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Nonprofit Board Members' Perceptions of the Initial Orientation and Ongoing Board Member Training

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Janice M. Trapp

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Nonprofit Board Members' Perceptions of the Initial Orientation and Ongoing Board

Member Training

by

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MS, University of Texas at Tyler, 2009

BS, Patten University, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services Administration

Walden University

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Abstract

Many nonprofit organizations have implemented board development practices that include an initial orientation and ongoing training to improve board performance. However, recent studies have shown that board members struggle with understanding their roles, responsibilities, and board governance. This lack of understanding limits their ability to perform their roles effectively, which may impact the members' performance and the organizations' performance. This generic qualitative study explored board members' perceptions of whether the initial orientation and ongoing training they received in preparation for board service adequately prepared them for board governance. Inglis et al.'s three factor-framework of strategic activities, operations, and resource planning served as the conceptual framework for the study. Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants. Five board members serving on nonprofit human service organization boards located in Santa Rosa, California, participated in the study. Data were collected using in-depth interviews that consisted of a series of opened-ended questions. Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step process was used to analyze the data. Inductive analysis was used to determine emergent themes. Findings revealed that participants felt they gained increased knowledge of their roles and responsibilities. Participants were more confident in their ability to perform their roles as board members after completing an initial orientation. Results contribute to social change by revealing that providing board members with orientation training can increase their confidence in performing their roles and responsibilities in board governance.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my parents Noble and Addie Simmons. Their love and devotion to their family were never-ending. They taught us to love God, to love our family, and to be a responsible member of society. Thank you for life, love, and a strong family foundation that keeps me focused on what is important in life. I love you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Board members who serve on nonprofit boards act as an organization's advocates and community representatives with multiple responsibilities (Aulgur, 2016, p.1). However, many board members find themselves at a loss in fully understanding their roles and responsibilities in board governance (Love, 2015). This lack of understanding often impacts the board members' ability to make informed decisions regarding the organization (Shaffer, 2014). Several researchers have indicated that good board governance is contingent on how well board members understand and perform their roles (Bruni-Bossio et al., 2016; Piscitelli & Geobey, 2020). If members do not have a firm grasp of what their role entails, they cannot perform their duties effectively, which could put the organization at risk with faulty decision making.

Boards that provide their members with an initial orientation and ongoing board training have been able to improve board members' performance and in turn the organizations' performance (Brown, 2007; Brown & Guo, 2010; Schaffer, 2014). However, board members have continued to struggle in understanding their roles and responsibilities in areas such as organizational mission and financial oversight (Jaskyte & Holland, 2015; Larcker et al., 2015; Hopkins & Mayer, 2019; Tysiac, 2018). This lack of understanding was evident even after nonprofit organizations (NPOs) implemented the prescribed board development practices of initial orientation and continued governance training. For a board to work effectively, they must have an understanding of what their work is. Therefore, board members struggling to understand their roles indicates that stronger orientations and development practices are needed (BoardSource, 2017).

This qualitative study examined board members' perceptions of the orientation and ongoing training they received in preparation for board service. The goal was to understand why board members continue to struggle to understand their roles and responsibilities after receiving an initial orientation and ongoing training. Understanding board members' perceptions of the training will provide valuable insight into whether members perceive the training as adequate preparation to fulfill their roles.

This chapter includes the background of the study, the problem statement, and the purpose of the study. The research question which guided the study was presented along with the theoretical foundation. The nature of the study and the definition of commonly used terms are discussed, followed by the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. The significance of the study is next, followed by the summary, and the transition concludes the chapter.

Background of the Study

Some researchers have found that board members performed better in their roles and responsibilities if they received an initial orientation and ongoing training (Brown & Guo, 2010; Jaskyte, 2012; Ryan et al., 2012). The orientation of new board members is significant for board success, and many NPOs adopted the recommended practices of providing board members with an initial orientation and ongoing board training (Shaffer 2014). However, despite the implementation of these practices, board members have continued to struggle to understand their roles and responsibilities as well as governance and the organization's mission and practices (Jaskyte & Holland, 2015; Larcker et al., 2015; Love, 2015). One indicator of this lack of knowledge is in boards' failure to have a succession plan in place in case of the departure of the organizations' executive director or CEO (Larcker et al., 2015; Love, 2015). A lack of leadership

impacts the staff members' ability to provide services and can cause stakeholders to lose confidence in the agency's ability to meet their needs. It takes about 90 days to recruit and hire a new chief executive, so having a succession plan in place that has identified and trained a successor ensures a smoother transition for the organization, allowing the organization to continue providing services without interruption (Larcker et al., 2015).

There is a gap in the literature regarding board members' perceptions of the effectiveness of the training they receive to prepare them for board service. This study addressed the perceptions held by board members of a single nonprofit board of directors regarding the initial orientation and the ongoing training they received in preparation for board service. This study's findings could identify areas of weakness in current board orientations and training and pinpoint areas where improvement is needed. Improving board performance leads to improved organizational performance (Brown & Guo, 2010).

Problem Statement

To serve the NPO for which they have oversight effectively, board members must possess a basic understanding of the roles and responsibilities associated with the position they hold (Larcker et al., 2015). However, there is a high incidence of role confusion among nonprofit board members (Denny, 2015), otherwise known as role ambiguity (Doherty & Hoye, 2011). A deficit of knowledge of the roles and responsibilities associated with board members' positions can lead to faulty decision making that places the organization at risk. For example, a lack of knowledge of Internal Revenue Service (IRS) laws governing nonprofits could lead to an NPO losing its tax-exempt status (Fram 2016). Board members should be familiar with their organizations' IRS nonprofit classification, whether 501(C)3 charitable organization or 501(C)4

social welfare organization. Directors should also be knowledgeable of the IRS requirement that NPOs file IRS Form 990 yearly, including providing financial data and answering 38 questions related to corporate governance. But many board members are not aware they should be involved in the preparation of the document each year, be familiar with the questions contained within the document, and be knowledgeable of any exceptions to the report (Fram, 2016). Although many nonprofits have an audit committee that usually hires an accounting firm to prepare the 990, board members are expected to be involved and understand all information pertaining to the preparation and filing of the tax forms to avoid penalties for failing to comply with this requirement. Further, the organizations can lose its tax-exempt status, which would lead to the organization's closure and the loss of valuable services needed in the community.

