significance of integrity in leadership behavior is the reinforcement of the relationship between the leader and employees, increased job satisfaction, and motivates employees to voice their opinions (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). Empowering leader behavior has a significant impact on employees' performance to improve

proficiency and learn new skills (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). A person's character trait is an essential virtue in leadership and acquired through a continuous learning process of practice until it becomes a habit (Campbell, 2015).

The expansion of the individual leader to gain knowledge through training and education is a critical aspect of leader development (Reichard, Walker, Putter, Middleton, & Johnson, 2017). The developmental process requires self-motivation and performance to improve as a leader (Reichard et al., 2017). The amount of experience is influential to the development of leaders, particularly those that possess international work experience (Irvine & Brundrett, 2019). Leaders with international experience obtain a strategic level of thinking competencies, empathy, and cultural intelligence that foster an enhanced ability to produce effective business plans (Liou, Tang, & Griggs, 2018).

Creating a leader development program is not a stress-free process; it is a fundamental part of educating individuals to perform in leadership positions. The seven design principles of leader development: (a) problem solving; (b) coaching and continuous feedback; (c) role model instructors; (d) problem-based learning; (e) sequenced learning; (f) situated learning; and (g) team-based assignments and activities (Duke, 2018). The effectiveness of training programs and how it fosters change at the attitudinal, cognitive, and behavioral levels help produce an environment to promote self-confidence and trust in others (Baron & Parent, 2015).

Several implications for leader development can improve leader self-efficacy, which is a valuable characteristic of a leader's self-confidence to demonstrate certainty toward actual developmental experiences and goals (Murphy & Johnson, 2016). Leader

developmental efficacy is one who believes in self to develop the leadership knowledge to increase motivation to take the initiative and accomplish the challenging assignments (Murphy & Johnson, 2016). Developing competent and confident leaders is a prominent concern for all organizations and requires various levels of development.

Several approaches offer the ability to enhance leader development, which includes the various strategies of goal setting, readiness, mind setting, reflection, and feedback (Hezlett, 2016). Goal setting is an essential component of self-directed learning derived from an individual or group to achieve a specific goal (Bagozzi & Verbeke, 2019). The primary method of leader development is a learning process and occurs at all levels of life; assuming experience continues to build from childhood through adulthood (Yeager & Callahan, 2016). In a complex environment, leadership development is an example of other leaders who serve as mentors and display the characteristics of an active leader.

Young leaders must learn to develop a leader's identity and leadership skills to build diversity awareness and interpersonal skills with coworkers (Yeager & Callahan, 2016). Interpersonal skills will improve effectiveness in a multi-generation workplace to successfully provide a positive experience of the organization's environment for developing leaders (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Leaders in most professions have expressed a need for strong interpersonal skills to build trust and display technical and tactical skills necessary for organizational success (Englefield, Black, Copsey, & Knight, 2019). The demand for interpersonal skills and core competencies will increase

collaboration, problem-solving, written, and oral communication to attain the desired outcome (Oussii & Klibi, 2017).

The lack of trust and involvement in leadership creates a dissatisfaction in organizations to build efficient team players, making it difficult to attract new hires (Andreassen et al., 2018). Core values reveal the originality and culture of the organization and the commitment to employee's work engagement to achieve objectives (Oh, Cho, & Lim, 2018). Organizational managers enforce the core values with dedication and passion for enabling subordinates the innovative ways to provide exceptional customer service (Oh et al., 2018). The practices of core values define the organization's culture and give clarity and shape to accomplish future goals.

Personal values and trust build relationships from every facet of life by parents, coaches, teachers, and other mentors involved in shaping one's life. Some of the most important values that leaders discuss are trust, courage, commitment, and determination (Carlson, 2015). Trust is a psychological state based on the positive expectations or performance of others (Grossman & Feitosa, 2017). Trustworthy leaders play a prominent role in relationships between subordinate leaders and employees, which helps create a healthy working environment that is critical for team effectiveness (Grossman & Feitosa, 2017). The development of trust over time leads to some benefits in team performance related to positive expectations. The lack of trust and confidence can hinder performance potential and significantly disrupt perceptions of competences, organizational bonds, and diminish organization (Carlson, 2015).

Courage is emotional strength and defined as the willingness to achieve goals in the face of danger, risk, adversity, uncertainty, and contains some character strengths of bravery, integrity, persistence, and vitality (Magnano, Paolillo, Platania, & Santisi, 2017). Courage is a fundamental trait that helps a person accomplish a task and drive performance without fear of what they believe is the right approach (Magnano et al., 2017). Courageous leaders have several benefits and are active performers for standing up to their superiors and maintaining their intentions of doing the right thing (Palanski, Cullen, Gentry, & Nichols, 2015). Commitment is essential to inspiring loyalty, dedication, and allegiance that connect employees to the organization, which is a significant factor in helping the organization succeed (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Employees with self-efficiency are highly committed to accomplishing goals and willing to place more time and effort than others (Tu & Lu, 2016).

The act of determination is a critical motivator in making a decision or finding a solution (Tu & Lu, 2016). Self-determination is when a person acts autonomously motivated or follows a course of action without outside influence (Ulstad, Halvari, & Deci, 2019). Self-determination is an essential factor in job satisfaction and reported to have a lower turnout rate, lower intention to quit, and related to positive business outcomes (Demircioglu, 2018). Employees who have self-determination and competence tend to exhibit a positive role behavior in the areas of conscientiousness, courtesy, civic virtue, and sportsmanship (Joo & Jo, 2017). Employees with high self-esteem tend to praise critical events and prefer challenging activities (Joo & Jo, 2017).

Leaders must be dependable, demonstrate clarity of roles, build unity within the organization, and create training programs to prevent burnout due to stress in the workplace (Vullingsh, De Hoogh, Den Hartog, & Boon, 2018). The design for leadership training programs is to develop employees to solve problems, generate solutions, and help team members create a shared understanding of a problem and implement a plan to tackle it (Santos, Caetano, & Tavares, 2015). Team members may feel threatened that a new employee might take over their responsibilities, so leaders must clarify the position of all members of the team (Bacud, 2018). The clarity of the role is crucial and a strong predictor of organizational goals such as employee commitment, overall satisfaction, and turnover rate (Bataineh, Alfalah, Falah, & Idris, 2017). Employees who have less appropriate information about their duties and role leads to anxiety, tension, and job stress (Bataineh et al., 2017).

The Leadership Strategies to Help Strengthen Leaders and Organizations

The importance of implementing strategies to improve organizational performance and those of inspirationally motivated leaders inspire employees to solve and analyze job performance to achieve organizational goals (Haider et al., 2019). The concept of smart leadership, to which leaders must articulate a shared vision, setting goals and objectives, have patience during high demand, and develop time-management skills (Sotarauta, 2018). Communicating the vision statement is an inspiring and motivating force that defines the direction of the organization and assists leaders to influence employees to pursue organizational goals (Haque, TitiAmayah, & Liu, 2016).

Articulating the vision statement is a critical strategy that most leaders emphasize by delivering appropriate messages and soliciting feedback promptly (Haque et al., 2016).

The assessment, goal-setting, and feedback activities are a crucial part of the growth of an organization (Gonsalvez, Wahnnon, & Deane, 2017). The procedure is a lengthy process and involves all levels of the organization to include stakeholders. Leaders must have patience, which is one of the characteristics of leadership to include integrity, respect, civility, and possess the skills to communicate effectively (Eich, 2017). Additionally, leaders must demonstrate useful time management skills by prioritizing different tasks, schedules, and plan to maximize performance (Zafarullah & Pertti, 2017). Developing specific objectives and goals make it easier for employees to apply the amount of effort to remove barriers to achieving their targets, which leads to lower turnover and a decrease in the absence (Caillier, 2016).

Leaders need to understand the following ten deficiencies: short time and priority management skills, ineffective interpersonal/teaming skills, ineffective communication practices, failing to clarify direction and performance expectations, and the inability to handle stress/pressure (Longenecker & Yonker, 2013). The last deficiencies are ineffective problem solving, ego issues and disorganization, and weak coaching/feedback, and employee development practices (Longenecker & Yonker, 2013). Senior leaders tend to struggle with implementing leadership strategies due to problem-solving complexity, formulating a plan, and poor execution (Tawse, Patrick, & Vera, 2019).

Leadership strategy is the act of formulating a vision and setting goals and objectives with a measurable plan of action (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Levy-Gazenfrantz, 2015). The four dimensions of the leadership strategies model consist of envisioning, engaging, implementing, and monitoring (Eacott, 2010). The leadership model is to assist leaders with the skills required for producing a positive work environment at all levels of the organization (Eacott, 2010). Vision is a need for creative strategies, which help the organization to understand the situation, guidance towards idealized goals, and beneficial to the organization (Haque et al., 2016).

