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Impact of Leadership Style on Employee Performance in a Call Center Environment

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MBA, Walden University, 2009

BS, University of Memphis, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Philosophy

Management

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Abstract

Call center representatives' performance may impact the operational costs and the level of quality provided to the customer. The specific management problem is the need to ensure that the organizational performance goals are met month after month by employees to reduce costs and increase the organization's efficiency. The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for each of three leadership styles of front-line managers at transportation call centers in the United States. This study included the theoretical foundation of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership theories. The research design was correlational and non-experimental. The relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives was analyzed by using Pearson's correlation. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire was used to measure the leadership styles of the call center managers. The findings indicated a significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who reported to transformational front-line call center managers, which corresponded to the highest performance of call center representatives. The results of the study may promote positive social change by helping companies to determine the most effective leadership style for front-line call center managers to maximize call center representatives' performance and thus improve call center customers' satisfaction.

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Dedication

I dedicate this achievement to my parents, Evangeline M. Lashley and Leonard Lashley. Thank you for always loving and supporting me. I would have succumbed many years ago without the values of spirituality, courage, gratitude, and persistence that you both instilled in me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Call centers seek to provide excellent customer service to all customers while meeting the performance goals of the organization. If the performance goals are not met, it may negatively impact the organization's bottom line. Companies need to have good employee performance for them to be successful (Rifa'I et al., 2019). Leadership style has a positive and significant influence on employee performance (Rifa'I et al., 2019). One of the factors that can motivate employees and increase their performance is the leadership style of the manager (Widayanti & Putranto, 2015).

A gap exists in the current literature regarding the association of employee performance with leadership style in a call center environment of the transportation industry. The leadership styles of front-line call center managers are transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. The independent variable in this study was the quality evaluation scores of call center representatives. The dependent variable was the average handle times of call center representatives. By understanding the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives to the leadership styles of front-line call center managers, the front-line call center managers may gain insight on call center representative performance, which may lead to promoting positive social change.

Chapter 1 includes a discussion of the background, problem statement, purpose, and research questions and hypotheses of the study. The chapter also includes the theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the research study.

Background of the Study

A recurrent problem for call centers is the ability of call center representatives to meet the performance goal expectations and satisfy customers consistently (Chicu et al., 2016). The Gallup Workplace Report (2017) indicated that 67% of employees are not engaged at work, which costs over $5 trillion in lost productivity. In the call center environment, quality and efficiency are productivity measurements that can impact the customer's experience as well as the organization's bottom line. For organizations to survive and thrive, employees must achieve the organization's objectives. Furthermore, the importance of performance is increasing due to its ability to improve organizations' effectiveness and efficiency (Jameel & Ahmad, 2019).

In 2003, approximately 20% of Fortune 500 companies utilized a system to improve performance by ranking employees' performance and terminating the employees ranked in the bottom 10% as low performers (Adsit et al., 2018). During the 2000s, upper management of the companies found that threatening low-performing employees with termination was not the most appropriate practice to improve performance (Nisen, 2015). Whether it is voluntary or involuntary, turnover impacts the overall company, its employees, and its customers.

Furthermore, a company may have a process to optimize employee performance to achieve organizational goals, and with ineffective leadership a company will not achieve sustainable results. Alfanny (2018) suggested that an employee's performance could not be separated from a manager's direction. Alfanny indicated good leadership was able to motivate and coordinate individuals to achieve optimal performance of

organizational goals. Leadership can create a culture and environment that allows performance to be achieved. Leadership sets the company's tone and sets the behavior standards, which are expected of all employees, including front-line employees and management at every level. One of the factors that can motivate employees and improve their performance is the leadership style of the manager (Widayanti & Putranto, 2015). A gap exists in the current literature regarding the association of employee performance with leadership style in the call center environment of the transportation industry.

The call center representative's performance may impact the operational costs and the level of quality provided to the customer. The relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for the three different leadership styles of front-line call center managers in the transportation industry is not known. My goal for this quantitative study was to expand the understanding of the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for each of three types of management styles, which may improve particular managerial behaviors and the performance of call center representatives.

Statement of the Problem

Call center representatives' performance may impact the operational costs and the level of quality provided to the customer. The specific management problem is the need to ensure that the organizational performance goals are met month after month by employees to reduce costs and increase the organization's efficiency. Edwards (2010) indicated that managers are asked to do more with less. Still, managers are also asked to sustain and even elevate customer service levels to differentiate from competitors in the

marketplace. A common issue for call centers is employees' inability to meet performance goals and satisfy customers consistently (Chicu et al., 2016). Continuous superior performance by call center representatives remains out of reach (Edwards, 2010). The Gallup Workplace Report (2017) indicated that 67% of employees are not engaged at work, which costs over $5 trillion in lost productivity. In the call center environment, quality and efficiency are productivity measurements that can impact the customers' experience and the organization's bottom line. Edwards (2010) indicated that effective managers could inspire employees and unlock discretionary efforts in employees for a 10% to 15% improvement in performance. The relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for the three different leadership styles of front-line call center managers in the transportation industry is not known.

Basit et al. (2017) reviewed the significance of specific leadership styles and the positive or negative impact on employee performance. The regression analysis showed there was a significant and positive impact of democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles on employee performance. Autocratic leadership was found to have a negative effect on employee performance. Mohiuddin (2017) reviewed past literature to understand how different styles, such as autocratic, democratic, transformational, transactional, and participative approaches, influenced an employee's performance. Mohiuddin (2017) verified leadership style has a crucial relationship with employees and organizational performance. Ro and Lee (2017) sought to obtain insight into call center employee's job perceptions in order to improve employee performance in the call center

industry. The recommendations of the researchers were call center management to find strategies for increasing employees' job engagement. Widayanti and Putranto (2015) suggested that if a leader applied transformational leadership, transactional leadership, or both, it would improve employees' performance. They showed transformational and transactional leadership had a significant effect on employee performance, either partially or concurrently. A gap exists in the current literature regarding the association of employee performance with leadership style in the call center environment of the transportation industry.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between quality evaluation scores (independent variable) and average handle times (dependent variable) of call center representatives for each of the three leadership styles of front-line managers at transportation call centers in United States. The three leadership styles of front-line call center managers are transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. The design of the study was correlational and nonexperimental. The independent variable was the quality evaluation scores of call center representatives. The dependent variable was the average handle times of call center representatives. The results of this study may be useful in determining the most effective leadership style of the front-line call center managers.

Research Question(s) and Hypotheses

The relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for each of the three leadership styles of front-line call center

managers in transportation call centers were evaluated and addressed using the following research questions and hypotheses:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What is the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transformational front-line call center managers in transportation call centers?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0$1)*: There is no statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transformational front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a1): There is a statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transformational front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What is the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transactional front-line call center managers in transportation call centers?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0$2)*: There is no statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transactional front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a2): There is a statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transactional front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): What is the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to laissez-faire front-line call center managers in transportation call centers?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0$3)*:* There is no statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to laissez-faire front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a3): There is a statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to laissez-faire front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

I determined the relationship between the quality evaluation scores (independent variable) and average handle times (dependent variable) of call center representatives for each of the three leadership styles of front-line call center managers. I used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences to analyze the data to test the null and alternative hypotheses. I used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass and Avolio, 2004) to measure leadership styles as it relates to transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire characteristics.

Theoretical Framework

This quantitative study included the theoretical foundation of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership theories to examine how front-line call center managers' leadership styles influence call center representatives' performance. James Burns, and later Bernard Bass, developed transformational leadership and transactional leadership theory. Transformational leadership theory is where a manager identifies a

needed change, creates a vision through inspiration, and executes the change with employees (Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1994). Transactional leadership theory is where a manager focuses on results and gives employees something in exchange for getting what they want (Zareen et al., 2015). Kurt Lewin developed a laissez-faire leadership theory in which a manager delegates the authority to make decisions to the employee without consulting with a manager (Basit et al., 2017). Basit et al. (2017) indicated understanding which leadership types impact employee performance can improve the company's performance and lead the company to great success. The theoretical proposition of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership theories will be explained in more detail in Chapter 2. The theories relate to the study approach and research questions to examine how front-line call center managers' leadership styles influence call center representatives' performance. The findings may be valuable to managers in the call center environment of the transportation industry to bring about a positive social change by helping the leadership of companies determine the most effective leadership style for front-line call center managers to maximize call center representative's performance.

Nature of the Study

I conducted a quantitative correlational research study to determine the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives to front-line call center managers' leadership styles for three leadership styles of front-line call center managers. The design of the study was correlational and nonexperimental. The independent variable was the quality evaluation scores of call center representatives. The dependent variable was the average handle times of call

center representatives. I measured the performance and its variations due to front-line

call center managers' different leadership styles. I used Statistical Package for the Social

Sciences software to analyze the data to test the null and alternative hypotheses. The field

of statistics involves methods of describing and analyzing data for making decisions or

inferences by interpreting data patterns (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). The

correlational design was appropriate for this quantitative study because I could use it for

data analysis and identify patterns to make decisions to bring about a positive change by

determining the most effective leadership style to maximize call center representatives'

performance.

       I provided front-line call center managers in the transportation call centers located

in the United States an internet-based survey via SurveyMonkey.com to obtain the

overall quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives

for a 1 year period in which they reported directly to the front-line call center manager. I

provided the internet-based survey to identify each front-line call center manager's

specific leadership style in the transportation call centers. I used The Multifactor

Leadership Questionnaire (by Bass & Avolio, 2004) to measure leadership style as it

relates to transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire characteristics. The Multifactor

Leadership Questionnaire is composed of nine scales that measure three leadership styles:

transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership. All

MLQ scales are scored using a 5-point scale from 0 to 4. The possible values of the front-

line call center manager's leadership styles were based on the MLQ score, which is the

sum of items divided by the total number of items, which comprise the scale.

Definitions

The definitions of several terms that I used in this research study are given below.

Average handle time: Average handle time (AHT) is a call center metric. AHT is the average amount of time that a call center representative spends on an inbound call assisting a customer on the phone. The time is measured from the initiation of the call, hold time, talk time, and related tasks while the customer is on the phone with the call center representative (Fontanella, 2019).

Call center: A call center is a division that specializes in answering a large number of inbound calls from customers in regard to inquiries. A call center is an effective customer interface and is strategically important to companies as a base for acquiring loyal customers (Batt, 2000).

Call center representative: An employee who works in a call center and answers inbound calls from customers in regard to inquiries.

Front-line call center manager: A manager who supervises and provides coaching to call center representatives to achieve operational goals.

Laissez-faire leadership style: This leadership style is where leaders allow their employees to make decisions. Laissez-faire leaders give complete freedom and power to employees to make their own decisions to solve the problem or meet organizational goals (Zareen et al., 2015).

Quality evaluation form: Front-line call center managers use this standardized form to measure the effectiveness of the call center representative's interaction with the customer.

Quality evaluation score: The score is based on the completion of a quality evaluation form used by front-line call center managers to measure the effectiveness of the call center representative's interaction with the customer.

Transactional leadership style: This leadership style is where leaders use a reward system and punishment system with employees. Transactional leaders rely upon the traditional economic value of relationships with employees (i.e., exchange of performance for reward) to motivate employees to achieve desired outcomes. They are good at using principles and existing rules and policies to structure the organization's incentive system to achieve conformance (Belasen et al., 2016).

Transformational leadership style: This leadership style is where leaders use team building and collaboration with employees. Transformational leaders rely on intangible sources of motivation to energize employees (Belasen et al., 2016).

Assumptions

In this study, I made several assumptions that were critical to the meaningfulness of the study. I assumed the front-line call center managers would provide honest survey responses to identify the front-line call center manager's leadership style. I assumed the front-line call center managers would provide their call center representatives overall quality evaluation scores and average handle times for a 1-year period. I assumed that the front-line call center managers were able to understand computer technology and access the internet-based survey via SurveyMonkey.com to identify the specific leadership style of each front-line call center manager in the transportation call center. I used the

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 2004) to measure leadership style as it relates to transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire characteristics.