One of the problems is that many NPO boards do not have a formal governance structure and processes (Larcker et al., 2015). Research has shown that board members felt that they did not feel prepared to meet the needs of the NPO (Larcker et al., 2015, p.1). A lack of adequate skills and experience suggests a need for further training (Temkin, 2015). Additional research is also needed to determine whether board members perceive the training they received adequately prepared them to fulfill their board member roles and responsibilities.

Purpose of the Study

A well-run and efficient NPO is one where the board members understand their roles and responsibilities and have a firm grasp of governance (Rosenthal, 2012); however, many board members lack a strong understanding of the mission and strategic objectives of the organizations they served (Larcker et al., 2015). Several researchers have noted the need for training those serving as volunteer leaders in NPOs for (Hopkins & Meyer, 2019; Morrison, 2019; Tysiac,

2018). This generic qualitative study addressed nonprofit board members' perceptions of whether the training they received in preparation for board service adequately prepared them to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. The participating organization and its board members who met the criteria for this study were recruited from the 13 nonprofit human service organizations located in Santa Rosa, California, with two additional participants from nearby cities. The targeted organization provided its board members with an initial orientation and ongoing training.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study: What are nonprofit board members' perceptions regarding whether the board training they received adequately prepared them to fulfill their roles and responsibilities for serving on the board?

Theoretical Foundation

This study's theoretical basis was Inglis et al.'s (1999) three-factor framework, which divides board roles and responsibilities into three categories: strategic activities, operations, and resource planning. The framework was developed to help practitioners and other stakeholders understand the roles and responsibilities of volunteer community board members (Inglis et al. 1999). The original research conducted by Inglis (1997) consisted of a survey of executive directors, board presidents, and volunteer board members of 41 amateur sports organizations. Research from that study resulted in the development of a four-factor framework of board roles and responsibilities. However, Inglis et al. (1999) later discovered that the roles could be combined into a three-factor framework. The three-factor framework included some of the roles from the original 1997 four-factor framework. Roles listed in the first factor, strategic activities,

included planning associated with building a strong organizational foundation such as the mission and vision, plans, and policy. The operations factor reflects the roles of developing and delivering programs and services, advocating for groups' interests, and raising funds for the organization—the same as the roles within the 1997 category of community relations. Factor 3, resource planning, included roles that focus on the annual budget, hiring senior staff such as the executive director or chief executive officer and setting financial policy. In the 1997 study, this factor was labeled the planning factor.

Inglis et al.'s (1999) three-factor framework was selected because it can be used to explain the roles and responsibilities of board members. The roles and responsibilities of governance are essential functions of board service, and board training should cover essential elements from each category. Without adequate training, members cannot perform their roles and responsibilities effectively (Denny, 2015). Chapter 2 will offer a more detailed explanation of the theoretical framework.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a generic qualitative approach. Generic qualitative research allows the researcher to examine people's experiences or feelings about their world (Percy et al., 2015, p. 78). Using the generic qualitative method allowed me to explore the nonprofit board members' perceptions of whether the initial orientation and ongoing training they received adequately prepared them for board service. In-depth interviews were conducted using open-ended questions. The interviews were audio-recorded to ensure full capture of the thick, rich information shared by the participants. The participants received a copy of the transcribed interview for review and feedback to ensure trustworthiness in the study, accuracy, and

triangulation. A preliminary review of the transcribed data was conducted to gain insight, become familiar with the data collected, and identify recurring themes. Upon completing the preliminary review, data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet to be analyzed for recurring themes and coded.

The study participants were recruited from organizations located in Santa Rosa, California, and two nearby cities. The organizations registered with Guidestar, an NPO that maintains a listing of NPOs registered with the IRS and are members of their organization. There are 32 NPOs listed for Santa Rosa, California, and of the 32 organizations, 13 were human service organizations. My goal was to recruit one organization from the pool of 13 that had at least 10 board members who completed an initial orientation and ongoing board member training. This sample size would generate enough participants to provide pertinent information to reach saturation of data. Saturation is reached at the point where no new information or themes are observed in the data, which can occur as early as six interviews (Guest et al., 2006). Thus, the goal was to recruit 10 participants from the human service NPOs that have experienced the phenomenon under investigation, which would allow for maximum saturation.

Definition of Terms

Board of directors: The governing body of a nonprofit or for-profit corporation, which has specific legal and ethical responsibilities to and for the organization (BoardSource, 2017).

Board development: The process of building effective boards, which includes recruiting and orienting to engaging and educating board members. It also includes the rotation of board members to ensure a good fit with the organization's governance needs (BoardSource, 2017).

Governance: The process of providing leadership, direction, and accountability for a specific nongovernmental, not-for-profit organization (Renz, 2007).

Human service organization: An NPO with an IRS tax-exempt code of 501(c)3 and has as a primary goal to improve the quality of life for individuals and families (National Organization for Human Services, 2017).

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs): Organizations that have obtained IRS tax-exempt status (IRS, 2017).