Developing a vision statement can enhance change, creativity, motivate employees to create ideas, improve performance measures, assist in maintaining decision making in context, and provides the basis for strategic change (Bouhali et al., 2015). Several factors influenced the vision-based approach and identified as ideology, leadership, purpose, and core values (Anderson & Son, 2017). Vision creates meaning for organizations and driven by ideology and values from genuine leaders. Implementing a clear mission and vision statement requires the ability to think about organizational goals with an imagination that clarifies purpose and employee commitment (Gurley, Peters, Collins, & Fifolt, 2015). Visionary organizations effectively communicate and follow values that employees appreciate. Leaders should inspire employees to be creative, committed, loyal, truthful, thankful, and work as a team for organizational growth (Hensel & Visser, 2018). A workplace culture where employees are appreciated creates an atmosphere of satisfaction. Companies with onboarding programs that consist of a tour with new employees and scheduled events with all members will allow co-workers to

interact with each other (Caldwell & Peters, 2018). Leaders can transform employees by building commitment through shared values, increasing motivation, and empowering them to accomplish organizational goals by crafting a vision for higher achievement (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016).

Through collaboration, leaders can solve complex problems in a rapidly changing environment, create a network of supportive leaders to leverage complicated issues and to develop resilience to help manage stress (Morris, McNamara, & Belcher, 2019).

Leadership training programs consist of traditional classroom instructions, coaching, feedback, and experiential training to improve leadership performance (Seidle et al., 2016). It is the leaders' responsibility to set measurable objectives and goals based on the vision of the organization (Chai, Hwang, & Joo, 2017).

Greater emphasis on building a team and engaging people will provide employees with a sense of purpose and decrease the possibility of burnout (Carmeli, Dutton, & Hardin, 2015). Several leaders have incorporated wellness programs consisting of physical activity and exercises to help reduce stress levels to create a positive attitude for employees (Richardson, 2017). Employee health and violence prevention to decrease verbal abuse is a critical factor that can influence the long-term success of an organization by creating a workplace environment where everyone can feel safe (Richardson, 2017).

Job Performance and Expectations

Previous studies examine interpersonal conflict to reduce stress for job satisfaction, leadership styles, and role ambiguity to improve job performance (Mulki,

Jaramillo, Goad, & Pesquera, 2015). Job performance is the behavior of employees that produce objective results aligned with organizational goals (Joseph, Jin, Newman, & O'Boyle, 2015). In the aspects of expectancy theory, employees perform better if they expect to receive incentives for excellent performance, to seek self-enhance, and serve as a mechanism to attract more workers with higher skill levels (Ferris, Lian, Brown, & Morrison, 2015). The influence of job performance is through leadership trust, which motivates employees to take ownership of their job and acquire goal-directed behaviors (Aryee, Walumbwa, Mondejar, & Chu, 2015).

The five personality traits to improve job performance comprise of emotional stability, openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness (Judge & Zapata, 2015). Employees who have high psychological stability traits are resilient, calm, capable of dealing with interpersonal conflict, and consume higher performance scores (Choi, Oh, & Colbert, 2015). Openness refers to employees that are more likely to change an organization when opportunities arise and more challenging (Choi et al., 2015).

Conscientiousness contains a part of higher achievement and a predictor of job performance, including work outcomes (Gill, Metz, Tekleab, & Williamson, 2020). The relationship between the personality traits of extraversion and performance is a predictor of leadership (Blickle et al., 2015). Agreeableness is often associated with caring for others and might support performance in some professions but limited in others (Judge & Zapata, 2015).

The five personal traits often complement one another and can improve workplace performance, whereas some features can decrease performance (Grijalva &

Newman, 2015). The dark triad traits are otherwise known as narcissism, which is the lack of empathy, interpersonally toxic characteristics with counterproductive workplace behavior that threatens the workplace and leads to poor performance. Narcissism leadership is detrimental to organizational performance associated with reduced information exchange preventing goal achievement (Grijalva, Harms, Newman, Gaddis, & Fraley, 2015). In general, narcissistic leaders are those that desire positions of authority, achieve goals for their ambitions, are arrogant, and viewed as a personality disorder (Nevicka, Van Vianen, De Hoogh, & Voorn, 2018).

The outcome of team performance is through the process of direction, effectiveness, motivation, and support by shared leadership (D'Innocenzo et al., 2016). Team members are composed of employees with the right qualifications and skills, such as decision-making, cooperation, sharing of expertise, and play a critical role in determining the success or failure of an organization (Hoch et al., 2018). For some managers, employee participation is questionable due to the level of sensitive information, which limits the employee's ability to stay motivated and provide input (Groen, Wouters, & Wilderom, 2016).

Tools to Ensure Employee Satisfaction

Employee satisfaction is a positive response that demonstrates the relationship between the expectations of an employee and their job (Ukil, 2016). For leaders, understanding employee satisfaction is essential, as it often affects subordinates. Employees have a high commitment to the profession and better relationships with employees when managers provide core values to manage sustainability and build a

healthy work environment (Wijethilake & Lama, 2019). Leaders can influence employees' perceptions of the organization by providing unbiased attitude and openness or fair treatment, readjusting schedules to accommodate individual requests, and reward individuals for their accomplishments (Shrivastava, 2018).

Employee empowerment is a useful tool to increase employee satisfaction, motivation, and morale of employees (Ukil, 2016). It is the result of transformational leaders that show genuine concern towards employees, encourage individual development, foster a climate of trust, and address the needs of others (Fainshmidt, & Frazier, 2017). Organizations that provide training to their managers will help develop the leadership and social skills to produce an environment of trust among subordinates (Fainshmidt, & Frazier, 2017). Employees are more prone to commit to a long-term relationship when leaders implement an atmosphere that emphasizes group participation, feedback, and openness (Haque, Fernando, & Caputi, 2019).

Employee satisfaction is a positive emotional state or pleasure resulting from one's job experience (Locke, 1976). Employee satisfaction is higher among employees whose leaders express the ability to inspire, provide clarity, and show dignity and respect to members of a team (Jantz, 2017). Internal communication between the organizational leaders and its employees reduces relational conflict and generates positive outcomes, such as close relationships, loyalty, and job satisfaction (Fainshmidt, & Frazier, 2017). Supportive leaders stimulate enthusiasm among employees and their ability to perform a task to standard and create a healthy work environment (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Job

satisfaction is the way an organization is capable of pleasing a particular employee's needs (Huang et al., 2016).

Companies seeking to create a working environment increase, and employee job satisfaction need to understand the multiple parameters that affect their ability to retain their customers; for instance, supportive training and career opportunities will help maintain its customer base (Dixon, Nordvall, Cukier, & Neumann, 2017). Employee trust and satisfaction refers to the favorable relationship parties have with their jobs and leaders to which employees are more loyal than expected and likely to commit to a long-term relationship (Yao, Qiu, & Wei, 2019). Committed employees are less likely to quit, are more productive on the job, and possess increased employee satisfaction (Patiar & Yang, 2016).

How a Stressful Working Environment Could Damage an Employee's Health

Stress is a reaction to perceived danger initiated by the nervous system to prepare the body for physical contact (Wang, Pan, Shapiro, & Huang, 2017). The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health noted that 40% of Americans reported their job is extremely stressful, and 26% of people stress on the job and that more United States employees spend more time working than they have in past decades (CDC, 2014). High levels of stress may impact their well-being, work commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction (Collie, Shapka, Perry, & Martin, 2016). The increase in job demand and unrealistic expectations created a rise in burnout and employee stress (Richardson, 2017).

The immense pressure on employees to complete a task in less time may also lead to unethical ways to achieve the task and workplace aggression by leaders (Islam,

Ahmed, & Ali, 2019). The essential factors of individual differences and workload are one of the significant factors that cause stress and burnout (Smollen, 2015). Leaders can change negative thoughts into positive ones to decrease employees' stress levels in the workplace (Liborius, 2017). Leaders must understand employees and the working environment to correctly assess the amount of workload and how much each person can endure (Liborius, 2017) and make adjustments where necessary.

Organizational leaders are responsible for monitoring stress levels by incorporating policies and procedures to reduce unnecessary stress and burnout to increase job satisfaction (Hayes, Douglas, & Bonner, 2015). Factors that contribute to stressful environments can produce conditions for workplace bullying and account for the following variants of role conflict, ambiguity, and overload alike (Kubicek, Bhanugopan, & O'Neill, 2019). Leaders that fail to communicate or demonstrate humility towards others tend to focus on self, which creates stress for others when the actions of the leader do not take into account the well-being of subordinates (Liborius, 2017).