Scope and Delimitations

The research study's scope was the relationship between quality evaluation scores (independent variable) and average handle times (dependent variable) of call center representatives for each of the three leadership styles of front-line call center managers at call centers in the transportation industry in the United States. The relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for the three different leadership styles of front-line call center managers in the transportation industry is not known. By understanding quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for the leadership styles of front-line call center managers may expand knowledge to develop or improve particular managerial behaviors, which influence the performance of call center representatives.

I determined if a relationship exists between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives in United States based call centers in the transportation industry. I chose to use this population because I have worked for most of my professional career in the transportation call center environment. Call centers in other industries would not be evaluated in this study. However, this study could be expanded to include other industries to further research beyond the current scope.

Limitations

In this study, I evaluated call centers in the transportation industry in the United States of America. I did not include call centers in other sectors in this study; therefore,

the limitation of my research was the lack of inclusiveness of call centers in different industries and specific geographic regions of the country. Although front-line call center managers provided the overall quality evaluation scores data and average handle times data of their call center representatives, it was not challenging to obtain enough participants to identify the specific leadership style of front-line call center managers of those call center representatives. The data collected remained private and confidential. I collected the data on a thumb drive and password-protected and locked in a private place. I informed the front-line call center managers that their participation was voluntary, and everyone involved would respect their decision to join or not.

Significance

Call centers are becoming increasingly crucial to business success because they provide a platform for continuous contact with customers (Valle & Ruz, 2015). A common issue for call centers is employees' ability to meet performance goals and satisfy customers consistently (Chicu et al., 2016). In education, leadership style is closely associated with work performance and morale (Stewart-Banks et al., 2015). By understanding the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle time of call center representatives to the leadership styles of front-line call center managers, the front-line call center managers may gain insight on call center representative performance. This study's significance stems from the objective to determine the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives to the leadership styles of front-line call center managers. This knowledge may promote positive social change by helping companies to determine the most

effective leadership style for front-line call center managers to maximize call center

representatives' performance and thus improve call center customers' satisfaction.

Summary and Transition

Call center employees' performance may impact the operational costs and the

level of quality provided to the customers. The relationship between quality evaluation

scores and average handle times of call center representatives for the three different

leadership styles of front-line call center managers in the transportation industry is not

known. My goal for this study was to expand the understanding of the relationship

between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives

for front-line call center managers for three leadership styles. Understanding this

relationship would help develop or improve managerial behaviors, influencing call center

representatives' performance. In Chapter 2, I will provide a review of the research

literature on call centers, quality evaluation scores, average handle time, and three types

of leadership styles: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The performance of call center employees can impact the level of service provided to customers. Many researchers identified management's leadership style as a factor, which may affect an employee's performance (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016; Calweti, 2010; Kreitzer, 2010). The three leadership styles of management are transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. Transformational leadership style is where a leader identifies a needed change, creates a vision through inspiration, and executes the change with employees (Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1994). A transactional leadership style is when a manager focuses on results and gives employees something in exchange for getting what they want (Zareen et al., 2015). Laissez-faire leadership style is where a manager delegates the authority to make decisions to the employee without consulting with a manager (Basit et al., 2017).

Widayanti and Putranto (2015) suggested that if a leader applied transformational leadership, transactional leadership, or both, it would increase employees' performance either partially or concurrently. Furthermore, Mohiuddin (2017) stated that leadership style has a crucial relationship with employees and organizational performance. Additionally, Ro and Lee (2017) recommended that call center management develop strategies to increase employee job engagement.

Iqbal et al. (2015) found that leadership styles have significant and substantial effects on employees and the organization's performance. Aboyassin and Abood (2013) found that an effective leadership style played a positive role by increasing employee performance. In contrast, ineffective leadership styles led to a decline in employee

performance (Aboyassin & Abood, 2013). Therefore, studies indicate that management's leadership directly impacts employees' performance, which in turn reflects the level of service provided to customers.

The environment of a call center can be stressful for representatives and customers (Lukasiak, 2018). The representatives handle an endless number of inquiries and complaints by customers. Additionally, the customer spends their valuable time on the phone inquiring or complaining about an issue. Call centers have one of the most stressful jobs due to emotional exhaustion, which impacts job satisfaction, performance, service quality, and employee turnover (Robinson & Morley, 2006; Sawyerr et al., 2009).

In a call center, quality and efficiency are two factors that contribute to the success or failure of a call center to provide a positive customer experience and create customer loyalty for the business (Desmarais, 2009). Traditional call center metrics such as call volume, average handle time, and close rate play a vital role in monitoring the day-to-day operations of call center representatives' performance and operating costs (Kardys & Engelson, 2007). Kardys and Engelson (2007) indicated that a representative's performance could have a negative impact on costs and revenue.

Fluss (2002) indicated that many call center managers sacrifice quality by cutting staff and pushing call center representatives to reduce call handling time to attempt to maximize profitability. Approximately 90% of call center managers evaluate and reward call center representatives based on call handling time, improving operation efficiency (Bordoloi, 2004). Bordoloi (2004) further indicated when call center managers reward

call center representatives in this manner; it negatively impacts quality and profitability long-term.

Managers' responsibility is to be engaged in the processes and practices, contributing to a business's success. Managers must commit to the development of the workforce and encourage participation to be successful. To be an effective leader, one must have a vision and a clear plan to direct a business to achieve the vision. Managers should have the ability to encourage and motivate employees to achieve higher goals while exerting extra efforts (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016). Additionally, Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016) indicated managers should adopt leadership styles that amplify employee satisfaction, actions, and performance.

The management problem is that call center managers are driven by upper management to ensure that operational costs and the level of quality provided to the customer are not negatively impacted by front-line representatives not meeting the operational goals. The relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for the three different leadership styles of front-line managers in the transportation industry is not known. The three leadership styles of front-line call center managers are transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between quality evaluation scores (independent variable) and average handle times (dependent variable) of call center representatives for each of the three leadership styles of front-line call center managers at transportation call centers in the United States. The following sections include discussions of the literature search strategy, the theoretical foundation,

and a literature review related to the key variables, such as efficiency (average handle times) and quality (quality evaluation scores) of call center representatives and concepts of leadership styles in the research study.

Literature Search Strategy

In preparing the literature review, I used the following library databases through Walden University's Library: ABI/INFORM Collection, Business Source Complete, ProQuest, Academic Search Complete, EBSCO ebooks, and Dissertations and Thesis @ Walden University. The search terms and combinations of search terms were: *call centers, quality evaluation scores, call quality monitoring, average handle time, employee performance, transformational leadership style, transformational leadership theory, transactional leadership style, transactional leadership theory, laissez-faire leadership style,* and *laissez-faire leadership theory*. The literature review scope was the last 5 years in which there was limited information available regarding leadership styles in a call center setting. Additionally, there was limited information regarding quality evaluations and average handle times in a call center environment. Therefore, I expanded the scope to incorporate literature and dissertations in areas such as hospital, academic, and corporate sectors.

Theoretical Foundation

I used the theoretical foundation of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership theories to examine how leadership styles of front-line call center managers influence call center representative's performance. James Burns, and later Bernard Bass, developed transformational leadership and transactional leadership theory.

Transformational leadership theory is where a manager identifies a needed change, creates a vision through inspiration, and executes the change with employees. Yammarino and Dubinsky (1994) noted that the transformational leadership theory explained the connection between leaders and their employees, which accounted for an organization's extraordinary performance and accomplishments. Additionally, transactional leadership theory explained managers' focus on the results and provided employees something in exchange for getting what they want. House and Shamir (1993) indicated that transactional leadership theory is when the leader can achieve peak performance by employees using a carrot and stick approach.

Kurt Lewin developed a laissez-faire leadership theory in which a manager delegates the authority to make decisions to the employee without consulting with a manager (Basit et al., 2017). Lewin and Lippiit (1938) stated that all the rights and power are entirely given to the employee to make decisions. Zwingmann et al. (2014) stated that transformational leadership theory was the most influential leadership theory that highlighted leaders' impact on individual followers.

The transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership theories relate to the study approach because I examined how leadership styles of front-line call center managers influence call center representatives' performance. The research questions focus on how front-line call center managers' leadership styles affect call center representatives' performance, building upon the transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership theory.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

In a call center, quality and efficiency are two factors that contribute to the success or failure of a call center to provide a positive customer experience and create customer loyalty for the business (Desmarais, 2009). The ability of call center managers to achieve competitive success is a difficult task. Call center managers attempt to keep costs under control while achieving quality and efficiency. In the call center environment, quality is measured based on quality monitoring in which the call center representative receives a quality evaluation score. Additionally, the call center representative's efficiency is calculated based on the call center representatives' average handle time. The relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for the three different leadership styles of front-line call center managers in the transportation industry is not known. The three leadership styles of front-line call center managers are transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. I reviewed the literature to provide insight into call centers, the role of managers, transformational leadership style, transactional leadership style, and laissez-faire leadership style, productivity, and quality.

Call Centers

Since the early 1990s, call centers have become a single point of contact for customers. Call centers are becoming increasingly crucial to business success since call centers provide a platform for continuous communication with customers (Valle & Ruz, 2015). The call center offers customers convenient access to sales and after-sales support and enhances operational efficiencies by converting high-contact services to low-contact

services through technology (Clark et al., 2019). Call centers provide customized, high-quality services and solutions to customers in various industries such as telecommunications, travel, publishing, and healthcare (Pieper et al., 2019).

Call centers may serve a range of customer segments. Customers' needs may differ in complexity in which mass-market customers require fewer complex needs than the business customers whose requirements may be broader and more complex (Holman et al., 2009). The call center seeks to provide excellent customer service to all customers while meeting the organization's performance goals. If the performance goals are not met, it may negatively impact the organization's bottom line. For organizations to survive and thrive, employees must achieve the organization's objectives. The importance of performance is increasing due to its ability to improve organizations' effectiveness and efficiency (Jameel & Ahmad, 2019).

Call centers may have inbound calls in which customers call into the call center with an inquiry or issue. Additionally, call centers may have outbound calls. The call center representatives make outbound calls to follow up on a customer problem or solicit business from a potential customer. On average, it costs approximately $10 per inbound call and more than $6,000 to hire another call center representative (Bordoloi, 2004).

Employee performance may impact the operational costs and the level of quality provided to the customer. Fluss (2002) indicated that many call center managers sacrifice quality by cutting staff and pushing call center representatives to reduce call handling time to attempt to maximize profitability. Approximately 90% of call center managers evaluate and reward call center representatives based on call handling time, improving

operation efficiency (Bordoloi, 2004). Bordoloi (2004) further indicated that when call center managers reward call center representatives, it negatively impacts the quality, and the increased turnover can negatively impact profitability long-term. Weyforth (2007) indicated that high representative attrition negatively impacts the customer experience, customer satisfaction, and the bottom line.

The call center environment can be stressful for representatives and customers (Lukasiak, 2018). The representatives handle an endless number of inquires and complaints. While the customer spends their valuable time on the phone inquiring or complaining about an issue. Call centers have one of the most stressful jobs due to emotional exhaustion, which impacts job satisfaction, performance, service quality, and employee turnover (Robinson & Morley, 2006; Sawyerr et al., 2009). In most call centers, employees' pay wage is low due to the low skill requirements to perform the job. Additionally, call center employees must be flexible in their work schedule due to forecasting based on call arrivals' patterns to meet call volume based on the customer's peak times. Michel and Ashill (2013) indicated that call center representatives are under constant pressure to meet their productivity goals while delivering quality customer service.

Role of Managers

The responsibility of managers is to be engaged in the processes and practices, which contribute to a business's success. Managers must commit to the development of the workforce and encourage participation so that a business can be successful. To be an effective leader, one must have a vision and a clear plan to direct a company to achieve

the vision. Managers should have the ability to encourage and motivate employees to achieve higher goals while exerting extra efforts (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016). Additionally, Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016) indicated managers should adopt leadership styles that help to amplify employee satisfaction, actions, and performance. The leader should also align team members to the appropriate roles based on their skillsets, and plans should be communicated to the entire organization.

An effective leader motivates and inspires others by leading by example. An effective leader is essential to conduct a business to improved processes and practices. Calweti (2010) indicated that good leadership was critical to the success of any organization. Managers must possess a leader's qualities and be a positive role model, which encourages employees to do a more efficient job.