Role ambiguity: Occurs when people are unclear or uncertain about their expectations within a specific role, typically their role in the job or work (Edmondson, 2018).

Training: An educational process that involves the sharpening of skills, concepts, changing of attitude, and gaining more knowledge to enhance the performance of the employees (www.mbaskool.com).

Assumptions

This qualitative study utilized in-depth interviews with open-ended questions to collect data on the phenomenon under investigation. Qualitative research assumes that the phenomena under investigation can only be understood through the participant's lens who experienced it and that the phenomena cannot be measured (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I assumed that the phenomenon under investigation could only be understood from the board members' lived experiences as they shared their thoughts and views of the training they received. It was further assumed that the data collected through in-depth interviews with board members would answer the research question.

There are 13 human service NPOs in Santa Rosa, California. It was assumed that out of the 13 organizations, at least 10 board members who completed an initial orientation and ongoing board development training would commit to participating in the study. I also assumed that the board members' participation would occur with the understanding that there were no monetary benefits associated with the study. It was also assumed that participants would answer all questions freely and truthfully, as all participants were provided confidentiality for their participation in the study. It was further assumed that the orientation and training directors received included the roles and responsibilities of board governance. Finally, it was assumed that the identified roles could be categorized according to the three-factor framework of strategic activities, resource planning, and operations.

Delimitations

I explored nonprofit board members' perceptions of whether the training they received in preparation for board service adequately prepared them to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. The study was bounded in that it only focused on board members of non-profit human service organizations located in the Santa Rosa, California area. Because researchers have indicated that many board members struggle with understanding their roles and responsibilities (Jaskyte et al., 2015; Larcker et al., 2015), I examined the perspectives of the members who have experienced initial board training and any additional training they received or continue to receive as board members. This line of inquiry was selected because of my interest in understanding board governance from the board member's perspectives and a desire to improve board performance. Due to time constraints for completing this study and the need for in-depth interviews, the number of participants was limited to 10 board members currently serving on an NPO board.

Although the study was limited to board members serving on human service organization boards in the Santa Rosa area, the results are expected to provide valuable information for current and future research around board development and governance.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this generic qualitative study. One limitation was that the study focused on nonprofit human service organization board members located in Santa Rosa, California. Consequently, the results' transferability may be limited when it comes to nonprofit boards in other regions operating under different circumstances. Although participants were required to have completed an initial orientation within the last 2 years, the study was also limited based on the member's ability to recall the details of their orientation and training.

Researcher bias was another potential limitation. Qualitative research is subjective in that the researcher is the instrument in the data collection. As the instrument, the researcher comes with pre-existing ideals and values, which could impair the researchers' ability to conduct the research and analyze data objectively. To minimize researcher bias, I used triangulation, a method of collecting the same data in more than one way (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It was also crucial for me as the researcher to acknowledge any underlying values, assumptions, and expectations I had regarding the phenomena under investigation to minimize bias. Other measures, such as prolonged engagement with the participants, built trust and created an environment where the participants could freely communicate their thoughts and opinions. Additional details of the actions taken to minimize researcher bias are presented in Chapter 3. Finally, qualitative research assumes that there is a reality, but the reality can only be understood from the perspective of those who live them. In this study, it was assumed that by examining the

board members' perspectives regarding the orientation and other training they received, I would gain insight into whether the members viewed the training as adequate preparation to fulfill their governance role.

Significance of the Study

There is limited information on how board members perceive board orientation and board development training intended to equip them for board service. However, there is research that has revealed that board members lack the necessary skills to fulfill board governance's roles and responsibilities (Larcker et al., 2015). This study's significance was that it gathered information that can be used to fill a gap in the literature regarding nonprofit board member orientations and development training as perceived by the board members who experienced it.

Results from this study also have implications for social change. First, the study results provide information regarding board members' perceptions of whether they are adequately educated and trained to fulfill their required roles and responsibilities. Findings from this study revealed areas in which board members need additional training and development. Human service and other professionals can use information from this study as evidence of the need to improve board development practices. These improvements consist of redesigning current training practices and implementing different development training practices for board members. The improved training would expand board members' knowledge and awareness of their roles as board members, increase their knowledge of board governance, and improve board members' leadership skills. Improved board leader development practices lead to social change by improving organizational oversight and board performance. The greater implication for social change is that improved organizational effectiveness driven by trained board members results in

the enhanced delivery of goods and services NPOs provide to the communities and individuals they serve. The improved delivery of goods and services further promotes social change by improving the lives of the individuals living in marginalized communities often served by nonprofit human service organizations.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview and introduction to the study. The chapter presented a summary of previous research that recommended that NPOs improve board performance by providing members with an initial orientation and ongoing board development practices (Brown, 2007; Brown & Guao, 2010; Shaffer, 2014), as board members continue to struggle to understand their roles and responsibilities (Jaskyte & Holland, 2015; Love, 2015). Inglis et al.'s (1999) three-factor framework was discussed as the theoretical orientation for this study, and the research question was framed around the generic qualitative methodology. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature related to previous and current research on nonprofit board performance, training, and governance. Chapter 3, covers the research design and rationale, the researcher's role, participant selection logic, sample size, participant recruitment, instrumentation, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In 2015, the Stanford Graduate School of Business, in partnership with BoardSource and GuideStar, surveyed board members from 924 NPOs across the United States. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the composition, structure, and practices of the boards. The directors gave themselves low performance marks in performing their roles and responsibilities as board members. Twenty-seven percent of the directors surveyed also felt that their fellow directors lacked the necessary skills, resources, and experience to meet the needs of the NPO in which they served (Larcker et al., 2015). The results revealed that many of the nonprofit boards needed significant improvement in governance.