The significant influences on organization development of socioeconomic stress during the past 10 years and the foreseeable future are due to the lack of expectations for positive results, value and trust, and commitment to interactive relations (Darling, Heller, & Wilson, 2012). Organizational leaders without a definite purpose, vision, or mutual respect cannot demonstrate a culture of caring to increase intentions for employees to leave the organization (Carmeli et al., 2015). The leader is a significant contributor to creating a healthy environment against high levels of stress by counseling subordinates on the duties, roles, and responsibilities (Bowling, Khazon, Meyer, & Burrus, 2015).

Defining their roles and responsibilities can have a positive impact on the organization, and employees will know what to expect from them.

Abusive leadership associated with a significant decrease in employee's creativity and performance indicates various levels of stress and lower levels of job satisfaction (Jahanzeb, Fatima, Bouckenooghe, & Bashir, 2019). If employees are dissatisfied with their leader's behavior, it leads to the intention to search for other employment (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). Job performance and job satisfaction are related to several positive work-related outcomes, such as employee retention and customer satisfaction (Anthony-McMann, Ellinger, Astakhova, & Halbesleben, 2017).

A Gallup survey noted that employees engaged at work across 142 countries consisted of 13%, and 52% of the United States workforce is disengaged (Gallup, 2013). The findings indicate that a vast majority of employed people are emotionally disconnected at work and less likely to produce positive results (Gallup, 2013). Engaged workforces are more customer-focused, more productive, and drive revenue, whereas a disengaged workforce lowers morale (Heymann, 2015). Strategic measures for implementing surveys to address employee participation are the first step. Such inquiries will benefit organizations and boost productivity, reduce turnover, increase the return on investment, raise customer satisfaction, lessen safety incidents, enhance the quality of service, and reduce tardiness and absenteeism (Heymann, 2015). Implementing surveys to measure actions will empower teams and lead to increased workforce engagement as much as 240% boost in performance (Gallup, 2013).

Summary and Transition

Many business leaders fail to meet the goal because of their inability to manage their organizations to profitability. The general business problem is that some leaders fail to understand how to accomplish a goal. The specific problem is that leaders of financial institutions lack leadership strategies to reduce employee stress and knowledge of how to improve employees' job performance. A review of previous research discovered insightful evidence and the essential need for further research to understand the leadership strategies to improve job performance. Section 1 includes a current overview and historical background on leadership, the expectancy theory of motivation, development programs, 360-degree feedback approach, communication process, and core values.

I presented a qualitative research methodology, the background of the problem, the problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, conceptual framework, and an academic literature review of current knowledge, including extensive findings. Section 2 covers the following topics: purpose statement, the role of the researcher, the participants, and the research method and design, the sample, data analysis plan, data collection methods, and ethical considerations.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 covers the following topics: the purpose of this qualitative case study, the role of the researcher, the demographic characteristics of participants, the methodology and justification, and the ways that reliability and validity and credibility of the findings were assured. The data collection section consists of the advantages and disadvantages of the methods and explains the ethical guidelines. The data analysis section explains the data collection, analysis, and triangulation techniques.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the critical leadership strategies for leaders in financial institutions to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job performance. The participants had implemented successful strategies to reduce stress on employees and improve their job performance. The findings may affect positive social change as leaders apply the strategies useful to reduce job-related stress, lower staff turnover rates, encourage motivation through promotion, create a healthy organizational culture, and improve social conditions outside the workplace.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is the primary instrument of the study; she or he is responsible for the collection, analysis, and triangulating of the data (Bellamy, Ostini, Martini, & Kairuz, 2016). The objective and assessment methods are required to determine if the results are the same (Park et al., 2016). A significant role of the researcher is to be self-aware and reflexive during the data collection process (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Part of the researcher's role is to understand and abide by the fundamental ethical principles and

guidelines of human subjects research (Rendtorff, 2016). The researcher is directly responsible for safeguarding the well-being of participants and for collecting data with confidentiality, mitigating risk, administering informed consent, and considering vulnerable populations (Fuller, Shareck, & Stanley, 2017).

The Belmont Report described the basic ethical principles involving human subjects associated with all ranges between biomedical and behavioral research (Miracle, 2016). The ethical principles to obey during the interview process consist of respecting participants, negotiating justice, embodying moral action, and generalizing beneficence (Bromley, Mikesell, & Khodyakov, 2017). Also, the researcher must understand the importance of the new regulation for evaluating and reporting data on quality, safety, and efficacy, which applies to most countries as listed in *The Belmont Report* (Shekhar Singh, 2014).

Bias is a systematic error or systematic deviation from the truth, which can occur at any phase during the research study (MacDermid, 2017). A random sampling of the data collection is to ensure the results are generalized to minimize the potential for bias (Palinkas et al., 2015). Selecting various sources of data such as published papers, websites, expert referrals, news articles, and database search will help avoid bias (Shekhar Singh, 2014). Student researchers must be careful not to separate themselves from the research because they are the primary data collection instrument through a questionnaire (Rahi, 2017). Researchers need to recognize one's perspective while engaging in the study during data collection to mitigate bias and avoid their worldviews (Liedtka, 2015).

A semistructured interview is a process of collecting data for a particular study between the researcher and the participant (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). The procedures for the interview protocol consists of four phases: (a) aligning research questions with interview questions, (b) formulating an inquiry-based discussion on specific information, (c) receiving useful feedback on participants to enhance reliability, and (d) orchestrating the interview protocol in real conditions simulating space, process, recording, rapport, and consent (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Interviews require participant recruitment voluntarily that involves approval, accurate data, effective communication of results, and feedback to the participants (Cridland, Jones, Caputi, & Magee, 2015).

Participants

The participants consisted of three senior leaders from financial institutions in the southern United States. Each participant received the same questions to achieve data saturation and ensured the interpretation of the phenomena originated from the members rather than the researcher, as recommended by Fusch and Ness (2015). The method for selecting participants consisted of people in a position of power and possessed the ability to provide the best information to address the problem. The recruitment of participants should act in a timely, efficient, effective, and timely manner to prevent costly extensions and delays in the results of the study (Lamb, Backhouse, & Adderley, 2016).

The initial step in gaining access to a particular company is by writing a formal letter explaining the purpose and the design of the study; that participants are voluntary, confidential, and at their convenience (Wanat, 2008). One of the most effective strategies

for gaining access to participants in an organization is the known sponsor approach, where the researcher receives an arrangement with the executive level leader who gives consent to the subordinate organizations (Fletcher, De Massis, & Nordqvist, 2016). Another method is to engage with opinion leaders that are trusted by the community, credible, and motivated to act as a representative who can influence the attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and behaviors of people in the organization (Lim et al., 2018).

The gatekeepers are responsible for upholding the ethical obligations of the company and grant permission or denying access to company information to researchers (Singh & Wassenaar, 2016). The gatekeepers' approval to conduct a study does not guarantee the researcher complete support from participants to collect data (Wanat, 2008). It is essential for researchers to develop a rapport with the participants and to be conscious of their time, resources, and objectives (Rosenthal, 2016). Researchers can gain further access if they express an empathetic relationship over the traditional rapport-building methods to earn the participant's cooperation through personal connections related to juggling various jobs, family concerns, and other life problems (Wanat, 2008). Researchers will have a better working relationship if they are trustworthy, respectful, understandable, and provide private, comfortable, and accessible interview locations (Kidney & McDonald, 2014).

Research Method and Design

Two elements make up a research project in any field of study, which are research methods and designs. The three research methods consisting of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are the key features to research (Yazan, 2015). The research design is

the overall strategy used to address the research problem effectively (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Researchers must determine the best method and design to support the research problem.

Research Method

A qualitative case study was the best methodology for this research study to explore the key leadership strategies that leaders of financial institutions use to reduce employee stress in the workplace and improve job performance financial institutions' supervisors to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job performance. Qualitative research is a phenomenological interpretation that searches answers for questions of who, where, when, and why (Leung, 2015). Qualitative research is a process to gather data and study phenomena from participants on things as they appear (Cristancho, Goldszmidt, Lingard, & Watling, 2018). Researchers use qualitative methods to gain a better understanding of a particular topic (Rosenthal, 2016). Unlike quantitative and mixed method research, which primarily consists of statistical functions of convenience sampling and numerical data, qualitative research uses life experiences through the form of interviews to collect data (Robinson, 2014).

Quantitative research consists of facts derived from a number or percentage in a given population (Barnham, 2015). The primary focus of quantitative analysis is to test the hypothesis using statistical procedures to answer the research questions (Hesse-Biber, 2016), which is not suitable for this study. The developments in statistics are a quantitative analysis tool to ensure data is both reliable and valid (Lawrence, 2015).

Researchers use quantitative methods of testing as a generalized sample to understand the meaning behind behaviors (Palinkas et al., 2015).