A business may have an excellent process in place to achieve results; however, a company will not achieve sustainable results without effective leadership. Kreitzer (2010) stated that an organization's success is influenced by effective leadership. Leadership creates a culture and environment that allows performance to be achieved. Therefore, leadership sets the business's tone and sets the behavior standards, which is expected of all employees, including front-line employees and management at every level. The behavior is one of respect for others, no matter the title of the employee. Additionally, this same respect applies to customers and stakeholders. Finally, leadership must set the direction of the business and created a vision for success (Kreitzer, 2010).

Robinson and Morley (2006) suggested that the manager's role has changed from being an active investigator to monitoring and evaluating workers' performance.

Fernandez et al. (2010) indicated that in order for managers to be successful, it was essential for managers to perform five significant roles simultaneously. The roles were task-oriented, relations-oriented, change-oriented, diversity-oriented, and integrity-oriented (Fernandez et al., 2010). First, managers must be task-oriented. The managers' behavior includes setting and communicating goals, monitoring compliance with procedures and goal achievement, maintaining clear communication channels, and providing the necessary feedback. Second, managers must have excellent human relations skills. Managers are concerned for the employees' well-being, involve employees in the decision-making process, recognize employees for their work, and provide employees opportunities for personal growth. Third, managers must facilitate change by rewarding and encouraging innovation and creativity of employees. Fourth, managers must lead by ensuring the work environment is a diverse workforce with employees of different ages, genders, races, and religious beliefs. Fifth, managers must lead with integrity and operate to impose intense demands for the legality, fairness, and equitable treatment of employees.

Towers and Spanyi (2004) indicated that managers need to clearly and precisely indicate the organizational goals and objectives to ensure that all employees understand their expectations. Employees must know what is expected to be successful. True leaders can get employees to follow them, as opposed to managing by dictation willingly. Some managers assume that in order to be a successful manager, they must tell employees what to do. The managers must utilize the principles of total quality management (TQM) for an organization to be successful.

Hur (2009) stated that without sound managers, the TQM utilization would not be sufficient. Managers must encourage a work environment that fosters employee responsibility. Top management of the organization must be able to motivate, maintain enthusiasm through the organization, and identify effective ways to overcome barriers to implement TQM successfully.

Kumar and Anthony (2009) found that strong managers and management commitment were critical to introduce and drive TQM initiatives. Any initiative's success depends on the dedication and buy-in from the top management to devote time, resources and break down stumbling blocks in the implementation process. The proper amount of time must be committed in order to drive TQM initiatives. However, it is essential that managers realize that managers must be strategic and patient. The TQM implementation will not produce immediate results since this will transform the workforce's current practices. Managers need to remain committed and strategic to lead the transformation using TQM.

Hur (2009) suggested that quality management practices changed employees to collectively learning units with a team approach when making decisions. The objectives of total quality management include employee empowerment, continuous organizational improvement, and new corporate culture. It is essential for management to discover ways to improve their overall team's performance. Improved quality can lower costs, create a better competitive position and happier people on the job, and more jobs, though the company's better competitive position (Deming, 1982).

It is the management's responsibility to be engaged in the processes and practices, which contribute to the business's success. An effective leader can create an environment of teamwork and advocate the team concept in order to achieve success. Management must lead employees to do the right thing, which involves creating favorable organizational dynamics to get people to commit themselves. Management must also understand that leading consists of the vision and principles that influence employees' mindset and motivation, which will help employees transition themselves to commit to doing the right things that lead to a successful business.

Management must lead team members down a path for continuous success, which can seem challenging at times. Managers have different values, attitudes, and show their employees in various ways. Managers must have both management capabilities and leadership abilities in order to have a successful business (Clark, 1999). Leaders must get team members to buy-in so that the team members support the shared vision, which addresses the emotional aspects of change and creates a perception, desire, and expectation that action will lead to the business's success. Additionally, managers should remain an active role in the team's presentation and positively position changes that were implemented to create a favorable outcome. Kuei and Lu (2013) identified the importance of changing management styles and inspiring employees to break down barriers and find win-win opportunities. The proper utilization of resources by management would aid in the implementation of processes and minimize any obstacles.

Transformational Leadership Style

James Burns, and later Bernard Bass developed transformational leadership theory. Yammarino and Dubinsky (1994) noted that the transformational leadership theory explained the connection between leaders and their employees, which accounted for an organization's extraordinary performance and accomplishments. The employee is motivated to go beyond achieving short-term goals to achieve higher personal and organizational goals. Transformational leadership theory is where a leader identifies a needed change, creates a vision through inspiration, and executes the change with employees (Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1994).

Zwingmann et al. (2014) stated that transformational leadership theory was the most influential leadership theory that highlighted leaders' impact on individual followers. Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016) indicated that transformational leadership theory results in employee emotional attachment to the leader. The employee develops trust and respect for the transformational leader. The employee is genuinely eager and willing to take the necessary actions or steps to fulfill the leader's expectations. The researchers stated that transformational leadership behavior positively relates to outcome variables.

Barbinta et al. (2017) stated that transformational leadership theory is based on the leader's transformational leadership style. There is a deep connection or relationship between the leader and their team of employees. Barbinta et al. (2017) identified five characteristics of the transformational leadership style. First, a transformational leader sets long-term goals for team members, and the objectives exceed the team members'

interests. There must be a commitment between the leader and the team to attain long-term goals and focus beyond their own interests. Second, a transformational leader is charismatic and has the ability to convey their beliefs to the team. Third, a transformational leader can motivate and inspire the team. Fourth, a transformational leader obtains solutions by encouraging creativity with the team. Fifth, a transformational leader pays attention to not only the team but individual team members as well.

Rowold and Heinitz (2007) indicated that a transformational leader's charismatic qualities and behaviors allow the follower to identify with the leader. Rowold and Heinitz (2007) demonstrated that the emotional ties created between the transformational leader and the follower enable the follower to change their beliefs and attitudes. In turn, the follower adapts to the values and performance standards that the transformational leader sets.

A transformational leader seeks to develop connections or relationships with their employees as to inspire commitment from the employee to achieve goals. An increase in commitment results in enhanced employee productivity due to the employee's extra effort (Hooper & Potter, 2011). If goals are not achieved by the employee, a transformational leader readily accepts failure and utilizes failure as an opportunity for employee growth to achieve goals. Agotnes et al. (2019) stated that a transformational leader gets their followers to look at problems from a different perspective. The transformational leader provides the follower with a different perspective; it fosters active learning and problem solving with the follower. Additionally, the transformational leader motivates and inspires the follower by challenging the follower to overcome obstacles.

Boonzaier (2008) stated that transformational leaders develop strong bonds with their employees by providing individual attention, vision, inspiration, and directing employees to the future to create an organizational culture of growth and change. A transformational leader is proactive and more involved in assisting and directing their employees by being role models for the employee. Transformational leaders inspire trust, act as role models, and transformational leader's proactive behavior is likely to be emulated by employees (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Sadeghi & Pihie, 2012).

Amanchukwu et al. (2015) stated a transformational leader motivates and inspires employees. A transformational leader helps the employee see the importance of the task and its value that the employee offers for the task's success. Amanchukwu et al. (2015) indicate that the employee is led by the transformational leader to see their full potential.

Phong et al. (2018) stated that transformational leaders help employees reach their full potential within the organization by motivating the employee to work beyond the employees' own expectations. A transformational leader ensures that employees understand the organization's vision and directs the employees' path so that success may be achieved. Wade (2019) stated that a transformational leader inspires followers to become committed to and part of the shared vision. The transformational leader influences the follower to achieve more than the follower's own self-interest.

DuBois et al. (2015) indicated that transformational leaders transform the workplace by inspiring and developing employees and motivating individuals to achieve high-performance levels. A transformational leader gains the respect and trust of employees by displaying integrity and high values. As a role model, a transformational

leader walks the walk even in the most trying circumstances. Campbell (2018) stated that transformational leaders create strong and loyal teams that are highly productive. The teams are highly productive due to the organization's communication and implementation by the transformational leader.

Bass and Avolio (1994) indicated that transformational leaders utilize one or more of the four I's to achieve superior results from followers. The four I's are the following: 1) idealized influence, 2) inspirational motivation, 3) intellectual stimulation, and 4) individualized consideration. The transformational leaders utilize *idealized influence* by being a role model to their followers. The transformational leader is admired, respected, and trusted by their followers in which the follower wants to emulate the leader. The transformational leaders utilize *inspirational motivation* by motivating and inspiring followers to arouse team spirit and commitment to goals and shared vision. Transformational leaders use *intellectual stimulation* by encouraging creativity to address problems and find solutions using new approaches and creative ideas. Lastly, the transformational leaders utilize *individualized consideration* by having a supportive environment that acknowledges individual followers' needs and differences, ensuring that the interaction with individual followers is personalized.

Arbaiza and Guillen (2016) stated that a transformational leader could identify the need and create a vision that inspires employees to accept new goals and take the necessary steps to accomplish goals. Arbaiza and Guillen (2016) indicate that a transformational leader can motivate employees and align employees with tasks that

enhance their performance. By the transformational leader understanding the employees' strengths and weaknesses, the transformational leader can improve their performance.

A transformational leader is a role model and gains the trust and respect of their employees. This type of leader identifies a needed change, creates a vision through inspiration, and executes the change with employees. The employee is motivated to go beyond achieving short-term goals to achieve higher personal and organizational goals. No matter the sector (hospital, academic, or corporate), the transformational leader can motivate their subordinates to do more than they desire to do. Therefore, the subordinates transcend their own interests in favor of the organization.

Transactional Leadership Style

Transactional leadership theory was developed by James Burns, and later Bernard Bass. Transactional leadership theory is when a manager focuses on results and gives employees something to achieve their desired results (Zareen et al., 2015). Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016) indicated that transactional leadership is useful when the leader is mostly concerned with achieving goals. Employees are rewarded for the tasks that the employee has accomplished. Therefore, transactional leaders are concerned with the completion of a specific job and the performance of employees. The transactional leader will utilize positive and negative reinforcements to achieve the employee's expected results to achieve the desired results. Positive reinforcement may be incentive pay in which the employee would receive a monetary amount for their performance. Negative reinforcements may be discipline or termination in which the employee would receive disciplinary action for poor performance or termination.

Jiang et al. (2019) stated that a transactional leader has a 'give and take' relationship with employees. The employee is rewarded in exchange for their performance by the leader. The rewards presented to the employee by the leader are a way to motivate the employee to achieve the performance expectations set by the leader.

Hannah et al. (2020) stated that transactional leadership was based on economic exchanges between leaders and followers in which the leader establishes the goals and objectives for the follower to achieve. The researchers indicate that the transactional leader defines the follower's job roles and assigns various tasks to the follower. By the leader providing multiple task assignments, the follower's confidence in themselves grows due to the success of the completion of the various assigned tasks. Therefore, the researchers suggest that the follower develops self-acceptance and boosts their self-esteem with completing tasks. The leader can offer praise to the follower, which enhances the follower's identity. In addition to the boost of confidence, the follower is provided a reward such as pay, titles, office space, which signifies status and prestige based on the successful completion of the tasks.

Saeed and Mughal (2019) stated that the purpose of transactional leadership and contingent rewards is to maintain high performance and control quality. The researcher indicated that this style is management by exception in which the manager maintains an active role and intervenes should any potential problem arises. Donkor and Zhou (2020) stated that transactional leaders reward employees for completing tasks and maintaining or increasing organizational performance. The manager is shown as useful when the employee can achieve or exceed the organization's performance.

Boonzaier (2008) stated that transactional leaders motivate employees by utilizing goal setting and providing rewards based upon the achievement of those goals that were set. McCleskey (2014) indicated employees would accept a transactional leader only if the leader can provide rewards such as status and money. A transactional leader will monitor their employees and motivate them with rewards for good performance. Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016) indicated transactional leadership behavior is usually negatively related to long term performance.

Zareen et al. (2015) indicated that transactional leaders communicate to their employees the expectations and how to achieve the expectations and then closely monitored them. If the employee successfully completes the expectation, then the employee is rewarded. However, if the employee does not successfully achieve the anticipation, the employee is punished for non-satisfactory performance, such as disciplinary action.