Boards continue to struggle with the same challenges such as weak accountability, ambiguous expectations, resistance to change, and a lack of clarity about what needed to be changed (Jaskyte & Holland, 2015; see also Chait et al., 1991). Additionally, board members continue to show low performance related to mission and financial oversight, legal and ethical oversight, CEO support and evaluation, organizational strategy, performance monitoring, community relations, board composition diversity, and fundraising involvement (Jaskyte & Holland, 2015). Despite the members having received an initial orientation and ongoing training (BoardSource, 2015), there seems to be a disconnect between board training and the expected outcomes of that training, which is improved board performance.

The purpose of this study was to examine board members' perceptions of the effectiveness of the initial orientation and ongoing training provided to them in preparation for board service. This chapter provides an overview of the literature search strategy and the

theoretical foundation. A review of the current literature is also presented. The chapter concludes with a summary and a conclusion.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search strategy for this study utilized Walden University's Library website. The first search consisted of a basic keyword search of Thoreau, a tool that searches multiple databases using the term nonprofit board training. This search resulted in 53 potential items related to board member training. An additional search using the same keywords (except replacing *training* with *development*) yielded 108 possible articles. However, not all the articles were suitable for inclusion in the literature review due to the 5-year date period. In some instances, the articles were not peer-reviewed. Because Thoreau does not search all databases, I conducted additional searches using other major databases such as Academic Search Complete, Expanded Academic ASAP, ProQuest, and others. Additional searches were conducted using the terms *nonprofit board governance*, *board development*, *non-profit boards*, *board development practices*, *nonprofit training resources*, *board training*, and *board member orientation and training*. Some of the searches were limited to full-text and peer-reviewed, whereas other searches did not have this restriction. Walden University's Dissertation Database was searched for currently available information. A search for literature under the term training resources yielded no results through Walden. However, a search of the Internet using the keyword *training resources* resulted in organizations such as BoardSource, Nonprofit Ready, National Council of Nonprofits, and BoardEffect that offered information on board orientation, including orientation templates. References from current literature were used for additional research sources.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Inglis et al.'s (1999) three-factor framework, which they developed after recognizing the lack of a theoretical framework that addressed the types of roles and responsibilities of members serving in roles related to board governance. Inglis et al.'s three-factor framework posits that all board roles and responsibilities fall within the following three categories: strategic activities, operations, and resource planning. Strategic activities are activities that are foundational to the organization, such as the mission and vision, developing and evaluating long-range plans, setting policy from which staff can deliver programs and services, evaluation of the executive director or CEO, and the board. Other strategic activities include any role or responsibility with a strong external focus, including those expanding into the community to develop partnerships and those responding to community needs. The operations factor encompasses developing and delivering programs and services, advocating for the interests of groups, and raising funds for the organization. Finally, the third factor, resource planning, includes developing an annual budget, hiring senior staff other than the CEO, and setting financial policy.

The development of the three-factor framework has been beneficial in five distinct ways:

1. It clarified the work of the board for constituent groups, including the volunteer board itself, staff, funders, donors, clients, and community;
2. Improved the organization and boards' ability to assess how well the roles and responsibilities were accomplished
3. provided baseline information that would be useful in shaping new roles and responsibilities

4. assisted boards in designing meetings; and
5. assisted boards in determining board training and development needs and ensuring that boards attend to the most appropriate roles in the most effective way.

In addition to Inglis et al.'s (1999) framework, Lans et al. (2011) found three domains constitute the heart of entrepreneurial competence: (a) analyzing, (b) pursuing, and (c) networking. These three domains provide professionals in sector development with an empirically valid framework of what constitutes entrepreneurial competence, including insights on education and learning.

A number of researchers have used Inglis et al.'s (1999) three-factor framework of board governance. Kennelly (2012) used the model in a study designed to determine whether the roles listed in the framework were relevant to nonprofit peacemaking organizations. The results revealed that the roles and responsibilities listed in Inglis et al. three-factor framework were relevant to nonprofit peacemaking boards but with a distinct difference. Results from the study supported the categories of strategic activities and operations but not of resource planning. Kennelly found that evaluation as the third category of board roles and responsibilities was more appropriate for peacekeeping organizations. In the current study, the three-factor framework allowed me to determine board members' perceptions of whether training in the three areas was adequate in preparing board members for their roles and responsibilities.

Literature Review

Overview of Human Service Organizations

In the myriad of NPOs operating in the United States, human service organizations make up two-thirds of those organizations (McKeever, 2015). Human service refers to organizations whose primary focus is to improve individuals' and families' behavioral, psychological well-

being, skills, and social conditions. Organizations included in human services are organizations in health, childcare, mental health, education, employment, and other social services (BoardSource, 2017). These organizations can be either for-profit, nonprofit, or public. Human service organizations rely on third-party funding, which includes government grants, foundations, and other philanthropic resources to provide the services they offer to the community.

Additionally, human service organizations operate in complex environments such as low- to moderate-income communities that are in a constant state of change due to ongoing social and demographic changes (Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012). Organizations operating in a changing environment must be flexible, willing, and able to adjust the services they offer, developing new programs when necessary, to meet the changing needs of the communities in which they serve (Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012). Being willing to adjust current services or creating new ones becomes crucial to the organizations' survival. Thus, the leadership of such organizations also needs to be able to adjust their leadership styles to meet the changes (Lee, 2017; van Breda, 2018).