A mixed method approach is when a researcher integrates quantitative and qualitative studies to combine the power of numbers and stories (Pluye & Hong, 2014). The mixed method approach uses qualitative data to provide a better understanding of statistical analysis and survey responses with detailed assessments, although combining data can be expensive and time-consuming (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Focusing on one method can cause the researchers to overlook critical evidence, which will lack a strong rationale to make changes (Pluye & Hong, 2014).

A mixed method or quantitative research paradigm was not suitable for this study. Qualitative research offers insights into the question of why people act in a particular way (Barnham, 2015). The objective of this study was to understand and describe responses to the problem of the inability of organizational leaders to effectively communicate and manage complexity during intense situations to reduce stress among employees. Accordingly, I did not select a mixed method or a quantitative research approach for this study.

Research Design

A case study design was the best methodology to explore the key leadership strategies that leaders of financial institutions use to reduce employee stress in the workplace and improve job performance in Florida. However, there are five approaches feasible under the qualitative research platform, which consist of the case study, ground theory, ethnography, narrative, and phenomenology (Yin, 2009). Researchers use a case

study design to answer the research question and to explore a social phenomenon surrounded by real-life issues (Yin, 2009). The qualitative study allows the use of inductive reasoning to produce a narrative data analysis (Durodola, Fusch, & Tippins, 2017).

The grounded theory approach is primarily for areas with limited information about the research topic or to provide additional evidence on existing knowledge through the use of coding, computer assistance, integrative diagrams, and memoing (Nunkoo, 2018). The ethnography approach is primarily a combination of close-up observation and participation of individual people or the culture of a group (Lichterman & Reed, 2015). Narrative research is the focus of a person's life through their own stories or experiences, as opposed to a group of people (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Phenomenology research explores the distinction between the conceptual thought and experiences of groups or individuals to reveal a deep understanding of these experiences (Tight, 2015).

The goal of this study was to explore the strategies that business leaders used to reduce the stress and uncertainty of their employees for organizational success. Moreover, the case study design will capture the results through one case of an organization rather than the experience of participants (Fusch et al., 2017). The researcher must select the appropriate pool of participants that has the best opportunity to reach data saturation for qualitative studies (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The interview process with structured interview questions to facilitate asking the same questions to multiple participants is one method to reach data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Therefore,

random sampling of various participants using questions related to the research topic will ensure data saturation for qualitative studies (Tran, Porcher, Falissard, & Ravaud, 2016).

Population and Sampling

The sample population for this case study consisted of three semistructured interviews of individuals in leadership positions in the southern United States who implemented successful strategies to reduce stress on employees and improve job performance in the workplace. The objective of this study was to collect data from participants with specific knowledge of the key leadership strategies to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job performance. Therefore, I selected all participants to ensure proper alignment and relevant experience to answer the research questions.

The sampling method in a qualitative study relates to saturation, which is inconsistently applied (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). The number of participants needed depends on the amount of information the sample holds and how relevant for the actual study (Malterud et al., 2016). A case study usually consists of 20-30 interviews, bearing in mind that a more significant number of participants will take time and money to complete the research (Boddy, 2016). The ideal population for the qualitative researchers consists of 12 or more in-depth interviews from participants with a broad scope of knowledge (Malterud et al., 2016). Moreover, anything more than 30 becomes too challenging to administer and analyze (Boddy, 2016).

Purposeful sampling comprises collecting information from a group of candidates who contain the best information about the research problem (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Purposeful sampling is a method used in qualitative research gained from an

individual or group with particular knowledge about an experience (Palinkas et al., 2015). The snowball sampling consists of asking the candidates for a list of other people with the same criteria to produce similar results, and often better than random sampling (Groen et al., 2016). Snowball sampling is appropriate for a qualitative case study and desired for this study.

Data saturation is when no new detected information in the data from additional cases or interviews (Palinkas et al., 2015). A researcher selects the candidates who meet the criteria and continue to conduct data collection until saturation is complete (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The goal of data saturation is to produce the best results that are authentic, legitimate, and valid to reach data saturation or redundancy (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Participants are selected based on their education, background on the research topic, willingness to participate, and possess the ability to communicate articulately (Palinkas et al., 2015). The interview setting plays a significant part of the research and must be held in a place with little distractions or noises to ensure the participants feel more comfortable than in the workplace (Robinson, 2014).

Ethical Research

The researcher's responsibility during the data collection process is to respect the participant's rights and welfare by following the basic principles of dignity, integrity, and vulnerability (Rendtorff, 2016). Ethical challenges will persist during the phase of the data collection, and researchers need to complete the mandatory web-based training from the National Institutes of Health for a better understanding of the protection of human

subjects. Researchers must take into consideration the safety of the interview candidates to prevent harm (Isreb, Attwood, Hesselgreaves, McLachlan, & Illing, 2020). To ensure compliance, the Commission implemented the Belmont Report to address the guidelines on the ethical principles of human subject research (Adashi, Walters, & Manikoff, 2018). The instructions consist of an informed consent process, which includes a mandatory form, assessment of risks, and benefits for candidates to complete with a signature before the interview phase of the study (Adashi et al., 2018).

The informed consent form is a mandatory process for candidates to fill out and sign before the interview phase of the study. Candidates that wish to participate are informed about the steps involved in the research process, such as one-on-one interviews in which are audio-recorded, transcribed on paper, and may consist of two hours (Kidney & McDonald, 2014). The researcher may refer to various locations to conduct the consent interview as an advantage to receive positive feedback from the participants. The participants are informed about the withdrawal process and may do so at any time during the interview (Kidney & McDonald, 2014).

There are several incentives that a researcher can offer to sample members to increase participation rates. Cash incentives are the most effective technique to attract the maximum number of participants but might decrease the quality of data by submitting incomplete questionnaires to obtain the monetary incentives (Chen, Lei, Li, Huang, & Mu, 2015). A gift certificate or a movie pass is another form of motivation to emphasize the importance of a study and to appreciate each participant (Kidney & McDonald, 2014).

The researcher should design her or his study to promote trust, respect, integrity, and safeguard against misconduct and impropriety (Kidney & Donald, 2014). Member checking is a process to encourage confidence and accuracy by ensuring each participant has access to the audio recording of information collected and that each member would receive a copy of the interpretation (Durodola et al., 2017). Member checking will establish internal validity and that the ethical protection of participants is adequate before uploading the text into NVivo (Durodola et al., 2017).

I adhered to the ethical standards and did not conduct my research until I received permission from Walden University's IRB with the approval number of 06-14-19-0361360. Upon receipt of approval, I reached out to the participants to complete the informed consent form with the questions included about the topic of discussion. The consent form was an official invite to take part in a research study on a volunteer basis that focused on the key leadership strategies for supervisors to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job performance. The form included the background information, procedures about the interview process for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, audio recording to ensure accuracy of data, participants' rights in the study, the withdrawal process, followed by the risks and benefits. I offered an incentive for each participant to receive a \$25 Amazon gift card in an envelope as a thank you gift upon completion of the interview.

Before the interview, I read over the statement of the consent form and asked the participants if they had any questions before signing the form. I notified the participants that I will not include any names that could identify the participant in the study reports. I

concluded the consent form process by informing the participants that electronic files are kept on file for 5 years on the researcher's password-protected hard drive. Upon completion of the participant signing the form, I ensured the individual received a copy of the statement of the consent to keep. I adhered to the research and Walden University's guidelines about the protection of human subjects.

Data Collection Instruments

During the research process, I was the primary data collection instrument to gain a better insight into the research study and personal access to data. The researcher must develop qualitative research questions to determine the appropriate data collection instrument (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The devices selected for the data collection must be in good measure and pass the test of reliability and validity (Dikko, 2016). The various types of interview methods consist of a focused interview, open-ended questions interview, and a structured interview (Yin, 2018). The data collection instrument consisted of semistructured interviews and analysis of organizational documents to explore the key leadership strategies that leaders of financial institutions use to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job performance in the state of Florida.

The semistructured interview consisted of nine open-ended questions from participants who provided consent to share their experiences. The goal of the interview process in a qualitative study is more suitable for understanding the experiences of people in their natural settings (Keddem et al., 2015). I used an audio recorder to collect data, which was essential to identify patterns, trends, and to ensure adequate data to enhance leadership strategies to reduce stress for organizational success.

It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument. Validity is the concept to which the qualitative research study is accurately measured (Heale & Twycross, 2015). Reliability is the consistency of a measure using specific instruments on participants to gain the same results (Heale & Twycross, 2015). I used the same interview questions for all participants to enhance the reliability and validity of the data collection to include member checking and transcript review. Member checking is an appropriate method to assess the trust and validate the worthiness of a qualitative research study (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016).