Additionally, Zareen et al. (2015) identified three characteristics of transactional leaders, which are contingent rewards, active management by exception, and passive management by exception. *Contingent rewards* are when management sets expectations of employees and rewards employees for meeting those expectations. The leader uses bonuses or promotions to obtain the desired results from employees. Kamisan and King (2013) indicated that leaders reward employees based upon their success, and employees are punished if they fail to perform. *Active management by exception* is when management anticipates problems, monitors progress, and issue corrective measures. Kamisan and King (2013) indicated that leaders monitor employees' performance and

take disciplinary action to ensure that the standards are met. Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016), the leader anticipates the behavior and attempts to resolve the problem before it occurs. *Passive management by exception* is when management does not interfere with workflow unless an issue arises. Kamisan and King (2013) indicated that the leaders would interfere only when there is a diversion in the standard, and mistakes have occurred. Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016) stated that the leader does not anticipate a forthcoming problem and takes the necessary actions when the problem occurs.

Transactional style leadership involves a leader that motivates employees by presenting them with rewards and punishments. The requirements are clearly stated with the corresponding rewards. Amanchukwu et al. (2015) noted that a transactional style leader pays the employee for their effort and compliance. However, the researchers stated that if the employee does not achieve the minimum standards, the employee is punished. If the employee fails to satisfy those requirements, then the employee would receive the corresponding punishment. Therefore, the relationship between the leader and the employee is one that is transactional. The employee and organization both win since the employee benefits with pay, and the organization benefits from meeting the minimum standard defined by the leader.

Laissez-faire Leadership Style

Kurt Lewin developed a Laissez-faire leadership theory in which a manager delegates the authority to make decisions to the employee without consulting with a manager (Basit et al., 2017). Lewin and Lippiit (1938) stated that all the rights and power are entirely given to the employee to make decisions. Sadeghi and Pihie (2012) indicated

that a laissez-faire leader utilizes minimum effort. The leader allows the employee to determine the best way to achieve organizational goals on their own. The laissez-faire leader lacks involvement with an employee and lacks responsiveness to the employee's needs. When an employee cannot determine the best way to achieve organizational goals, it can become problematic since no one is taking responsibility. Saeed and Mughal (2019) indicated that a laissez-faire leader does not play an active role in an organization, which accounts for why organizations in the banking industry do not utilize this leadership style.

Diebig and Bormann (2020) indicated that laissez-faire leaders generally avoid decisions, neglect workplace problems, and do not model the appropriate behaviors. The researchers suggest that employees have to overcome difficulties by themselves, which often leads to the problem remaining unresolved. The laissez-faire leader lacks involvement with the employee and exhibits the non-supportive, hands-off type of behaviors. The employee becomes insecure and uncertain of the next steps to resolve the problem, which causes the employee stress. Piccolo et al. (2010) indicated that the laissez-faire leadership style avoids making decisions and offers limited guidance for problem-solving.

Amanchukwu et al. (2015) stated that laissez-faire is a French phrase for "let it be." When laissez-faire is used in leadership, it describes leaders that allow employees to work at their own pace and on their own without any guidance of leaders. Amanchukwu et al. (2015) stated that laissez-faire leaders avoid making decisions and relinquish all responsibilities. However, a laissez-faire leadership style can be useful if the leader

monitors the employee's performance and provides regular feedback to the employee. Amanchukwu et al. (2015) indicated that a laissez-faire leadership style allows employee's freedom to make decisions without the leader's guidance, which can lead to high job satisfaction and increased productivity. Although the researchers indicated that if employees are unable to manage their time, lack knowledge, lack motivation, or do not have the necessary skills to do their work effectively then laissez-faire leadership style can damage the employee's performance and job satisfaction.

Arbaiza and Guillen (2016) stated that laissez-faire leaders do not provide guidance to their employees. Laissez-faire leaders are hands-off and delegate tasks to employees without providing any direction to the employee. The researchers suggested that if an employee has a laissez-faire leader, the lack of productivity, cohesion, and satisfaction may be evident in the employees' performance.

Furthermore, Gemeda and Lee (2020) stated that laissez-faire leaders were characterized by non-involvement and being absent when needed. Gemeda and Lee (2020) indicated that a laissez-faire leader would overlook the achievements and problems of employees. The researcher's study suggested that a laissez-faire leader had an overall negative relationship with employee performance, leader effectiveness, and organization performance.

Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016) indicated that laissez-faire leaders are reluctant to take the necessary steps and avoid situations in which problems could occur. Laissez-faire leaders do not utilize rewards to appease employees. Therefore, laissez-faire

leaders may have inefficient, unproductive, and unsatisfied employees with their job within the organization.

Skogstad et al. (2007) stated that the lack of leadership displayed by a laissez-faire leader might lead to poor performance and less job satisfaction by the employee. Skogstad et al. (2007) suggested that some employees may be uncertain of their role and lack the knowledge to complete tasks. Therefore, employees may have poor performance and job satisfaction. The laissez-faire leader does not provide the employee with any guidance, which may lead to employee frustration, a decline in performance, and a reduction in job satisfaction (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Skogstad et al., 2007).

Breevaart and Zacher (2019) stated that laissez-faire leadership is often referred to as non-leadership. This leadership is the most passive and ineffective because employees do not receive information and feedback to perform satisfactorily in their positions. When an employee does not accept any guidance from a laissez-faire leader, the employee must utilize their judgment to make decisions. Judge and Piccolo (2004) stated that the lack of leadership presence negatively impacts employees leading to a decline in job satisfaction, leader satisfaction, and leader effectiveness. The employee lacks the knowledge or experience to make the appropriate decisions to be successful. The laissez-faire leader does not provide the employee's needed guidance to positively impact the employee's job satisfaction, leader satisfaction, and leader effectiveness.

Samanta and Lamprakis (2018) stated that the laissez-faire leadership style constitutes the absence and non-existence of leadership. The leader avoids making decisions and refuses any responsibilities. Therefore, the laissez-faire leader allows others

to perform their duties without caring about the result. The researchers noted that evidence reflected that laissez-faire leadership had a negative effect on organizational outcomes.

In contrast, Pahi and Hamid (2016) suggested that a laissez-faire leadership style is positively related to employee commitment. A laissez-faire leader can instill confidence and motivate employees to meet a goal or objective due to the leader's employee allowance to work independently. The researchers stated that an employee who is self-motivated, highly skilled, experienced, and educated could thrive and successfully work for a laissez-faire leader.

Laissez-faire leadership is when the manager is hands-off and allows employees to make decisions. These employees have the complete freedom to make decisions regarding achieving performance. This type of leadership will enable employees the space to accomplish performance goals. However, the employee will have to specifically ask the manager for guidance and support to achieve performance goals. Otherwise, the manager is entirely hands-off.

Quality and Efficiency

In a call center, quality and efficiency are two factors that contribute to the success or failure of a call center to provide a positive customer experience and create customer loyalty for the business (Desmarais, 2009). The ability of call center managers to achieve competitive success is a difficult task. Call center managers attempt to keep costs under control while achieving quality and efficiency. In the call center environment, quality is measured based on call quality monitoring in which the call center

representative receives a quality evaluation score. Additionally, the call center

representative's efficiency is calculated based on the call center representatives' average

handle time.

Traditional call center metrics such as call volume, average handle time, and close

rate play a vital role in the day-to-day operations of call center representatives'

performance and operating costs (Kardys & Engelson, 2007). The researchers indicated

that call center representative's performance could have a negative impact on costs and

revenue. Call center representatives' performance is measured based on their average

handle times and quality evaluations. The average handle time is the length of the

conversation between the customer and the call center representative. Call quality

measures the efficiency and effectiveness of the conversation between the customer and

the call center representative.

Call center managers must evaluate calls handled by call center representatives.

The evaluation of calls handled by call center representatives can improve a call center's

quality and effectiveness (Hsu et al., 2016). The researchers stated that call evaluations

by front-line call center managers play an essential role in improving customer

satisfaction and lowering costs. By front-line call center managers evaluating call center

representatives' calls, the front-line call center manager can identify areas of opportunity

and strengths of the call center representative in order to assist with improving the call

center representative's call quality. Additionally, call quality monitoring ensures that the

customer is treated with respect and is offered a positive experience to protect the

organization's brand. If the call center representative provides the customer with a

negative experience, the company may lose potential business. However, if the customer has a positive experience with the call center representative, then based on the customer's positive experience, the customer may do additional business with the company in the future.

Preece et al. (2018) indicated that the industry standard was to randomly score four customer representative calls per month with a quality score between 75% and 90%. However, Preece et al. (2018) stated that 41% of call centers monitor less than four customer representative calls per month. One way to improve the productivity of call center representatives is by front-line call center managers using quality scores and providing direct feedback to customer service representatives to inspire employees to be more productive and boost their scores.

Call center representatives' calls can be monitored with or without the call center representative's knowledge by front-line call center management and recorded as call quality evaluations. The call quality evaluations are used to measure the quality of service the call center representative provides. A series of call center representatives' calls are selected to be monitored for customer quality by the front-line call center manager. Banks and Roodt (2011) stated that call center managers are required to maintain required service levels and the quality of service listen to the conversations with customers to access the call center representatives' tone of voice, enthusiasm, and friendless. Call quality monitoring enables the call center managers to listen to the interaction between the customer and the call center representative in order to improve call handling, customer service, loyalty, and revenue.

Schelmetic (2006) indicated that the use of metrics pressured call center representatives to concentrate on quantity over quality rather than taking care of customer problems and inquiries. Michel and Ashill (2013) stated that call center representatives are under constant pressure to meet their productivity goals while providing quality service to the customer. Michel and Ashill (2013) indicated that an emphasis on quantity over quality is putting call centers at risk. A reduction in quality creates a higher cost and decreases the competitive position of a business.

Deming (1982) suggested that productivity will increase with the improvement of quality. The management must realize that it is possible to accomplish both an increase in productivity and an increase in quality. When quality is improved, there does not have to be a decrease in productivity. When productivity is improved, there does not have to be a decrease in quality. Improved quality and productivity can lead a company to increased customer satisfaction and revenue because of the higher efficiency and fewer errors.

For revenue to be maintained, quality is the key. Things must be done correctly, efficiently, and effectively. Clark (1999) stated that quality means doing the right things right, in which doing things right implied efficiency, and doing the right things refers to effectiveness. Therefore, these exclusive terms, efficiency, and significance, indicate that an employee can do the right things wrong and the wrong things right.

Employees need to know what to do to do their best. When an employee understands what to do and how to do it, an employee can provide quality service. When an employee does not understand what to do and how to do it, it causes rework, which leads to increased cost for the company. Clark (1999) suggested that there are three types

of quality: perceived, expected, and actual. Perceived quality is quality based on one's perceptions and what one thinks it is. Expected quality is quality based on what one believes it will be or what one wants it to be. The actual quality is quality based on statistics – facts, and numbers.

Nonetheless, service's quality can be achieved when employees are sufficiently trained and practice doing the right things. Employees can be productive and provide a service of quality when given the proper tools to be successful. Even though employees want to be their best, their best will not do. Employees must be told what to do and how to do it to achieve their best.

After management has determined the quality of the service, management must determine what actions need to be taken to improve processes, improving quality and positively impacting efficiency. Creech (1994) suggested that a business without productivity goals has no direction and a business without productivity measurements has no control. Management must work consistently to identify problems, improve processes, train employees, supervise employees to enforce positive practices, and provide refresher training in areas that impact performance. Improvement of operations in the workplace is essential to maintain company's stability and, ultimately its quality and service. Improved quality can lower costs, create a better competitive advantage for the company, happier employees on the job, and more jobs. Crosby (1980) stated, "if you concentrate on making quality certain, you can probably increase your profit by an amount equal to 5 to 10 percent of your sales" (p.1). An increase in productivity and an increase in service quality will ensure that the company remains profitable.

Fontanella (2019) defined average handle time (AHT) as a customer service metric, which measured the average amount of time needed in order to resolve a service or support request. Preece et al. (2018) indicated that the industry standard for average handle time was six minutes, and three seconds for all companies. Preece et al. (2018) suggested that the goal of call centers is to reduce AHT to maximize efficiency. However, a reduction in AHT can negatively impact quality.

Average handle time (AHT) is monitored as a productivity indicator. The average time of a transaction between the call center representative and the customer is the average handle time. Feinberg et al. (2000) indicated that efficiency is measured by average handle time, which is a standard metric for the evaluation of representative efficiency in call centers. Shadding (2009) noted that average handle time should always be a metric of constant observation due to the cost component it represents in a call center.