Nonprofit Governance

NPOs are governed by an all-volunteer board of directors. These directors have legal and fiduciary oversight of the organization. They are responsible for setting policy and ensuring the organization accomplishes its mission (Rosenthal, 2012). There are approximately 13 key roles and responsibilities related to board governance that have been identified: (a) fund, (b) development, (c) strategy, (d) planning, (e) financial oversight, (g) public relations, (h) board member vitality, (i) policy oversight, (j) relationship to the executive, (k) provide guidance and

expertise, (l) facilitate granting, (m) generate respect, (n) be a working board, (o) board membership, and (p) become knowledgeable (Brown & Guo, 2010, p. 540). Board members are expected to fulfill each of these roles competently. However, many individuals recruited to serve on boards desire to serve and have expertise in their professions. Still, they do not necessarily understand board governance or know what is expected of them as board members (Aulgur, 2016). This lack of understanding, if not addressed, could negatively impact the members' performance, the board performance, and eventually the performance of the organizations as well (Ryan et al., 2012).

The Importance of Board Governance

To understand why it is essential for nonprofit board members to have a firm grasp of governance, it is important to understand governance. In NPOs, governance occurs through a volunteer board of directors who have oversight of the organization (Purdy & Lawless, 2012). Governance is a system of policies and processes that help guide business actions and service the needs of shareholders and stakeholders (Purdy & Lawless, 2012, p. 34). Further, governance is the board's legal authority to exercise authority over the NPO on behalf of the people and community it serves (BoardSource, 2010). In addition, the governing board has fiduciary oversight and is legally liable for the organization. The individual board members have three legal responsibilities in addition to the other roles and responsibilities associated with their position: (a) the duty of care, which refers to board members acting responsibly and with a standard of care in making decisions affecting the organization; (b) the duty of loyalty, which requires board members to place the interests of the organization above their own when acting on behalf of the organization; and (c) the duty of obedience, which refers to the board's

responsibility to ensure the organization complies with all federal, state, and local laws (BoardSource, 2017). The duty of obedience also refers to the board's obedience to the organization's mission, by-laws, and policies. With these essential responsibilities, both legal and otherwise, an orientation covering the legal duties and essential roles and responsibilities of governance is essential.

Board Member Roles and Responsibilities

Board chairs and CEOs expect board members to possess attributes such as a clear understanding of their roles, high engagement level, talents and skills that add value to the board, and self-sacrifice, and board members must understand board governance and the responsibilities they are assuming (Doherty & Hoye, 2011). Potential board members should be selected based on the necessary skills and expertise needed by a board (Shaffer, 2014). New board members should know who the board's stakeholders are, their needs, and how the board supports them. New board members should also review the boards' strategic plan and initiatives, become familiar with the staff and vendors, and come with an understanding that the executive officer works for them and not the reverse.

Additionally, there has been a great deal of research on board member roles and responsibilities. Ingram (2009) identified 10 fundamental roles and responsibilities of nonprofit boards:

- Determine mission and purpose
- Select the chief executive
- Support and evaluate the chief executive
- Ensure effective planning

- Monitor and strengthen programs and services
- Ensure adequate financial resources
- Protect assets and provide financial oversight
- Build a competent board
- Ensure legal and ethical integrity
- Enhance the organization's public standing

The roles and responsibilities identified by Ingram have remained constant over the years and are the primary roles and responsibilities of nonprofit governance (BoardSource, 2015). However, unlike other nonprofits, community foundations do not provide direct social services, and the roles of the board members may vary significantly from other NPO's providing services (Brown & Guo, 2010). For instance, in a nationwide qualitative study of 121 executives of community foundations throughout the United States, 13 critical board governance roles were identified:

- Fund development
- Strategy and planning
- Financial oversight
- Public relations
- Board member vitality
- Policy oversight
- Relationship to executive
- Provide guidance and expertise
- Facilitate granting
- Generate respect

- Be a working board
- Board membership
- Become knowledgeable. (Brown & Guo, 2010)

Role Ambiguity

Without a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, board members might experience role ambiguity, which has been associated with low job performance and increased job stress (Doherty & Hoye, 2011). In a climate where there is high role ambiguity, employee engagement and performance are also negatively impacted, as employees will work in an environment with no clear procedures (Mans et al., 2018). Role ambiguity is evidenced when individuals are not sure what is expected of them in their role and do not know how to fulfill the role (Denny, 2015). There are three types of role ambiguity: (a) scope of responsibilities ambiguity, which relates to not knowing what to do; (b) means-ends knowledge ambiguity, which is not knowing how to do it; and (c) performance outcome ambiguity, which pertains to not understanding the difference performance outcomes make (Denny, 2015).

Organizations must clearly define role functions and tasks with more comprehensive information (Manas et al., 2018). Organizations must facilitate actions by improving role clarity. Role clarity can be achieved by effectively planning operations, communicating changes, and monitoring activities through effective leadership.

Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict

Role conflict exists when an individual is confronted with conflicting role expectations (Denny, 2015). For example, an individual is required to perform two roles simultaneously, but doing so is difficult or impossible because doing one precludes the other. Role ambiguity

significantly impacts job performance both directly and indirectly (Celik, 2013). The direct effect is the full mediation of emotional exhaustion, and the indirect effect is the partial mediation of personal accomplishment. Role conflict also, directly and indirectly, impacted job performance. Role conflict directly impacts job performance in the same way as role ambiguity. Board members who do not clearly understand their roles are less likely to be engaged in their role as board members, but board engagement can be improved by clearly defining the boards' purpose, their role, and to whom they are responsible (Denny, 2015). Boards should be strategic when recruiting new board members and provide orientation, ongoing training, and education as well (Denny, 2015). Boards need to evaluate their performance continuously and adjust as needed. In order to combat the negative impact, roles need to be determined and clarified, the authority clearly defined, and the responsibilities outlined (Celik, 2013).