The process of the member checking consists of the researcher to make claims on the trustworthiness of the interview transcripts, the modification, confirmation, and verification (Birt et al., 2016). Triangulation is another method used in a qualitative study to test the trustworthiness of the data (Fusch et al., 2018). Triangulation is combining multiple methods or techniques to ensure the validity or trustworthiness of the study (Park, Chun, & Lee, 2016). The four types of triangulation for social research consist of data source triangulation, method triangulation, theory triangulation, and investigator triangulation (Moon, 2019). Triangulation can sometimes produce inconsistent results and contradictions (Lawlor, Tilling, & Smith, 2016). The researcher's responsibility is to ensure that the data of information is rich in depth (Lawlor et al., 2016). This study focused on the triangulation of data to collaborate with the same findings.

I focused on semistructured interviews consisting of nine open-ended questions to explore the key leadership strategies that leaders of financial institutions use to reduce

stress in the workplace and improve job performance. I interviewed the participants in a quiet place for about 1 hour. Upon completion of the interview, I transcribed the data. For accuracy, I had the participants validate their transcripts (member checking) and then sent a copy to their email to keep on file. None of the participants sought to change any data.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection is a series of organized activities for gathering information from participants with experience on the topic to help answer the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2016). I used semistructured interviews and audio recordings. Before signing the consent form and conducting the interviews, I explained to each participant that the process could be stopped at any time. The location was chosen by the participant to eliminate distractions. The face-to-face semistructured interviews lasted about 1 hour.

A semistructured interview was used to get responses from participants about a phenomenon or situation they had experienced (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The advantage is that such interviews are conducted only once, with a group or individual, using an organized list of questions (Jamshed, 2014). Semistructured interviews give structure to the situation, afford the chance to use visual aids, and allow participants to clarify issues (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

The recording of the interview is an essential part of the process to allow a verbatim transcript, but the disadvantages are that handwritten notes are relatively unreliable and controversial (Jamshed, 2014). Therefore, I used member checking on transcript reviews to enhance the credibility of qualitative research (see Appendix B). Upon completion of the interview, I conducted member checking by returning the

transcript to participants and allowing them to check for accuracy, and to ensure their narrative was an accurate representation of their worldview (Birt et al., 2016).

I used an audio recorder to collect information from the participants during the interview. Proper audio recording and the storage of information of qualitative research study interviews will help assure reliability and validity (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Audio recording allows researchers to minimize the loss of data, analyze qualitative data, and transcribe detailed notes without time-consuming transcription (Neal, Neal, VanDyke, & Kornbluh, 2015). The disadvantage of using an audio recording is that it is more common for the researcher to skip transcription and directly refer to detailed notes (Neal et al., 2015).

I used qualitative data analysis software called NVivo to shorten the time and to achieve more robust results. NVivo is a popular qualitative data management program that allows researchers to work on the same files from different locations within the computer (Zamawe, 2015). The software is capable of coding both audio and transcripts into one file to detect trends, themes, and patterns (Zamawe, 2015). The disadvantage of using NVivo is the training that is required to understand the different ways to obtain the best results (Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2016).

Data Organization Technique

The key to maintaining the credibility of a qualitative study is to ensure the researcher uses memos to track changes throughout the process (Bengtsson, 2016). The principles of data collection consisted of a database to store information, collecting data from participants, and documenting all evidence (Yin, 2018). The pages of the transcript

must be checked with the audio recorder to ensure the accuracy of the information (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Audio recorders provide the best solution to capture the experience necessary to transcribe the data (Nelson & Cohn, 2015).

Researchers who employ various instrument techniques to collect data can significantly shorten the process (Cheng, Ganganath, & Fok, 2017). The NVivo qualitative software helped with the coding and organizing of multiple data files (Zamawe, 2015). The results of the data analysis were password protected and will be stored for 5 years.

Data Analysis

Researchers conduct qualitative data analysis to support some research designs used in programs to analyze the collection of data through an audio recording, focus groups, field notes, documents, transcripts, interviews, and open-ended questions (Woods et al., 2016). The four types of triangulation consist of methodological triangulation, data triangulation, investigator triangulation, and theory triangulation (Yin, 2018).

Triangulation is a data source of a qualitative research strategy to test the validity of information from various sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Methodological (within method) triangulation is regularly used in qualitative studies and may include field notes, interviews, observations (Carter et al., 2014). Data source triangulation is the collection of data from individuals, families, groups, and communities to gain validation of data (Koster, Baars, & Delnoij, 2016). Investigator triangulation consists of numerous researchers involved in the data analysis process (Archibald, 2015). To determine the approaches used by leaders to explore the

key leadership strategies that leaders of financial institutions use to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job performance, I used methodological triangulation. I collected interview data and document review analysis data. I will analyze data using Yin's 5-step interview process of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Yin, 2018).

The compiling phase involves the organizing of the data to create a database while disassembling steps consists of breaking down the compiled data into fragments and labels. The reassembling process involves clustering and categorizing the names into a sequence of groups. The interpretation stage involves creating narratives from the series and groups for conclusions (Fusch, 2015). The concluding consists of the final phase when the researcher completes the study and reports the results (Yin, 2018).

I followed the data analysis process by loading the data collected by the participants, member checking, notes, and any relevant material into NVivo software as outlined by Woods et al. (2016). Using NVivo to upload the transcripts, I used the information to assist in coding and organizing multiple data to understand and answer the research question (Zamawe, 2015). I compared the results of this study with other studies to explore the key leadership strategies that leaders of financial institutions use to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job performance.

Reliability and Validity

The measurement of a research study is through reliability and validity (Heale & Twycross, 2015). Reliability and validity are relevant terms to ensure the credibility of a research study (Heale & Twycross, 2015). The practice of reliability and validity is an

ongoing process accepted in more quantitative studies than qualitative studies (Noble & Smith, 2015). Qualitative research must demonstrate the principles of credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Hanson, Craig, & Tong, 2017).

Reliability

Qualitative reliability and dependability correspond to the concept of trustworthiness since there is no truth in qualitative studies (Bengtsson, 2016). I addressed dependability by member checking of data interpretation from semistructured interviews. Member checking consists of the researcher interpreting the information received from the participants after conducting the semistructured interview to assess the trust and validate the worthiness of the study (Birt et al., 2016).

Reliability is the trustworthiness of the procedures, to include accounting for research method biases to allow the researcher to reach similar findings (Noble & Smith, 2015). Trustworthy replaced validity and reliability, which refers to authenticity, quality, and truthfulness of results of research design (Cypress, 2017). I ensured the trust and validity of the information by using a methodical triangulation from multiple sources (Carter et al., 2014). I reviewed the transcripts for dependability, and a copy will be sent to the participants to verify for accuracy.

Validity

Validity is the extent to which an idea is measured (Luftman, Lyytinen, & Tal, 2017). Qualitative researchers aim to apply validity to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings often include strategies such as meticulous record-keeping, acknowledging bias, verbatim descriptions of participants, demonstrating

clarity, respondent validation, and data triangulation (Noble & Smith, 2015). The effects of validity imply the exact results retrieved from data collection (Shin, 2007). The researcher uses a series of questions during the research phase to explore possible threats to validity (Teusner, 2016). I used data to check and ensure the research study met the standards through reliability and validity.

The neglect of data saturation has a significant impact on the value of a research study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation is complete when there is no new data on the information collected (Hagaman & Wutich, 2017). Researchers must report the type of saturation applied towards the study and the criteria for acknowledging its achievement (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & Lacey, 2016). Selecting a diverse group and an adequate number of participants for the interview process will help reach data saturation (Moynihan, Burke, Evans, O'Donoghue, & Sullivan, 2018).

Credibility. Researchers use triangulation to enhance the credibility or trustworthiness of research studies from various types of data and participants (Varpio, Ajjawi, Monrouxe, O'brien, & Rees, 2017). Researchers can maximize credibility by identifying triangulation as a strategy when collecting multiple types of rich and thick data through focus groups and interviews (Varpio et al., 2017). Member checking or respondent feedback and member validation are to improve the credibility of participant involvement and data analysis (Varpio et al., 2017). Member checking is a continuous process of checks and balances and the most preferred technique for establishing credibility (Anderson, 2017). I used triangulation and member checking to enhance a credibility research study.

Transferability. Transferability is the degree to which the results of the qualitative research study can transfer to other settings or contexts with other respondents (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The researcher's responsibility is to provide a full description of the research process and the participants to enable the reader to complete access to the results to their setting (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I adhered to the data collection process and analysis of the research, using interview protocol (see Appendix C), exhaust data saturation, and that the results are suitably transferable to the reader.

Confirmability. Confirmability occurs when the researcher aims to prove the findings of the study directly reflects the results of the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers use confirmability as the degree findings or neutrality in a qualitative research study (Amankwaa, 2016). Qualitative researchers maintain detailed notes and might discuss this information with colleagues to prevent bias and one person's perspective (Amankwaa, 2016). Other researchers confirm the information and that the confirmability consists of an audit trail (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I maintained detailed notes or audit trails of information to assurance confirmability.