Helms and Mayo (2008) stated that efficiency referred to the call's completion in the shortest possible time. Helms and Mayo (2008) noted that when average handle time is reduced, it increases the call center representative's availability to handle more calls. A reduction in average handle time saves the company money since the customer is not on the call for an extended period of time. However, a reduction in average handle time may negatively impact the customer's experience if the call was not handled appropriately, and the quality of the call was low.

Grip et al. (2016) stated that the average handle time measured the average time a call center representative spent speaking to a customer and entering the information about

the call in the customer database. Grip et al. (2016) suggested that front-line call center

management utilizes average handle time as a key performance indicator, which is

measured in seconds. The average handle time of the call center representative is used to

monitor the call center's performance.

Costs in a call center are reduced when the call center representative's average

handle time is decreased without impacting the quality. Call center costs increase when

the average handle time of call center representatives is increased. However, good

performance is interpreted by a decrease in the call center representatives' average handle

time rather than an increase in the average time of the call center representatives.

Call center managers attempt to keep costs under control while achieving quality

and efficiency. For revenue to be maintained, quality is the key. It is crucial that things

are done correctly in an efficient and effective manner. Clark (1999) stated that quality

means doing the right things right, in which doing things right implied efficiency, and

doing the right things refers to effectiveness. In the call center environment, quality is

measured based on call quality monitoring in which the call center representative receives

a quality evaluation score. Additionally, the call center representative's efficiency is

estimated based on the call center representative's average handle time. Call quality and

average handle time are call center metrics that may significantly impact the customer's

overall experience in a call center environment.

Summary and Conclusions

The environment of a call center can be stressful for representatives and

customers (Lukasiak, 2018). The representatives handle an endless number of inquiries

and complaints. The customers spend their valuable time on the phone inquiring or complaining about an issue. Call centers have one of the most stressful jobs due to emotional exhaustion, which impacts job satisfaction, performance, service quality, and employee turnover (Robinson & Morley, 2006; Sawyerr et al., 2009).

In a call center, quality and efficiency are two factors that contribute to the success or failure of a call center to provide a positive customer experience and create customer loyalty for the business (Desmarais, 2009). Traditional call center metrics such as call volume, average handle time, and close rate play a vital role in the day-to-day operations of call center representatives' performance and operating costs (Kardys & Engelson, 2007).

The performance of employees may impact the operational costs and the level of quality provided to the customer. Fluss (2002) indicated that many call center managers sacrifice quality by cutting staff and pushing call center representatives to reduce call handling time in an attempt to maximize profitability. However, the call center managers sacrificing quality provided to customers is not the key to maximize profits. For revenue to be maintained, quality is the key. It is vital that call center representatives provide a quality service to customers in an efficient and effective manner.

Managers' responsibility is to be engaged in the processes and practices, which contribute to a business's success. Managers must commit to the development of the workforce and encourage representatives' participation so that a business can be successful. In order to be an effective leader, one must have a vision and a clear plan to direct a company to achieve the vision. Managers should have the ability to encourage

and motivate employees to achieve higher goals while exerting extra efforts (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016). Additionally, Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016) indicated managers should adopt leadership styles that amplify employee satisfaction, actions, and performance.

A business may have an excellent process in place, but it will not achieve sustainable results without effective leadership. Kreitzer (2010) stated that an organization's success is influenced by effective leadership. Leadership creates a culture and environment that allows performance to be achieved. Therefore, leadership sets the business's tone and the behavior standards, which is expected of all employees, including front-line employees and management at every level. The appropriate behavior is one of respect for others, no matter the title of the employee. Additionally, this same respect applies to customers and stakeholders. Finally, leadership must set the direction of the business and created a vision for success.

Many researchers identified management's leadership style as a factor, which may affect an employee's performance. Widayanti and Putranto (2015) suggested that if a leader applied transformational leadership, transactional leadership, or both, it would increase employees' performance either partially or concurrently. Yammarino and Dubinsky (1994) noted that the transformational leadership theory explained the connection between leaders and their employees, which accounted for an organization's extraordinary performance and accomplishments. Furthermore, Mohiuddin (2017) stated that leadership style has a crucial relationship with employees and organizational performance.

Iqbal et al. (2015) found that leadership styles have a significant and substantial effects on employees and the organization's performance. Aboyassin and Abood (2013) found that an effective leadership style played a positive role by increasing employee performance. In contrast, ineffective leadership styles led to a decline in employee performance (Aboyassin & Abood, 2013). Therefore, studies indicate that management's leadership directly impacts employees' performance, which in turn reflects the level of service provided to customers.

The management problem is that call center managers are driven by upper management to ensure that operational costs and the level of quality provided to the customer are not negatively impacted by front-line representatives not meeting the operational goals. The relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for the three different leadership styles of front-line managers in the transportation industry is not known. In Chapter 3, I present the methodology used to understand quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for the leadership styles of front-line call center managers which may expand knowledge to develop or improve particular managerial behaviors, which influence call center representatives' performance.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between quality evaluation scores (independent variable) and average handle times (dependent variable) of call center representatives for each of the three leadership styles of front-line managers at transportation call centers in United States. The three leadership styles of front-line call center managers are transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. The design of the study was correlational and nonexperimental. This study's results will be useful in determining the most effective leadership style of the front-line call center managers. By understanding quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for front-line call center managers' leadership styles may expand knowledge to develop or improve particular managerial behaviors, which influence call center representatives' performance.

In Chapter 3, I will provide the research design and rationale, methodology of the study. In the chapter, I further provide the data analysis plan and threats to the validity of the research study.

Research Design and Rationale

The design of the study was correlational and nonexperimental. Price et al. (2015) stated that research could be nonexperimental because the research focuses on a "statistical relationship between two variables but does not include the manipulation of an independent variable, random assignment of participants to conditions or orders of conditions, or both" (p. 125). Furthermore, Price et al. (2015) stated that "in correlational research, the researcher measures the two variables of interest with little or no attempt to

control extraneous variables and then assesses the relationship between them" (p. 126). In this quantitative research study, the two variables of interest were quality evaluation scores of call center representatives and average handle times of call center representatives. The independent variable was defined as the quality evaluation scores of call center representatives. The dependent variable was defined as the average handle times of call center representatives. The research questions were the following:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What is the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transformational front-line call center managers in transportation call centers?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What is the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transactional front-line call center managers in transportation call centers?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): What is the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to laissez-faire front-line call center managers in transportation call centers?

The research was correlational, nonexperimental, and focused on the statistical relationship between two variables, quality evaluation scores and average handle times. I measured the performance and its variations due to front-line call center managers' different leadership styles, as stated in the research questions. I used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass and Avolio, 2004) to measure leadership style as it relates to transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire characteristics. Cook and Cook (2008) indicated that correlational research seeks to "identify relationships that exist

among variables and describe them in relation to their direction (positive or negative) and their strength without introducing an intervention to change an outcome variable" (p. 101). The correlational design was appropriate for this quantitative study because I could use it for data analysis and identify patterns to make decisions to bring about a positive change by determining the most effective leadership style to maximize call center representatives' performance.

Methodology

Population

The target population was front-line call center managers with call center representatives reporting directly to the front-line call center manager in the United States' transportation industry, which were provided by Survey Monkey. The target population size was unknown. I placed my survey online at Survey Monkey and 112 people responded. The front-line call center managers were exempt employees of different age groups, genders, races, and years of service.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

The sampling strategy for this study was nonrandom (nonprobability) sampling. I used convenience sampling since the population was readily accessible. I placed my survey online at Survey Monkey and 112 people responded. The participants were front-line call center managers with call center representatives reporting directly to the front-line call center manager in the United States' transportation industry that chose to participate in taking the survey in the research study.

Bornstein et al. (2013) stated that convenience sampling is a nonprobability sampling strategy in which the participants were selected based on their accessibility and proximity. Etikan et al. (2016) indicated that the convenience sampling technique is more frequently utilized in quantitative studies. I provided front-line call center managers an internet-based survey via SurveyMonkey.com to obtain the quality evaluation scores and average handle times of their call center representatives and identify each front-line call center manager's specific leadership style in the transportations call center. I used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software to analyze the data to test the null and alternative hypotheses. The field of statistics involves describing and analyzing data for making decisions or inferences by interpreting data patterns (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). I used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Avoilio and Bass, 2004) to measure the leadership style as it relates to transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire characteristics. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire includes nine scales, which measure three leadership styles: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership. All MLQ scales are scored using a 5-point scale from 1 to 5.

I used G*Power 3.1 software to determine the sample size needed for my quantitative research study. Based on the power analysis, a minimum required sample size was 84 participants in which effect size = 0.30, alpha = 0.05, and power = 0.80. An effect size of 0.30 is considered the medium size and appropriate for a quantitative research study. According to Miles and Shevlin (2001), the alpha value is usually set to a

value of 0.05. Cohen (1988) stated that a power of 0.80 was an acceptable minimum level.

Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I selected participants for the research study from the population provided by Survey Monkey, which consisted of front-line call center managers in the transportation industry in the United States. I advised participants of the nature of the study, details of the research study, and requested the completion of an internet-based survey via Survey Monkey. I used the survey to identify the specific leadership style of the front-line call center manager in the transportation call center. The survey was used to obtain the overall quality evaluation scores and average handle times of the call center representatives that report to the front-line call center manager in the transportation call center.

I placed my survey online at Survey Monkey. I disabled the participant's IP address tracking and email tracking in Survey Monkey so that the survey remained anonymous. Once the front-line call center manager began the survey, the front-line call center manager was required to review and acknowledge the informed consent in order to continue with the survey. I advised the front-line call center manager that their participation was voluntary with no retribution, and all data collected would remain private and confidential. I used coding to identify participants. For example, Front-Line Manager 1 was coded as M1, Front-Line Manager 2 was coded as M2, and Front-Line Manager 3 was coded as M3. I used these codes M1, M2, and M3 to analyze the data collected to ensure no identifiable elements.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was developed by Bass and Avolio in 1985 to measure leadership style as it relates to transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire characteristics (Bass & Avolio, 2004). Questionnaires have been utilized in various research designs, especially quantitative research studies, which can be administered via computer, phone, or printed (Fawcett & Garity, 2012). Appendix A provides an image of the permission from Mind Garden, Inc. to use the MLQ instrument. The use of the MLQ was appropriate for the study in order to reveal the leadership style of the front-line call center managers. The MLQ comprises nine scales that measure three leadership styles: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership. All MLQ scales are scored using a 5-point scale from 0 to 4 (0 = *not at all*, 1 = *once in a while*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *fairly often*, 4 = *frequently, if not always*). The possible values of the front-line call center manager's leadership styles are based on the MLQ score, which is the sum of items divided by the total number of items, which comprise the scale.

The MLQ Leader form (5x Short; Bass and Avolio, 2004) consists of 45 items that identify and measure critical leadership and effectiveness behaviors which has been shown in previous research to be connected to individuals' and organizations' success. According to Bass and Avolio (2004), the MLQ (5x Short) has been used in research programs, doctoral dissertations and masters, and by leaders at various levels in public and private organizations. Based on previous research utilizing MLQ (5x Short), the reliability levels ranged from 0.64 to 0.92 (Bass & Avolio, 2004). The study populations

range from military, government, educational, manufacturing, high technology, church, hospital, profit, and non-profit organizations.

To answer my research questions, I collected the independent variable of quality evaluation scores of call center representatives and dependent variables of average handle times of call center representatives. The independent variable of quality evaluation scores of call center representatives measured the quality of the call center representative's interaction with the customer. The dependent variable of the average handle times of call center representatives measured the efficiency of call center representatives. Average handle time is the average amount of time that a call center representative spends on an inbound call assisting a customer on the phone. The independent and dependent variables were measured quantitatively. I took the overall average of the independent variable, quality evaluation scores of call center representatives based on the front-line call center manager's leadership style. I took the overall average of the dependent variable, average handle times of call center representatives based on the front-line call center manager's leadership style. The MLQ was the instrument used to determine the front-line call center manager's leadership style. The MLQ Scoring Key was used to group items and calculate the average by scale. For example, the items that were included in the Idealized Influence (Attributes) are Items 10,18,21,25. These scores were added for all the responses for these items and divided by the total number of responses.