Board Performance

This section reviews what some researchers have identified as problem areas in board performance. In a qualitative study of a single NPO board of directors, Aulgur (2016) identified a gap between what board members perceived as their roles versus the expectations of the executive staff of the organization. The board members perceived their prominent role in governance as being willing to work hands-on wherever necessary and in whatever capacity in their volunteer roles to sustain the organization. This lack of understanding of governance puts organizational governance as secondary and resulted in an undeveloped governing structure. Aulgur, (2016) data gathering process consisted of in-depth interviews, observations, and document review. Through this method, Aulgur was able to identify six major themes that negatively impacted board performance. The themes identified were: (a) a lack of consensus of

the meaning of nonprofit governance, (b) establishing credibility and pursuing sustainability-driven decision making, (c) the influence of a non-governing advisory board, (d) organizational reliance upon a single benefactor, (e) evidence of resource dependency governance, and (f) absence of strategic planning. Within the governance category, the executive director indicated that board members' role at board meetings were not related to decision-making but more of informing or being informed. In the area of establishing credibility and pursuing sustainability-driven decision making, the board had recently invested in an audit, but only to show credibility to qualify for a grant from a funder. However, the members did not understand the importance of establishing the organization's credibility for survivability. The board members lacked the skills needed for strategic planning (Aulgur 2016). Because of that, the organization was hampered in its efforts to obtain resources to fulfill its mission. Orientation and ongoing training did not exist for this organization's board members, which could have accounted for the lack of understanding of board governance and the misunderstanding of their role as board members (Aulgur 2016).

BoardSource (2015), an NPO that works with other NPOs to improve the leadership skills of board members, and to improve the organizational capacity of nonprofits, issued its annual report on the status of nonprofit boards. The report indicated board members continued to show areas where improvement was needed to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. In a study conducted by BoardSource, researchers had asked executive directors of NPOs nationwide to grade their board members' performance. The results of the study revealed six findings:

- the boards demonstrated room for improvement,
- board members needed to speak out more,

- as funding decrease, members need to outreach more and be the voice championing their organization,
- although board diversity showed an improvement, gaps persist as board size decrease,
- the best boards pay attention to culture and dynamics, make sure the best members are chosen as board members to ensure the board's success, and
- Board members need to embrace their roles as fundraisers; fundraising continues to remain the weakest area in board roles. Finding financial stability amid constant change indicates BoardSource (2015) requires strategic leadership. To remain vital as an organization, boards need to adjust their leadership style to meet the current challenges.

Gazley and Nicholson-Crotty (2018) conducted a study to determine what drives good board governance. A total of 13,391 tax-exempt member-serving organizations' CEOs and executive directors were asked to describe the external environment and governance characteristics, including board structure, selection procedures and challenges, deliberative processes, and meeting characteristics of their organization. In addition, CEOs and executive directors were asked to evaluate their boards on board relations with staff or with members, the board's performance of fiduciary duties, its strategic orientation, and board development and self-assessment practices. The results supported previous research that revealed board performance was linked to complex organizational and labor dynamics such as organizational capacity, high turn over in leadership, and that "performance metrics were multidimensional" (Gazley & Nicholson-Crotty, 2018, p. 262). The findings also revealed board dynamics, organizational capacity, and labor dynamics significantly impacted board performance.

The Need for Board Member Training

Hopkins and Meyer (2019) noted the many leaders in human services organizations take on positions without having requisite leadership skills, and subsequently their effectiveness is diminished due to limitations in their leadership skills. Board performance has been linked to organizational performance, and as a result, many NPOs have implemented board development practices such as initial orientation and ongoing training (Taylor, Ryan, & Chait, 2013). The training recommendations have included recommendations that boards provide members with an initial orientation and ongoing development and an annual assessment of the board and each director (Bruni-Bossio et al. 2016). Fish (2016) stressed the importance of bringing new members up to speed and functioning in their roles by providing a strong orientation to board service. Fish described three different areas of orientation in which board members should train: (a) the legal aspects of governance, (b) training and education about the organization, and (c) the current situations the board and organization are dealing with (i.e., issues, trends, staff, economy, budget). Each of the three areas is essential to helping board members understand what good governance is, what it means to be a good member and their roles and responsibilities in the organization.

Tempkin (2015) further suggested three areas in which board members should train: (a) mission, (b) community, and (c) governance. Training that covers the organizations' mission increases the members' understanding of the organization's history, the clients they serve, success stories, the number of people they serve, and the effect the organization has on the lives of the people served. Training around the community focuses on informing board members of the demographics of the area served and current changes, the economy, changes in the

community, the mission, and the organization's goals. Training in governance prepares and equips members to perform their roles as the governing body of the organization. Governance training should include defining what governance is, including the mandated legal responsibilities, fiduciary responsibilities, and the primary roles and responsibilities of governance.

Bruni-Bossio et al. (2016), to improve board performance, recommended that board training include role-performance training. The researchers indicated that the role-performance training should cover three areas: (a) role-performance reviews, which would allow the board and the chief executive to identify which roles are being performed by the board members versus the chief executive and how well they performed; (b) orientations and training should focus on role-performance relationships, in addition to governance, management, and administration, with the focus on the alignment of roles, and (c) develop and promulgate a positive board and organizational culture. Bruni-Bossio et al. recommended role assessment be conducted by both the board and the chief executive in order to routinely clarify board member roles and differentiate board member roles from the executive director's roles. Other recommendations included boards routinely participating in role crafting and role re-crafting, which is known as defining and redefining their roles in relationship to each other and other stakeholders.

Tysiac (2018) addressed the difficulty that organizations have in maintaining a high-quality board. Tysiac also indicated that 25% of board chairs rated themselves a grade of C for understanding their roles and responsibilities. In order for board members to be effective, Tysiac indicated that the board member training must be ongoing and that the training must distinguish

between management functions and board functions. The training should also address the duties of care, loyalty, obedience, and fiduciary responsibilities.