Summary and Transition

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the key leadership strategies that leaders of financial institutions use to motivate their employees and reduce stress to improve organizational success. In Section 2, I conducted research and identified the following topics in this study: the role of the researcher, participants research methodology and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection, data collection instruments, data organization technique, and data analysis. I identified the

critical differences between quantitative research, reliability, and validity. Also, I established similar analogous criteria of dependability, credibility, transferability, conformability, and data saturation.

Section 3 consists of a brief introduction to the study, which addresses the findings of the qualitative research study and the strategies used by business leaders to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job performance. The section also includes the application to professional practice, implications for social change, the recommendation for action, the recommendations for further research, reflections, and the conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Positive Social Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the key leadership strategies that leaders of financial institutions use to reduce stress in the workplace and to improve job performance. The research question was as follows: What leadership strategies do leaders of financial institutions use to reduce employee stress in the workplace and improve job performance? I conducted semistructured interviews with three supervisors at a financial institution. I qualified each participant based on their time in leadership positions. Two had over 20 years of leadership experience, and one had 15 years. Together, their experience included financial management, law enforcement, intelligence, and human resources.

I conducted face-to-face, semistructured interviews, and all participants responded to nine questions. Data saturation was achieved. I used NVivo12 qualitative software to help me collect, organize, and analyze the unstructured text, which was transcribed from an audio device. The results of semistructured interviews emerged three themes to identify the problem with motivating employees to reduce stress and improve job performance. The themes consisted of a lack of trust in leadership, strategy development processes, and the implementation of leadership strategies.

Presentation of the Findings

The findings answered the study's research question: What leadership strategies do leaders of financial institutions use to reduce employee stress in the workplace and improve job performance? This subsection represents the themes, the ways findings were confirmed, disconfirmed, or extensive knowledge to compare to the findings with peer-reviewed studies, and to compare with the conceptual framework.

For this study, I conducted three interviews using the interview protocol (see Appendix C). These data formed the essential information of the study and answered the research questions. I asked each of the participants nine questions (see Appendix A). After the face-to-face interviews, I conducted member checking, and then I analyzed the data using NVivo12 software to understand the data better to answer the research question. I labeled the transcripts as P1 through P3 (P1 means Participant 1) to protect each participant's identity and personal information. I used the data to develop themes, images, and literature to enrich my understanding of the research to produce the most robust results. The three themes consisted of (a) lack of trust in leadership, (b) strategy development processes, and (c) implementation of leadership strategies.

Table 1

Participants' Responses that Yielded Themes

Participants	Lack of trust in leadership	Strategy development processes	Implementation of leadership strategies
P1	Workload Distrust Understanding vision and goals	Executing a vision and goal Coaching and mentoring sessions	Employee onboarding Team-building activities Feedback
P2	Workload Distrust Understanding vision and goals	Executing a vision and goal Coaching and mentoring sessions	Employee onboarding Team-building activities Feedback Recognition
P3	Workload Distrust	Coaching and mentoring sessions	Team-building activities Feedback Recognition

Theme 1: Lack of Trust in Leadership

I explored the lack of trust in leadership that causes stress and how to motivate employees to excel in the workplace. Several contributions to stress arose during the interview process. All participants concluded that the heavy workload required of employees and lack of leadership trust was a significant factor. One senior leader had difficulties with implementing strategies to motivate employees due to the amount of time allocated to complete a project. Another observation was that senior leaders expected positive results without providing sufficient guidance, direction, information, or vision aimed at resolving the problem. Communicating a vision helps the organization understand the environment and leadership towards idealized goals (Haque et al., 2016).

An identified factor is that some leaders struggle with implementing strategies to motivate employees during increased workloads. P2 noted, “leaders must observe their employees and provide additional guidance on the priorities of work, communicate effectively, ensure team members stay productive, and provide motivation to prevent mental exhaustion.” The increased workload to complete a task in less time allocated leads to stress, poor working conditions, and demoralized employees (Islam et al., 2019). A combination of factors impacts work performance, and employees will spend more time job hunting than performing their job. P1 and P2 agreed that the lack of trust was the source of many problems that contributed to stress. Employees do not trust leaders that fail to take action or ignore workplace problems. The lack of trust can lead employees to realize their leaders as unfair (Holtz & Hu, 2017). The act of leaders treating subordinates

with dignity and respect promotes a healthy working environment where employees are loyal and motivated to perform better. Organizations with a higher trust climate have a positive relationship between job security and individual trust with less burnout (Jiang & Probst, 2015).

Effective communication is a vital skill for leaders to motivate employees to accomplish a task and achieve organizational goals. P1 expressed, “some senior leaders have challenges communicating guidance, such as priorities of work, which caused frustration by the leadership and the staff.” A shared understanding of the vision, goal, and preferences of work is an excellent strategy to help staff members stay on course with meeting the company’s overall objective. Leaders that understand their employees and work progressively together tend to establish a healthy working environment (Popescu & Predescu, 2016). P2 expressed that, “some leaders focused on personal ambitions to gain recognition without acknowledging their subordinates.” P2 also highlighted that “people are self-motivated and traditionally seen that men are more motivated by career-job success.” Authentic leaders possess integrity, courage, honesty, fairness, and treat their subordinates with respect (Gu, Tang, & Jiang, 2015).

A clear vision and goal help employees to become inspired, collaborate with others, and establish objectives for creating a successful organization. P2 highlighted the lack of understanding of the company’s vision and goals, which caused frustration and anxiety within the organization. Leaders should implement a mission and vision statement that influences performance and serve the interest of all employees with a positive impact on the economic growth of the organization (Yousaf, 2016).

Successful leaders provide clear expectations to their subordinates and what they can expect in return. P3 mentioned, “rising expectations or increasing complexity from senior managers without proper time allocated and guidance to complete a task increased stress on employees.” P3 further mentioned, “subordinates were frustrated and continued working to prevent loss of employment or took breaks away from their desk, which caused other employees to work late to complete the task.” Social withdrawal from dissatisfied employees within the workplace can cause reduced time spent on tasks and can cause significant service disruptions and productions for organizations (Loi, Loh, & Hine, 2015).

The findings confirmed with other peer-reviewed studies from the literature review and the conceptual framework on the expectancy theory of motivation. The results suggested, the heavy workload and lack of leadership involvement to produce a healthy environment can create stress and anxiety on subordinate leaders and their employees. The results further emphasized that employees are likely to increase productivity when treated with dignity and respect and receive a clear vision and goal. Direct leaders are responsible for motivating their employees to reach their goals (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016).

Theme 2: Strategy Development Processes

I explored any relevant information that will help me understand the approach to reduce stress in the workplace. All participants asserted that the strategy development process would assist leaders in creating a workforce that will unite and engage people to overcome the challenges in a working environment. P2 explained, “implementing the

Myers and Briggs personality test would help support personal performance goals, and the 360-degree feedback to assist supervisors in gaining information on each employee from external sources.” The Myers and Briggs Type Indicator is a test to help support personal well-being, professional performance goals, identify decision-making processes, and perceive the world in its environment (Yang, Richard & Durkin, 2016).

The strategy development process bridges the gap between senior leaders and the front line to improve organizational outcomes (Seidle et al., 2016). P1 and P2 articulated the importance of leaders developing a strategic vision and goal tied to corporate values in a way that employees can support. The process of developing a strategic vision and purpose is a way to energize the unity of the organization with all senior leaders. P2 argued that “a goal must be measurable and that incorporating incentives will improve employee performance.” P3 highlighted the need for leaders to discuss the strategy, expectations of the company, and how to deal with stress during times of high demands at the highest level of leadership. Incentives in the form of monetary value are essential to employee behavior and induce extrinsic motivation in which is often a recognition of one’s quality of work (Bruni, Pelligra, Reggiani, & Rizzolli, 2019).

All participants agreed that coaching and mentoring is a deliverable way for individual development to improve performance. P1 noted, “leaders who coach and mentor their subordinates are more prepared to handle unexpected challenges.” P2 expressed that, “senior leaders must initiate coaching and mentoring programs with clear objectives to obtain buy-in from subordinate leaders.” P3 pointed out how senior leaders established a timeline for one-on-one counseling sessions with each employee to discuss

the strengths, weaknesses, and how to overcome challenges. Coaching and mentoring sessions enable leaders to communicate face-to-face with their employees, encourages a positive atmosphere that puts the employees first, and helps deliver individual improvement (Jones et al., 2016).

Leadership training encourages managers to develop innovative ways to meet expectations, manage employees, build strong teams, and address new challenges. P1 discussed, “leadership training that would involve empowering behaviors of leaders to become more proactive.” Empowering leaders would help motivate employees to decrease the feeling of burnout, reduce stress, and improve the quality of life. Empowering people to lead by example, showing concern towards peers, subordinates, and leaders would help build trust create a positive environment. P1 concluded, “empowering leaders through coaching is a useful tool that will help leaders and subordinates to make independent decisions.” Leaders can often produce a deal of stress on employees with the amount of workload, which causes a superficial level of mental efficiency (Stixrud, 2012).