Data Analysis Plan

I used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software to analyze the data to test the null and alternative hypotheses. I diligently collected and analyzed the data. The

field of statistics involves methods of describing and analyzing data for making inferences by interpreting data patterns (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). The correlational design was appropriate for the quantitative study because I could use it for data analysis and identify patterns to make decisions to bring about a positive change by determining the most effective leadership style to maximize call center representatives' performance. Westfall et al. (2017) indicated that quantitative methods are utilized to understand statistical relationships through numerical data. I evaluated the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for each of the three leadership styles of front-line call center managers in transportation call centers by using the following research questions and hypotheses:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What is the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transformational front-line call center managers in transportation call centers?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0$1): There is no statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transformational front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a1): There is a statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transformational front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What is the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transactional front-line call center managers in transportation call centers?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0$2)*:* There is no statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transactional front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a2): There is a statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transactional front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): What is the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to laissez-faire front-line call center managers in transportation call centers?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0$3)*:* There is no statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to laissez-faire front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a3): There is a statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to laissez-faire front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

I used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software to analyze the data to test the null and alternative hypotheses. The correlational design was appropriate for the quantitative study because I could use it for data analysis and identify patterns to make decisions to bring about a positive change by determining the most effective leadership

style to maximize call center representatives' performance. Cook and Cook (2008) indicated that correlational research seeks to "identify relationships that exist among variables and describe them in relation to their direction (positive or negative) and their strength without introducing an intervention to change an outcome variable."

I used a correlation test to evaluate the association of quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center managers for each leadership style of the front-line call center manager. Pearson correlation formula is the following:

$$r = \frac{\Sigma(x-mx)(y-my)}{\sqrt{\Sigma(x-mx)^2\Sigma(x-mx)^2}} \qquad (1)$$

mx and *my* were the means of *x* and *y* variables. The *x* variable was the independent variable quality evaluation scores of call center representatives. The *y* variable was the dependent variable average handle times of call center representatives. I measured the strength of the correlation between the independent and dependent variables using the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. The *p*-value (significance level) of the correlation was determined by using the correlation coefficient table for the degrees of freedom: $df = n - 2$, in which n is the number of observations in *x* and *y* variables. If the p-value is <5%, then the correlation between *x* and *y* is significant.

Threats to Validity

In quantitative research, validity determines whether the research measures what it intends to measure or how truthful the research results are (Golafshani, 2003). Bruce et al. (2018) described validity as the measure of the accuracy of a test or instrument in which the test, instrument, or question provides a true result. There may be threats to

external validity, internal validity, and statistical conclusion validity in a quantitative research study.

Threats to External Validity

External validity is when the results can be generalized and applied to other populations (Winter, 2000). Creswell (2014) indicated that threats to external validity occur when the researcher generalizes beyond the groups in the study to other racial or social groups, setting not examined, or past or future situations not included in the research study. The appropriate sample size, concurrently collecting and analysis of data, and using validated and reliable instruments will minimize threats to external validity (Konradsen et al., 2013). In order to reduce threat to validity, the appropriate sample size was utilized in this quantitative study. I diligently collected and analyzed the data to minimize any threat to external validity. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) has been utilized in various research designs, especially quantitative research studies (Fawcett & Garity, 2012). The MLQ is a validated and reliable instrument that shall minimize any threat to external validity and produce accurate quantitative study results.

Threats to Internal Validity

Urban and Van Eeden-Moorefield (2018) described internal validity threats as threats to a cause and effect relationship's accuracy. Urban and Van Eeden-Moorefield (2018) identified the following threat to internal validity: history, maturation, testing, selection or selection bias, instrumentation, mortality, statistical regression, diffusion of treatment, demoralization, compensatory rivalry, time order, researcher effects, and

participant effects. Regarding my quantitative study, the purpose was not to identify a cause and effect relationship between the variables but to determine if there was a correlation between the variables.

Threats to Statistical Conclusion Validity

Hales (2016) described statistical conclusion validity as the validity of inferences about covariation between two variables. Statistical conclusion validity involves ensuring the use of adequate sampling procedures, appropriate statistical tests, and reliable measurement procedures. In order to limit threats to statistical conclusion validity, it is important that statistical methods have been accurately applied and interpreted. Therefore, in my quantitative research study, the data was handled properly, the correct statistics was used and applied correctly, and the results were interpreted correctly.

Ethical Procedures

Upon the approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University to conduct this research study, I obtained participants from the sample population provided by Survey Monkey. I conducted the research in a respectful manner for the protection of human subjects by using ethical principles and guidelines. The privacy of participants was protected through the use of an anonymous survey instrument. The research study was conducted under the Walden University IRB approval number 03-16-21-0125471.

I provided the nature of the study, details of the research study, and requested the completion of an internet-based survey via Survey Monkey to identify the participants' specific leadership style as a front-line call center manager in the transportation call

centers in the United States and to provide their call center representatives overall quality evaluation scores and average handle times for a one year period. Additionally, the I provided a consent form with the background, procedures, voluntary nature of the study, risks and benefits of being in the study, payment, and privacy. I provided participants the ability to withdraw from the study at any time.

Once the front-line call center manager began the survey, the front-line call center manager was required to acknowledge the informed consent in order to continue with the survey. I advised the front-line call center managers that their participation was voluntary with no retribution, and all data collected would remain private and anonymous. I collected the data on a thumb drive, and the thumb drive was password protected and locked in a private place. To protect the participant's identity, I used coding. For example, Front-Line Manager 1 was coded as M1, Front-Line Manager 2 was coded as M2, and Front-Line Manager 3 was coded as M3. I used these codes M1, M2, and M3 to analyze the data collected to ensure no identifiable elements.

I only had access to the data. I will retain the data for a minimum of 5 years after the study has been completed. I will post all results on LinkedIn site so that participants within the transportation call centers in the United States may view the final study results.

Summary

The design of the study was correlational and nonexperimental. The target population was front-line call center managers in the transportation industry in the United States. The sampling strategy for this study was a nonrandom (nonprobability) sampling. I used convenience sampling since the population is readily accessible. I used the

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences to analyze the data to test the null and alternative hypotheses. I used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass and Avolio, 2004) to measure leadership styles as it relates to transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire characteristics. It revealed the leadership style of the front-line call center managers.

To reduce the threat to validity, the appropriate sample size was utilized in this quantitative study. Also, I diligently collected and analyzed the data to minimize any threat to external validity. I handled the data properly, the correct statistics were used and applied correctly, and the results were interpreted correctly. The study results would help determine the most effective leadership style of the front-line call center managers. Chapter 4 provides the data collection and results of the quantitative research study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for each of the three leadership styles of front-line managers at transportation call centers in the United States. The three leadership styles of front-line call center managers are transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. By understanding the relationship, the front-line call center managers may gain insight into the leadership style that corresponds to the highest performance of call center representatives. I evaluated and addressed the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for each of the three leadership styles of front-line call center managers in transportation call centers using the following research questions and hypotheses:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What is the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transformational front-line call center managers in transportation call centers?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0 1$): There is no statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transformational front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Alternative Hypothesis ($H_a 1$): There is a statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transformational front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What is the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transactional front-line call center managers in transportation call centers?

Null Hypothesis (H_02)*:* There is no statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transactional front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a2): There is a statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transactional front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): What is the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to laissez-faire front-line call center managers in transportation call centers?

Null Hypothesis (H_03)*:* There is no statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to laissez-faire front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a3): There is a statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to laissez-faire front-line call center managers in transportation call centers.

Data Collection

I selected the participants for the research study from the population provided by Survey Monkey, which consisted of front-line call center managers in the transportation

industry in the United States. I did not collect demographic information in this quantitative research study.

I advised the participants of the nature of the study, details of the research study, and requested the completion of an internet-based survey via Survey Monkey. I used the to identify the specific leadership style of the front-line call center manager in the transportation call center. I used the survey to obtain the quality evaluation scores and average handle times of the call center representatives that report to the front-line call center manager in the transportation call center. I used coding to identify participants and organize data obtained from the survey. For example, Front-Line Manager 1 was coded as M1, Front-Line Manager 2 was coded as M2, and Front-Line Manager 3 was coded as M3. I used these codes M1, M2, and M3 to organize the survey data.

I used the MLQ instrument to determine the front-line call center manager's leadership style. I used the MLQ Scoring Key to group items and calculate the average by scale. The transformational leadership scale included the Idealized Influence (Attributes), Idealized Influence (Behavior), Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individual Consideration. The transactional leadership scale included Contingent Reward and Management-by-Exception (Active). The laissez-faire leadership scale included Management-by-Exception (Passive) and Laissez-faire Leadership. I added these scores for all the responses for these items and divided by the total number of responses. The highest score indicated front-line call center managers' specific leadership style. The front-line call center managers were grouped according to their particular leadership style

with their corresponding quality evaluation scores and average handle times data, which the front-line call center managers provided on the survey.

Once a front-line call center manager began the survey, the front-line call center manager was required to acknowledge the informed consent in order to continue with the survey. I advised the front-line call center managers their participation was voluntary with no retribution, and all data collected would remain private and confidential. I disabled the participant's IP address tracking and email tracking in Survey Monkey so that the survey remained anonymous. The time to complete the survey was approximately 25 minutes.

Between March 19, 2021, and March 25, 2021, there were 112 front-line call center managers in the transportation industry in the United States who completed the survey in its entirety. The response rate for the survey was 22%. Therefore, 112 completed surveys provided the sample for statistical analysis; thus, $n = 112$. As presented in Chapter 3, I utilized G*Power 3.1 software to determine the sample size needed for my quantitative research study. Based on the power analysis, a minimum required sample size was 84 participants in which effect size = 0.30, alpha = 0.05, and power = 0.80. An effect size of 0.30 is considered the medium size and appropriate for a quantitative research study. According to Miles and Shevlin (2001), the alpha value is usually set to a value of 0.05. Cohen (1988) stated that a power of 0.80 was an acceptable minimum level. The target population size was unknown.

Results

I used the MLQ instrument to determine the front-line call center manager's leadership style in the transportation industry. Of the 112 front-line call center managers who participated in the study, 20 (18%) had transformational leadership style, 17 (15%) had transactional leadership style, and 75 (67%) had laissez-faire leadership style. Figure 1 shows the distribution of leadership styles among the sample of front-line call center managers in the transportation industry. The most prevalent leadership style within the sample was the laissez-faire leadership style.

Figure 1

Leadership style distribution of Front-line Call Center Managers (n=112) in the Sample
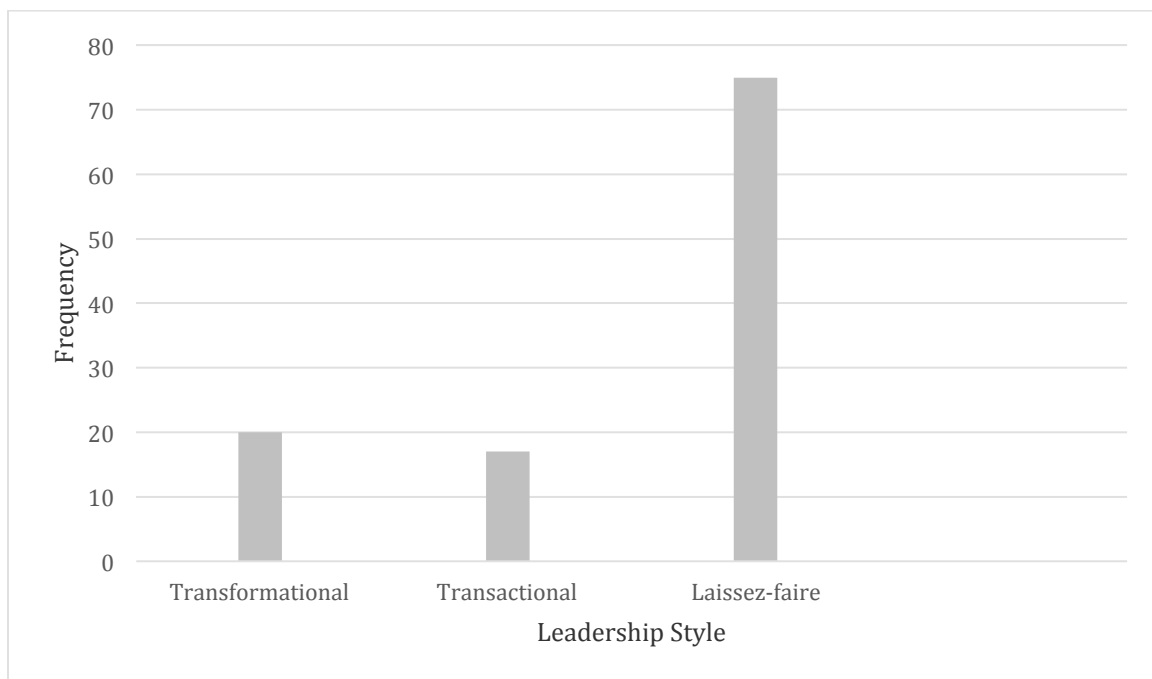
I used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences to conduct a descriptive analysis of quality evaluation scores (independent variable) and average handle times (dependent variable) of call center representatives for each of the three leadership styles

of front-line call center managers in transportation call centers. The descriptive statistics for quality evaluation scores of call center representatives for front-line call center managers with transformational leadership style had a mean of 90.10 (SD = 3.959, see Table 1), while for average handle times of call center representatives for front-line call center managers with transformational leadership style had a mean of 227.07 (SD = 27.379, see Table 1). The descriptive statistics for quality evaluation scores of call center representatives for front-line call center managers with transactional leadership style had a mean of 90.41 (SD = 4.244, see Table 1), while for average handle times of call center representatives for front-line call center managers with transactional leadership style had a mean of 235.272 (SD = 34.182, see Table 1). The descriptive statistics for quality evaluation scores of call center representatives for front-line call center managers with laissez-faire leadership style had a mean of 85.72 (SD = 17.961, see Table 1), while for average handle times of call center representatives for front-line call center managers with laissez-faire leadership style had a mean of 241.26 (SD = 48.732, see Table 1).