Board Orientations

Seminal research such as Brown (2007) identified board orientations as an essential component of a three-component board development practice to improve board performance. In his survey study of CEOs and board chairs concerning the underlying assumptions of board development practices in nonprofit governance, Brown (2007) found boards that use strategic recruitment, orientations, and evaluations as their board development practices can improve board performance, which improves organizational performance. Other researchers stress the importance of board orientations as well (BoardSource, 2015; Bruni-Bossio et al., 2016; Shaffer, 2014; Walton et al., 2014). The point of board orientations is to equip board members to assume their roles and responsibilities immediately and start functioning effectively from the start of their term (Fish 2016). Board members are volunteers who divide their time between family, professional jobs, and other activities state Shaffer (2014) and have limited hours to devote to learning their new role as board members. It would be essential to provide them with a well-developed orientation that would allow them to start functioning at the highest level as quickly as possible. Shaffer also recommended that board members receive an operations manual that describes board procedures, policies, and expectations. The intent for such a manual is so board members can reference and review it at their convenience. Board member orientations, according to Shaffer (2014), should include such things as the organization's mission, stakeholders, their needs, and how the board supports them. Members should review the organization's strategic

plan and initiatives, learn about the staff, and understand that the chief executive works for the board and not the other way around.

Abben's (2011) study of NPO's internal stakeholders' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the initial orientation and ongoing training and development found that board members perceived the orientation as sufficient in preparing them for board service. However, the data suggested that the board orientations lacked robustness or, in other words, failed to cover essential and necessary information in detail. Participants also felt there were areas where the board could improve its performance. When asked about their perceptions of whether the initial orientation prepared them to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities, the participants indicated they felt the initial orientation better-prepared board members for the educational and contextual dimensions of governance, but not the interpersonal and the analytical aspects. In the area of ongoing training, Abben (2011) found that the NPO's did not offer opportunities for ongoing training and development. Also, several of the NPO's did not provide an initial orientation. However, the participants felt that NPOs could improve the board members by providing an initial orientation for new board members and implementing an annual self-evaluation process.

Based on the findings from his study, Abben made the following recommendations to the NPO's involved in the research and to the broader community of NPO's that are not currently providing initial orientations to new board members:

- NPO's should begin to offer initial orientations, and the orientations should be robust,
- to improve effectiveness, boards and organizations should provide opportunities for ongoing training and development to their members,

- organizations that do not have a board development committee or a board development plan should develop both, and
- boards should utilize board retreats as a format for development

The study provided valuable information on the importance of NPO's having well-developed training and development practices for their members, which confirmed prescriptive research information currently available in the literature (Abben 2011). The study was limited due to its small sample size and geographical location, which may have limited its generalizability.

Researchers interested in nurses experiences of board orientations, conducted a web-based survey study of 46 nurses serving on three nursing organizations' board of directors. The results from the study revealed there were essential areas of training not covered in the orientations, such as liabilities and fiduciary duties. The missing liabilities and fiduciary components in the training created a deficit of knowledge in the role area of financial oversight. Board members recognized this deficit and requested additional training in finance and a more formal and structured orientation process (Walton et al. 2015).

A qualitative case study of a single nonprofit board of directors was conducted by Rhodes (2014) to determine how the directors acquired their knowledge of nonprofit governance. Eighteen directors were currently serving on the board but only 11 participated in the study. The findings revealed that six of the participants had no governance experience before becoming board members. However, the six members had participated in community programs designed to get community members engaged in the nonprofit arena. The remaining five members came with years of experience. The NPO had a robust recruitment and orientation program for new members where they acquired most of their governance knowledge. All members spoke highly

of the orientation; however, no ongoing training was provided beyond the monthly meetings after the initial orientation. The answer to the research question of how board members learn their roles and responsibilities was that it was accomplished through the initial orientation and on the job training. In her conclusion, Rhodes indicated the skills and knowledge that board members needed to be successful could be acquired through classroom study or structured training activities.

Rhodes (2014) further suggested that there are three factors that NPO's should focus on to have and maintain high performance in their board. Those three things are: (a) develop a robust selection process and orientation for board members; (b) communication, making sure all members receive information promptly regarding board business; and (c) ongoing training and development for board members. Rhodes also stressed the importance of board orientations providing new members with a comprehensive history of the organization, a detailed financial history of the last two years, issues recently addressed by the board or anticipated in the future, current budgets, and requirements of board service. Rhodes went on to emphasize the importance of self-monitoring to ensure the board and organization are running smoothly.

Morrison et al (2019) conducted a qualitative, case study to determine participants perceptions of leadership training. Participants in the study also discussed the need for hands on activities or examples to support the training. The researchers found that participants wanted more than lecture-based training. They wanted examples and activities that could allow them to connect the training to real scenarios. Results from the research also showed that the training should be outlined such that it could enable participants to connect with or disconnect the training from prior experiences with serving on board governance. The researchers suggested

that effective training should consist of the following three parts: a) initial training; b) refresher training, and c) team building training.

Summary

This chapter provided a review of past and current literature relating to nonprofit board member practice and development as it relates to governance. The introduction included a restatement of the problem and the purpose of the study, in addition to information on why the research is necessary. A Stanford Graduate School of Business study (Love, 2015) revealed nonprofit board members lacked sufficient understanding of governance and the roles associated with board service. Although being provided with board development opportunities such as an initial orientation and ongoing training, there remained a lack of understanding of board governance. There is a gap between training and the expected outcome, which is an increased understanding of the roles and responsibilities of board service. There is a need to understand the cause of the gap between training and outcomes. This study explores board member perceptions regarding training received and whether that training adequately prepares them for board service.