The findings confirmed with other peer-reviewed studies from the literature review and the conceptual framework on the expectancy theory of motivation. The results suggested, the lack of strategy development process on coaching and mentoring, developing an unclear strategic vision and goals, often leads to poor organizational performance. Leadership training and development combined with coaching, mentoring, feedback, and classroom education in literature are worthwhile investments for organizations (Seidle et al., 2016).

Employee onboarding. The onboarding process allows the integration of new employees with the organization and its culture to become a productive member of the team. The process consists of more than filling out forms and receiving an employee handbook. P1 and P2 discussed that organizations with onboarding processes assist new employees with gaining knowledge, skills, and behaviors to help with adjusting to a new working environment. The approach is a significant milestone for a new employee and their family, especially for employees that transition from another company (Krasman, 2015). Onboarding new hires through proper assessment and training will meet ethical expectations, employee satisfaction, increased productivity, and engaged employees who deliver results with overall satisfaction (Moon, 2018).

One of the advantages for leaders to prevent subordinates from resenting a new employee is to outline their duties, roles, and responsibilities. P1 noted, “the importance of leaders to clearly define subordinate roles during the onboarding process to keep the organization running.” Setting roles and responsibilities establishes effective communication, which is an advantage for continuous growth. P1 asserted that defining roles improve the flow of contact throughout the hierarchy, increases internal control, and enhances overall performance. P3 highlighted the importance of selecting employees to fill specific roles and responsibilities based on their particular set of skills, qualifications, and experiences required to improve the organization. P2 stated, “employees have a task that senior leadership depends on to complete a task.” The overview of the company, including the vision, mission statement, goals, expectations, and establishing team-building activities, are all critical to discuss during the onboarding process.

Team-building activities. Teamwork makes the dream work. Staying connected through communication builds trusted coworkers, improves morale, collaboration, and gains employee support. P1 pointed out the importance of building a team is to enhance the working relationship to meet the expectations of their customers. Team-building activities create a bond between employees, increase motivation, and aids in reducing stress. P1 suggested that company-wide events show public appreciation and that the display of recognition is a powerful act to motivate employees to achieve a higher standard next time.

Establishing goals with practical team-building activities increase team effectiveness, cohesiveness, trust, and positively impacts the organizational culture. P2 stated that “there are several team-building activities to build a sense of unity such as meditation and yoga sessions during office hours to help reduce stress and suffering.” Implementing activities will display a feeling of pride and common loyalty. To achieve results, preferably off-site locations will enable employees to feel more relaxed to generate ideas or other concerns with co-workers. A significant factor in enhancing team-building activities is leadership involvement. Leaders must have open lines of communication by offering employees the option of planning events, such as charity events, company parties, lunch gatherings, or a well-planned event.

Establishing events to allow employees to spend time together facilitates bonding, boost friendships, and camaraderie rather than confrontation. P3 expressed “team-building activities that allow employees to mass together to improve organization effectiveness towards a common goal and improve emotional connections with other

departments.” Team-building activities help leaders identify one’s personality, including strengths and weaknesses, to understand employee skills to manage an efficient organization effectively. Incorporating family-oriented team-building activities show appreciation to hard-working employees and support to deserving families. Rewarding excellence and personally recognizing top performers motivate employees to exceed their goals (Cantu & Batcheller, 2016).

Feedback. Positive and productive feedback motivates employees to improve performance significantly to organizational success. The participants frequently mentioned the essential need for leadership feedback to feel valued, inspired, and excited to accomplish the task. Leadership feedback improves communication skills, reinforces positive behaviors, increases morale, and guidance in a way that employees can improve their performance. Negative or constructive feedback also plays a role in organizational success by motivating employees to perform better at their positions. P1 pointed out that “positive feedback boosts employees’ confidence and cultivates trust and respect within the organization.” It is beneficial to conduct productive feedback sessions promptly utilizing an area with limited distractions that would prevent public humiliation, especially if leading constructive criticism.

Honest feedback provides employees with the opportunity to improve and accept more significant responsibilities. Managers will gain confidence in employees and allow more leeway to perform designated duties with less guidance. P2 mentioned, “feedback is a positive forum for leaders to interact with subordinates in a gentle but truthful manner.” Leaders with narcissistic traits tend to belittle, scold, or intimidate employees, which

hampers employee's ability to succeed, causing an increase in organization turnover rate. P3 highlighted the benefits of continuous feedback during increased workloads, and that leaders must be vigilant, actively praise, and motivate each employee to produce high levels of productivity to sustain physical health. Providing employee feedback will improve performance, help leaders become more efficient in their duties, which contributes to a significant impact on the organization.

Recognition. Employee recognition has proven to be a useful tool to express ongoing appreciation, improve performance, and reinforce particular behaviors. All participants mentioned the importance of employee recognition designed to thank employees. P1 stated, "recognition programs are a leadership strategy that has positive business results to reduce stress in the workplace." Recognitions that range anywhere from Employee of the Month, birthday celebrations, off-site day activities, monetary awards, or sticky notes saying "thank you for an outstanding job" will increase job performance.

A candid picture or collage wall showcasing an employee's outstanding performance is another strategy to enhance confidence. P2 highlighted "peer-to-peer employee recognition as a strategy to increase customer satisfaction and reduce turnover without leadership involvement." Peer recognition is a method used to build a healthy workplace culture composed of trust and confidence. Employees feel more connected to achieve success as a motivated team in a healthy workplace. Incorporating social media as a strategy to highlight employee recognition in a public setting can have an

increasingly positive impact. Social media allows the employee to connect with their company, express gratitude, and share their success with family members.

Employee recognition programs or the concept of providing incentives through the form of case rewards help increase productivity. P2 indicated, “employee appreciation that involves time-off or cash reward incentives for individual performance boost morale and significantly supports stress reduction.” P3 expressed incentives that consist of employee compensation of paid time off for working extra hours during the week. Other incentives to highlight employee recognition is by awarding temporary prime parking passes or covering the commuting cost to the workplace. Recognizing employees with a small “thank you” note, birthday and anniversary cards, sporting event tickets, or acknowledgment in a company meeting produces a positive and healthy working environment. The reward system changes the mindset of employees, promotes performance, motivation, and directly impacts the strategic goal. Rewarding excellence and personally recognizing top performers within the organization motivates employees to exceed their goals (Cantu & Batcheller, 2016).

The focused areas emerged under leadership strategies confirmed with other peer-reviewed studies from the literature review and the conceptual framework on the expectancy theory of motivation. The onboarding process sets the stage for new employees to meet organizational expectations, adjust to the culture, and become more productive to maximize success. Establishing team-building activities improve morale and employee support, employee feedback for professional growth, and recognition to shape a positive and productive culture of reduced stress.

Applications to Professional Practice

The specific business problem and purpose of this research was to explore the key leadership strategies that leaders of financial institutions use to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job performance. Stress prevention strategies in organizations consisted of 50 and 80% of high-risk failure, which contributed to staff turnover, reduced productivity, and sickness absence with estimated annual healthcare costs of up to \$190 billion in the United States (Jacobs et al., 2018). Leaders that lack a high-exchange relationship with their employees tend to have patterns of distrust, lower levels of productivity, and place more stress on the workforce (Findler, Jacoby, & Gabis, 2016). Successful exchange relationships are likely to exist when leaders are caring, trustworthy, honest, comprise of open communication, and genuinely concerned about the well-being of their subordinates, which is essential for establishing a healthy working relationship (Engelbrecht, Heine, & Mahembe, 2017).

Leaders can obtain organizational effectiveness by identifying effective strategies that influence job satisfaction, employee engagement, and prevent significant employee burnout (Kim, Ra, Park, & Kwon, 2017). The findings of this qualitative case study may assist business leaders with effective leadership strategies to reduce workplace stress and motivate employees to enhance organizational success. I conducted semistructured interviews with three leaders of financial institutions to explore the leadership strategies to reduce stress for organizational success. The findings revealed four relevant strategies to help motivate employees to increase performance, improve morale, and reduce stress to achieve organizational goals.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change from this study include the potential to understand those leadership strategies that motivate employees and reduce stress for organizational success. Leaders can produce a deal of stress on employees and cause a low level of mental efficiency, which makes it impossible to determine the importance of their position (Stixrud, 2012). Personality traits, capabilities, or preferences are the most dynamic leadership characteristics to predict desired outcomes, particularly motivation in the workplace (Lamm, Sheikh, Carter, & Lamm, 2017). The findings reveal that the leadership strategies in this study comprise of onboarding of new employees, team-building activities, feedback, and employee recognition. It is essential to disseminate leadership strategies throughout the organization. The findings may affect positive social change as leaders apply the strategies useful to reduce job-related stress, lower staff turnover rates, encourage motivation through promotion, create a healthy organizational culture, stabilize communities, and improve social conditions outside the workplace.