Table 1

Summary of Descriptive Analysis of Variables Based on Leadership Style

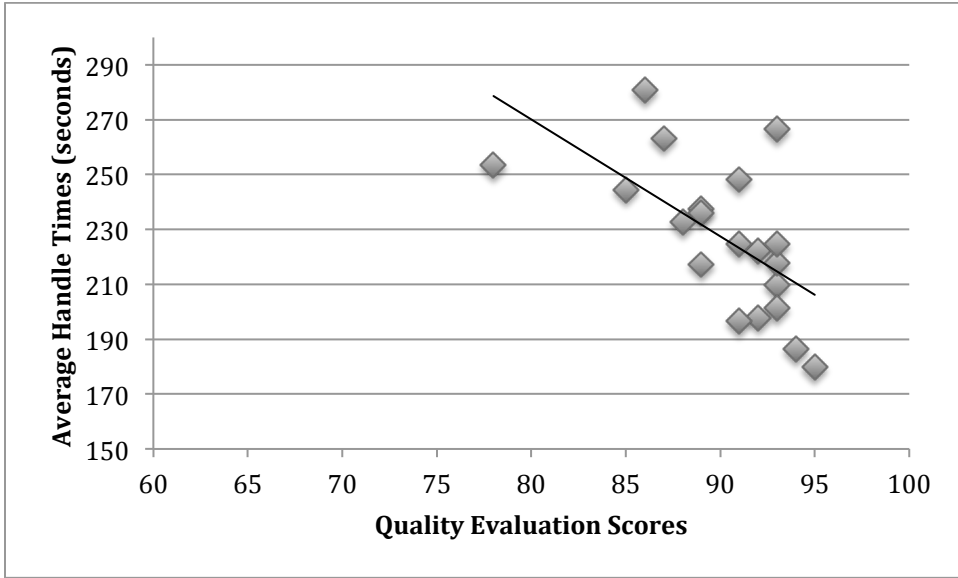| Variable	N	Mean	SD
Transformational Leadership style			
Quality Evaluation Scores	20	90.10	3.959
Average Handle Times	20	227.07	27.379
Transactional Leadership style			
Quality Evaluation Scores	17	90.41	4.244
Average Handle Times	17	235.27	34.182
Laissez-faire Leadership style			
Quality Evaluation Scores	75	85.72	17.961
Average Handle Times	75	241.26	48.731

I used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences to analyze the data to test the null and alternative hypotheses associated with the corresponding research question. I used a correlational test to evaluate the association of quality evaluation scores (independent variable) and average handle times (dependent variable) of call center representatives for each leadership style of the front-line call center manager. I measured the strength of the correlation between the independent and dependent variables using the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. I determined the *p*-value (significance level) of the correlation using the correlation coefficient table for the degrees of freedom: $df = n - 2$. If the p-value is < 5%, the correlation between the x and y is considered significant.

The results of the MLQ and correlational test were used to answer RQ1 regarding the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transformational front-line call center managers in the transportation call center. H_01 is the null hypothesis of no statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transformational front-line call center managers in the transportation call center. H_a1 is the alternative hypothesis of a statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transformational front-line call center managers in the transportation call center. I measured the strength of the correlation between the independent and dependent variables using the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. The results supported the rejection of H_01, which indicated a significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to a transformational front-line call center manager in the transportation industry. Quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who reported to a transformational front-line call center manager were found to be negatively correlated, $r = -.616$, $n = 20$, $p = .004$ (see Table 2). Figure 2 displays a plot of quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to a transformational front-line call center manager.

Figure 2

Scatterplot of Variables Based on Transformational Leadership Style (n = 20)

Table 2

Pearson's Correlation of Variables Based on Leadership Style

| Variable	*r*	*n*	*p*
Transformational Leadership style			
Quality Evaluation Scores	-.616	20	.004**
Average Handle Times			
Transactional Leadership style			
Quality Evaluation Scores	.133	17	.612
Average Handle Times			
Laissez-faire Leadership style			
Quality Evaluation Scores	.182	72	.125
Average Handle Times			

**Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

The results of the MLQ and correlational test were used to answer RQ2 regarding the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transactional front-line call center managers in the transportation call center. $H_0 2$ is the null hypothesis of no statistically significant relationship between evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transactional front-line call center managers in the transportation call center. $H_a 2$ is the alternative hypothesis of a statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transactional front-line call center managers in the

transportation call center. I measured the strength of the correlation between the independent and dependent variables using the Pearson's Correlational Coefficient. The results supported the H_02, which indicated no significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to a transactional front-line call center manager in the transportation industry. I found quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who reported to a transactional front-line call center manager to be a small positive correlation, which was not statistically significant, $r = .133$, $n = 17$, $p = .612$ (see Table 2). Figure 3 displays a plot of quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to a transactional front-line call center manager.

Figure 3

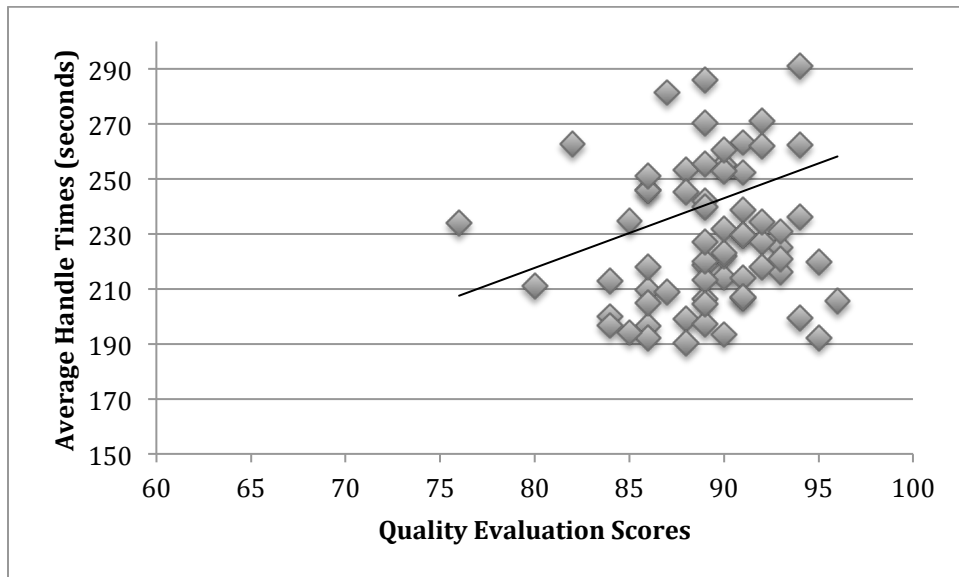*Scatterplot of Variables Based on Transactional Leadership Style (n = 17)*
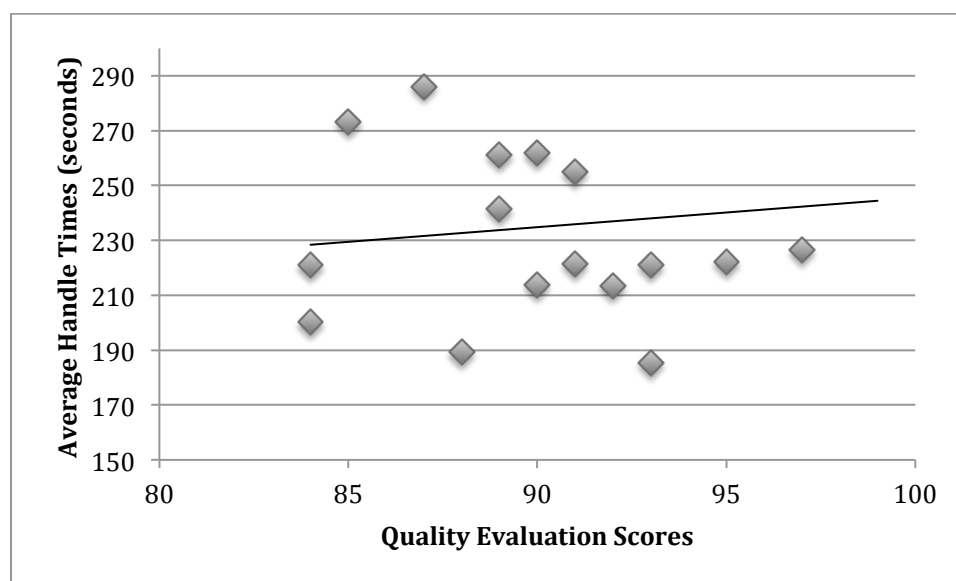
The results of the MLQ and correlational test were used to answer RQ3 regarding the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center

representatives who report to laissez-faire front-line call center managers in the

transportation call center. $H_0 3$ is the null hypothesis of no statistically significant

relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center

representatives who report to laissez-faire front-line call center managers in the

transportation call center. $H_a 3$ is the alternative hypothesis of a statistically significant

relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center

representatives who report to laissez-faire front-line call center managers in the

transportation call center. I measured the strength of the correlation between the

independent and dependent variables using the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. The

results supported the $H_0 3$, which indicated no significant relationship between quality

evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to a

laissez-faire front-line call center manager in the transportation industry. I found quality

evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who reported to

a laissez-faire front-line call center manager to be a small positive correlation, which was

not statistically significant, $r = .182$, $n = 72$, $p = .125$ (see Table 2). Figure 4 displays a

plot of quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives

who report to a laissez-faire front-line call center manager.

Figure 4

Scatterplot of Variables Based on Laissez-faire Leadership Style (n = 72)

Summary

This quantitative correlational study examined the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for each of the three leadership styles of front-line call center managers in the transportation industry. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass and Avolio, 2004) was used to measure leadership styles as it relates to transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire characteristics. The MLQ revealed the leadership styles of the front-line call center managers. Among the front-line call center managers in the sample, the leadership styles were not equally distributed among the three styles of front-line call center managers. Laissez-faire leadership style was the prevalent leadership style among the sample managers.

I used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences to analyze the data to test the null and alternative hypotheses to answer the research questions. I used a correlation test to evaluate the association of quality evaluation scores and average handle times of front-line call center managers for each leadership style of the front-line call center manager in the transportation industry. There was a statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of front-line call center representatives who reported to a transformational front-line call center manager. However, there was no statistically significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who reported to a transactional or laissez-faire front-line call center manager. The study results suggest that for the call center representatives who report to the transformational leadership style of the front-line call center managers, there is a relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times and they have the lowest average handle time. Chapter 5 provides the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between quality evaluation scores (independent variable) and average handle times (dependent variable) of call center representatives for each of the three leadership styles of front-line managers at transportation call centers in the United States. The three leadership styles of front-line call center managers are transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. The design of the study was correlational and nonexperimental. The independent variable was defined as the quality evaluation scores of call center representatives. The dependent variable was defined as the average handle times of call center representatives. I measured the performance and its variations due to front-line call center managers' different leadership styles.