Recommendations for Action

This study intended to explore the key leadership strategies that leaders of financial institutions use to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job performance. The data collected from financial industry leaders may provide advantages for organizational success. The participants provided much valuable insight into the lack of trust in leadership, strategy development processes, and leadership strategies to improve performance. The participants recommended leadership strategies involving the onboarding process of new employees, establishing team-building activities to improve

morale, employee feedback for professional growth, and employee recognition to show appreciation and boost productivity. The practical strategies align with Seidle et al. (2016) remarks on leadership development, and training contains coaching, mentoring, feedback, and classroom education in literature that are worthwhile investments for organizations. The qualitative data obtained from this study provided a highly effective approach for business leaders to reduce stress and to improve employee performance. Disseminating the results of this study is highly recommended via mandatory all-staff meetings, email distribution that requires employee electronic signatures, post employee online or classroom training, employee performance evaluation sessions, and employee handbooks. I recommend that business leaders incorporate employee onboarding programs, produce team-building activities to build es spirit de corps, conduct feedback sessions, and implement employee recognition to increase morale and productivity.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of the study was to explore the key leadership strategies that leaders of financial institutions use to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job performance. The study was limited to a sample size of three leaders of financial institutions with considerable knowledge of leadership management skills. Using a small geographic area with an insignificant percentage of participants is a limitation during the collection process (Marti, Serrano-Estrada, & Nolasco-Cirugeda, 2019). The limitations of this study were the financial institutions and geographical location. Future research should include diverse institutions with an expanded geographic area to gain max participants.

Reflections

Walden University's doctoral program in leadership has provided me with the knowledge to explore new perspectives and to manage and lead change effectively. I conducted a qualitative case study to explore the key leadership strategies that leaders of financial institutions use to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job performance. The program delivered the education to become an experienced professional and scholar-practitioner to provide business leaders with the strategies to reduce stress for organization success. I will address challenges as a strategic leader to manage an organization of high-performing teams effectively in a complex business environment. This doctoral program was challenging, but at the same time, a most rewarding experience. I am grateful that the committee members provided the motivation, guidance, and expertise to help me endure this overwhelming process and to achieve a distinguished title.

I gained an in-depth understanding of the research question. My preconceived notions were that leaders struggled to develop and implement strategies to reduce stress and improve performance. My biased ideas changed throughout the data collection process from successful financial industry leaders. The findings of this study may provide additional education for business leaders to implement strategies to reduce stress for employees and improve job performance. The results could be essential for leaders in today's changing environment and critical to an employee's health as well as the success of the organization.

Conclusion

The inability of organizational leaders to effectively communicate and manage complexity during intense situations creates work-related stress and uncertainty among employees (Kipfelsberger & Kark, 2018). Stress prevention strategies consisted of 50 and 80% of high-risk failure, which contributed to staff turnover, reduced productivity, and sickness absence with estimated annual healthcare costs of up to \$190 billion in the United States (Jacobs et al.,2018). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the key leadership strategies that leaders of financial institutions use to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job performance in the southern United States.

I conducted three semistructured interviews from participants in leadership positions who implemented successful strategies in the workplace. Three main themes emerged from the data collection process in which consisted of (a) lack of trust in leadership, (b) strategy development processes, and (c) implementation of leadership strategies. The conclusion of the leadership strategies consists of onboarding of new employees, team-building activities, employee feedback, and recognition. It is essential to disseminate leadership strategies to reduce stress and improve job performance throughout the organization. The results are necessary for leaders in today's changing environment and critical to the success of the organization.

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Appendix A: Semistructured Interview Questions

1. What has contributed to stress in the workplace?
2. How have employees react to a stressful environment?
3. How has the climate been in your current workplace? How have your leaders treated you and your peers on a daily basis?
4. What events or circumstances caused employees to stress on the job?
5. How have leaders facilitated change?
6. What methods or strategies have your organizational leaders incorporated to reduced stress in the workplace?
7. What leadership strategies helped subordinates improve their job performance?
8. What were the limitations of developing various effective leadership strategies?
9. Would you like to address any relevant information about the subject in question that will help me understand the approach to reduce stress?

Appendix B: Member Checking Protocol

1. Interview participant taking notes and recording interviews (if in plan)
2. Transcribe recording
3. Critically analyze transcript and interview notes
4. Synthesize interpretation for participant answer by question
5. Member check interpretation by sharing a paper version of the question and synthesis
6. Note and record any additional in-depth data from the participant
7. For a third interview repeat 2 through 6 if needed for more in-depth data collection

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

- I. Introduce self to the participant(s).
- II. Present the consent form, go over contents, answer questions, and concerns of participant(s).
- III. Participant signs consent form
- IV. Give the participant a copy of the consent form.
- V. If using a recording device, turn on the device.
- VI. Follow procedure to introduce participant(s) with pseudonym/coded identification; note the date and time.
- VII. Begin the interview with question #1; follow through to the final question.
- VIII. Follow up with additional questions.
- IX. End interview sequence; discuss member-checking with the participant(s).
- X. Thank the participant(s) for their part in the study. Reiterate contact numbers from participants to follow up questions and concerns.
- XI. End protocol.

Appendix D: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study that focuses on the key leadership strategies for supervisors to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job performance. The researcher is inviting people age 18 and older from in the United States that know the key leadership strategies for financial institution supervisors to reduce stress and improve job performance that is willing to participate in the study voluntarily. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Reginald Butler, who is a doctoral student in the Business Administration program at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the key leadership strategies for leaders of financial institutions to reduce stress in the workplace and improve job performance.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Voluntarily participate in an interview scheduled to last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.
- The interview will be audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy of the data collected.
- If you choose not to be audio recorded, handwritten notes will be taken during the interview.
- Data collection will be conducted one time, followed by member checking of the data interpretation to ensure accuracy.

Here are the questions you will be asked during the interview process:

1. What has contributed to stress in the workplace?
2. How have employees react to a stressful environment?
3. How has the climate been in your current workplace? How have your leaders treated you and your peers daily?
4. What events or circumstances caused employees to stress on the job?
5. How have leaders facilitated change?
6. What methods or strategies have your organizational leaders incorporated to reduced stress in the workplace?
7. What leadership strategies helped subordinates improve their job performance?
8. What were the limitations of developing various effective leadership strategies?
9. Would you like to address any relevant information about the subject in question that will help me understand the approach to reduce stress?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision on whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at the various institutions will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to be in the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as some stigma from describing workplace stress and the organizational culture and climate set by leaders. If the study creates distress, depression, etc., please contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline free of charge, confidential, 24/7, 365-days-a-year treatment referral and information service at 1.800.662.HELP (4357) for support. Please note, the collection process will not result in others learning of the volunteer's participation or opinion in the study. Participating in this study would not pose a risk to your safety or wellbeing.

Incentive:

Each participant will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card in an envelope as a thank you gift upon completion of the interview.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet to include any supportive documents. Electronic files will be stored on the researcher's password-protected hard drive as well as when the study is complete. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via Reginald.butler@waldenu.edu and/or phone number at 469-632-7190. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210 or email address irb@mail.waldenu.edu.

Walden University's approval number for this study is **612-312-1210** and it expires on **June 13, 2020.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information, and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing or replying to this email with the words, "I Consent," I understand that I agree to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix E: CITI Human Subjects Protection Certificate

		Completion Date 19-Dec-2018 Expiration Date N/A Record ID 29699671
This is to certify that:		
Reginald Butler		
Has completed the following CITI Program course:		
Student Researchers (Curriculum Group) Student Researchers (Course Learner Group) 1 - Basic Course (Stage)		
Under requirements set by:		
Walden University		
 Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative		
Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify?wc535220e-79d9-4e39-b53c-e1b5b21280b6-29699671		

Appendix F: Letter of Cooperation

Community Research Partner

Contact Information

Date

Dear Reginald Butler,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I permit for you to conduct the study entitled “Enhancing Leadership Strategies to Reduce Stress for Organizational Success” within the Insert Name of Community Partner. As part of this study, I authorize you to allow employees to participate in a scheduled interview to last approximately 45 to 1 hour. To audio record the data or use handwritten notes if the participant chooses not to be audio recorded, followed by member checking to establish internal validity and that ethical protection of participants is adequate. The individuals’ participation will be voluntary and at their discretion.

We understand that our organization’s responsibilities include: Will support 2-3 employees to voluntarily participate in the study and one private office if needed. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not name our organization in the doctoral project report published in Proquest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Authorization Official

Contact Information

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).