I used MLQ to determine the front-line call center manager's leadership style. I used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software to analyze the data to test the null and alternative hypotheses. The field of statistics involves methods of describing and analyzing data for making decisions or inferences by interpreting data patterns (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). The correlational design was appropriate for this quantitative study because I could use it for data analysis and identify patterns to make decisions to bring about a positive change by determining the most effective leadership style to maximize call center representatives' performance.

The relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for the three different leadership styles of front-line call center managers in the transportation industry is not known. My goal for this quantitative study

was to expand the understanding of the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for each of three types of management styles, which may improve particular managerial behaviors and the performance of call center representatives.

The key findings of the study indicate that front-line call center managers with a transformational leadership style were the most effective and influenced the quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives in the transportation industry. Furthermore, the study indicated that transactional and laissez-faire leadership style were less effective leadership styles that did not influence the quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives.

The following sections include the interpretation of the findings and the limitations of the study. This chapter includes recommendations for further research and implications of the research study.

Interpretation of the Findings

The results obtained in Chapter 4 led to the following conclusions regarding the research questions, which focus on how front-line call center managers' leadership styles affect call center representatives' performance, building upon the transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership theory.

Conclusions Answering RQ1

The first research question was regarding the relationship between evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to transformational front-line call center managers in transportation call centers. I confirmed

a significant relationship between quality evaluation scores (independent variable) and average handle times (dependent variable) of call center representatives who reported to transformational front-line call center managers. Quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who reported to a transformational front-line call center managers were found to be negatively correlated, $r = -.616$, $n = 20$, $p = .004$ (see Table 2). Figure 2 displayed the negative correlational relationship between evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to a transformational front-line call center manager. There was a tendency for high quality evaluation scores to low average handle times of call center representatives who reported to transformational front-line call center managers. The findings expanded the current literature regarding transformational leadership style to incorporate the call center sector in the transportation industry. The use of transformational leadership style amplified employee performance in the call center environment.

The transformational leadership theory is confirmed by this study. Yammarino and Dubinsky (1994) noted that the transformational leadership theory explained the connection between leaders and their employees, which accounted for an organization's extraordinary performance and accomplishments. The employee is motivated to go beyond achieving short-term goals to achieve higher personal and organizational goals. Transformational leadership theory is where a leader identifies a needed change, creates a vision through inspiration, and executes the change with employees (Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1994).

A transformational leader seeks to develop connections or relationships with their employees as to inspire commitment from the employee to achieve goals. An increase in commitment results in enhanced employee productivity due to the employee's extra effort (Hooper & Potter, 2011). If goals are not achieved by the employee, a transformational leader readily accepts failure and utilizes failure as an opportunity for employee growth to achieve goals. Agotnes et al. (2019) stated that a transformational leader gets their followers to look at problems from a different perspective. The transformational leader provides the follower with a different perspective; it fosters active learning and problem solving with the follower. Additionally, the transformational leader motivates and inspires the follower by challenging the follower to overcome obstacles.

Conclusions Answering RQ2

The second research question was regarding the relationship between evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to a transactional front-line call center manager in transportation call centers. The findings confirm no significant relationship between quality evaluation scores (independent variable) and average handle times (dependent variable) of call center representatives who reported to transactional front-line call center managers ($p = 0.623$ in Table 2). Figure 3 displayed a plot of the average handle times against the quality evaluation scores of call center representatives who report to a transactional front-line call center manager. The findings expanded the current literature regarding transactional leadership style to incorporate the call center sector in the transportation industry. The use of transactional leadership style did not amplify employee performance in the call center environment.

Transactional leadership theory is when a manager focuses on results and gives employees something to achieve their desired results (Zareen et al., 2015).

Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016) indicated that transactional leadership is useful when the leader is mostly concerned with achieving goals. Employees are rewarded for the tasks that the employee has accomplished. Therefore, transactional leaders are concerned with the completion of a specific job and the performance of employees. The transactional leader will utilize positive and negative reinforcements to achieve the employee's expected results to achieve the desired results.

Saeed and Mughal (2019) stated that the purpose of transactional leadership and contingent rewards is to maintain high performance and control quality. Saeed and Mughal (2019) indicated that this style is management by exception in which the manager maintains an active role and intervenes should any potential problem arises. Donkor and Zhou (2020) stated that transactional leaders reward employees for completing tasks and maintaining or increasing organizational performance. The manager is shown as useful when the employee can achieve or exceed the organization's performance.

Boonzaier (2008) stated that transactional leaders motivate employees by utilizing goal setting and providing rewards based upon the achievement of those goals that were set. McCleskey (2014) indicated employees would accept a transactional leader only if the leader can provide rewards such as status and money. A transactional leader will monitor their employees and motivate them with rewards for good performance. Asrar-

ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016) indicated transactional leadership behavior is usually

negatively related to long term performance.

Conclusions Answering RQ3

The third research question was regarding the relationship between quality

evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to a

laissez-faire front-line call center manager in transportation call centers. The findings

confirm no significant relationship between quality evaluation scores (independent

variable) and average handle times (dependent variable) of call center representatives

who reported to laissez-faire front-line call center managers (p = .125 in Table 2). Figure

4 displayed a plot of the average handle times against the quality evaluation scores of call

center representatives who report to a laissez-faire front-line call center manager. The

findings confirmed and expanded the current literature regarding laissez-faire leadership

theory to incorporate the call center sector in the transportation industry. The use of

laissez-faire leadership style did not amplify employee performance in the call center

environment. In laissez-faire leadership theory, delegation to make decisions is given to

the employee without consulting with a manager. Lewin and Lippiit (1938) stated that all

the rights and power are entirely given to the employee to make decisions. Sadeghi and

Pihie (2012) indicated that a laissez-faire leader utilizes minimum effort. The leader

allows the employee to determine the best way to achieve organizational goals on their

own. The laissez-faire leader lacks involvement with an employee and lacks

responsiveness to the employee's needs. When an employee cannot determine the best

way to achieve organizational goals, it can become problematic since no one is taking

responsibility. Saeed and Mughal (2019) indicated that a laissez-faire leader does not play an active role in an organization, which accounts for why organizations in the banking industry do not utilize this leadership style.

Arbaiza and Guillen (2016) stated that laissez-faire leaders do not provide guidance to their employees. Laissez-faire leaders are hands-off and delegate tasks to employees without providing any direction to the employee. The researchers suggested that if an employee has a laissez-faire leader, the lack of productivity, cohesion, and satisfaction may be evident in the employees' performance.

Furthermore, Gemeda and Lee (2020) stated that laissez-faire leaders were characterized by noninvolvement and being absent when needed. The researchers indicated that a laissez-faire leader would overlook the achievements and problems of employees. Gemeda and Lee (2020) suggested that a laissez-faire leader had an overall negative relationship with employee performance, leader effectiveness, and organization performance.

Limitations of the Study

In this study, I provided an internet-based survey via SurveyMonkey.com to front-line call center managers with call center representatives reporting directly to them in the United States' transportation industry. I did not include call centers in other sectors in this study; therefore, the limitation of my research was the lack of inclusiveness of call centers in different industries and specific geographic regions of the country. Although front-line call center managers provided the overall quality evaluation scores data and average handle times data of their call center representatives, it was challenging to obtain

an even distribution of front-line call center managers with the three leadership styles. Of the 112 front-line call center managers who participated in the study, 20 (18%) had transformational leadership style, 17 (15%) had transactional leadership style, and 75 (67%) had a laissez-faire leadership style. Therefore, the limitation of my research was the lack of even distribution of the transformational and transactional leadership styles in comparison to the laissez-faire leadership style.

Recommendations

I addressed three questions regarding the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who report to a transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire front-line call center managers in transportation call centers. A relationship existed between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who reported to transformational front-line call center managers. However, a relationship did not exist between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who reported to transactional and laissez-faire front-line call center managers.

The information obtained from the study provides insights into the specific leadership style that influences high quality evaluation scores and low average handle times of call center representatives in the transportation industry. With such results, a recommendation is for call center management to utilize the transformational leadership style to maximize their call center representatives' performance. Managers should have the ability to encourage and motivate employees to achieve higher goals while exerting extra efforts (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016). Managers should adopt leadership styles

that help to amplify employee satisfaction, actions, and performance. Calweti (2010) indicated that good leadership was critical to the success of any organization. Managers must possess a leader's qualities and be a positive role model, which encourages employees to do more efficient job. A business may have an excellent process in place but a company will not achieve sustainable results without effective leadership. Kreitzer (2010) stated that an organization's success is influenced by effective leadership. Leadership creates a culture and environment that allows performance to be achieved. Therefore, leadership sets the business's tone and sets the behavior standards, which is expected of all employees, including front-line employees and management at every level.

DuBois et al. (2015) indicated that transformational leaders transform the workplace by inspiring and developing employees and motivating individuals to achieve high-performance levels. A transformational leader gains the respect and trust of employees by displaying integrity and high values. As a role model, a transformational leader walks the walk even in the most trying circumstances. Campbell (2018) stated that transformational leaders create strong and loyal teams that are highly productive. The teams are highly productive due to the organization's communication and implementation by the transformational leader.

Implications

The relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for the three different leadership styles of front-line call center managers in the transportation industry was unknown. My goal for this quantitative study

was to expand the understanding of the relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives for each of three types of management styles, which may improve particular managerial behaviors and the performance of call center representatives. Kuei and Lu (2013) identified the importance of changing management styles and inspiring employees to break down barriers and find win-win opportunities. The proper utilization of resources by management would aid in the implementation of processes and minimize any obstacles.

The findings indicated a significant relationship between quality evaluation scores and average handle times of call center representatives who reported to transformational front-line call center managers, which corresponded to the highest performance of call center representatives. Managers with transformational leadership style develops connections or relationships with their employees as to inspire commitment from the employee to achieve goals. The study may promote positive social change by helping companies to determine the most effective leadership style for front-line call center managers to maximize call center representatives' performance and thus improve call center customers' satisfaction.

Conclusion

In a call center, quality and efficiency are two factors that contribute to the success or failure of a call center to provide a positive customer experience and create customer loyalty for the business (Desmarais, 2009). The ability of call center managers to achieve competitive success is a difficult task. Call center managers attempt to keep costs under control while achieving quality and efficiency. Additionally, call center

managers seek to provide excellent customer service to all customers while meeting the organization's performance goals. If the performance goals are not met, it may negatively impact the organization's bottom line. For organizations to survive and thrive, employees must achieve the organization's objectives. The importance of performance is increasing due to its ability to improve organizations' effectiveness and efficiency (Jameel & Ahmad, 2019). Managers must commit to the development of the workforce and encourage participation to be successful. To be an effective leader, one must have a vision and a clear plan to direct a company to achieve the vision. Managers should have the ability to encourage and motivate employees to achieve higher goals while exerting extra efforts (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016). Additionally, managers should adopt leadership styles that help to amplify employee satisfaction, actions, and performance. Leadership creates a culture and environment that allows performance to be achieved. In a transportation call center, front-line call center managers that utilize transformational leadership style amplify their call center representatives' performance to achieve high quality evaluation scores and low average handle times.

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Appendix A: Permission to use Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)

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To Whom It May Concern,

The above-named person has made a license purchase from Mind Garden, Inc. and has permission to administer the following copyrighted instrument up to that quantity purchased:

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

The three sample items only from this instrument as specified below may be included in your thesis or dissertation. Any other use must receive prior written permission from Mind Garden. The entire instrument may not be included or reproduced at any time in any other published material. Please understand that disclosing more than we have authorized will compromise the integrity and value of the test.

Citation of the instrument must include the applicable copyright statement listed below. Sample Items:

As a leader ....
> I talk optimistically about the future.
> I spend time teaching and coaching.
> I avoid making decisions.

The person I am rating....
> Talks optimistically about the future.
> Spends time teaching and coaching.
> Avoids making decisions

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Sincerely,

Robert Most
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