The research strategy was introduced, followed by the theoretical foundation of Inglis et al. (1999) three-factor framework. The three-factor framework of strategic activities, operations, and resource planning serves as a guide to identifying the areas in which board members are receiving training. According to Inglis et al., all board roles and responsibilities fall into three categories.

A literature review of key variables and concepts included an overview of nonprofit human service organizations, nonprofit governance, the importance of governance, roles and responsibilities of board members, and role ambiguity. Also provided were earlier research

information on improving board performance and the six competencies that identify the characteristics of an effective board, research on board member training, and board orientation recommendations. Finally, the summary presents recaps of previous research. The next chapter of this proposal is chapter 3, the methodology chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Though an efficient NPO is one where the board members understand their roles and responsibilities and have a firm grasp of governance (Rosenthal, 2012), many board members lack a strong understanding of the mission and strategic objectives of the organizations they serve (Larcker et al., 2015). This generic qualitative study addressed nonprofit board members' perceptions of whether the training they received in preparation for board service adequately prepared them to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. Participants for this study were recruited from the 13 nonprofit human service organizations located in Santa Rosa, California that provided their board members with an initial orientation and ongoing training.

This chapter discusses the generic qualitative methodology that was used to guide this study. The chapter starts with the research design and rationale. The role of the researcher is then discussed, along with the methodology. Included in the Methodology section is a description of the participant selection and the instrumentation. This chapter also includes the data analysis plan, along with a section on trustworthiness and ethical procedures. A summary of the main points concludes the chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

The following research question was used to guide the study: What are nonprofit board members' perceptions regarding whether the board training they received adequately prepared them to fulfill their roles and responsibilities for board service? The central concept of this study is that the performance of NPO board members serving on human service NPO boards are impacted by how well the members understand the roles and responsibilities of their position.

The study used a generic qualitative approach, also known as a basic qualitative or interpretive approach (Kahlke, 2014). A generic qualitative research approach is used when the research does not fit within the standard methodologies of qualitative research such as phenomenology, ethnography, and grounded theory. Generic studies are studies that do not align with any one methodology (Kahlke, 2014). The generic qualitative approach was best suited for this study because the study was not bounded by any of the standard methodological approaches but was able to draw on elements from each of the methodological approaches.

Other qualitative methods considered for this study included grounded theory and phenomenology. Grounded theory is a form of inquiry that relies on a series of procedures designed to develop a theory (Creswell, 2013). Grounded theory was not selected because this study was not intended to find a theory but rather to examine the perceptions held by nonprofit board members as it relates to board development practices. Phenomenology was also considered but not selected. Phenomenology focuses more closely on the experiences of the individual rather than the participants' interpretation, construct, or meaning of their experience (Kahlke, 2014).

The Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument by which data are gathered, reviewed, analyzed, and interpreted (Chenail, 2011). As the researcher in this study, I conducted interviews using an interview protocol, observing the behaviors of the participants as they were interviewed to analyze and interpret the data provided by the participants. Although I am a Santa Rosa resident, I am not affiliated with any of the NPOs or their boards. Thus, I did not anticipate any conflicts of interest related to me as the researcher. I also obtained Institutional

Review Board (IRB) approval from Walden University to conduct the research before the start of the study (approval number **12-10-19-0244874**). The IRB is responsible for ensuring all student research complies with Walden University's ethical standards and U.S. regulations.

Because the researcher is the instrument, they bring their lived experiences and values to the study, which can lead to researcher bias (Chenail, 2011). Having worked in the nonprofit field in another county, I acknowledge my passion for nonprofit work and the propensity to believe services provided to a community should be of the highest quality. To minimize researcher bias in qualitative research, researchers can use the following strategies: (a) if possible, use multiple people to code data; (b) have participants review transcripts of the information they provided in their interview, which is called transcript review; (c) review findings with peers; and (d) verify the information by using multiple data sources, referred to as triangulation (Noble & Smith, 2015). I used transcript review and reflexivity to minimize researcher bias in this study.

Transcript review was accomplished when participants were allowed to review the transcript of their interview. The transcripts were mailed, faxed, or emailed to each participant within 1 week of their interview to review and confirm whether the information captured accurately reflects the information they shared during their interview. I met with each participant in person or via telephone to go over the transcript and obtain their feedback.

In addition, I practiced reflexivity as a way of minimizing researcher bias. Reflexivity refers to the researcher's awareness of how their values, biases, and status could influence the research process (Case, 2017). Reflexivity refers to the researcher's ability to examine his or her feelings, reactions, and motives, and their influence on how he or she thinks or acts in a situation

(“Reflexivity,” n.d.). I kept a reflective journal, noting my thoughts, assumptions, biases, and experiences throughout the research process. As the researcher reflects on their values and biases during the research process, they can identify other potential biases, take note, and avoid harm to the research and or participant (Case, 2017).

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

In qualitative research, participants are recruited based on predetermined criteria relevant to the study (Suri, 2011). Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research to identify and recruit “information-rich” cases related to the focus of the study (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 534). Within purposive sampling, there are several strategies from which a researcher might choose to recruit participants. Snowball or chain sampling, which is a form of sampling where participants are identified by people familiar with information-rich cases or people who would be good interview participants. I used purposive sampling to recruit participants for this study to ensure that all participants experienced the studied phenomenon (Suri, 2011). The participant organization and board members were recruited from the 13 nonprofit human service organizations located in Santa Rosa, California. The board members of the recruited organization met the following criteria:

- the NPO for which they had oversight were an IRS 501(c)3 approved organization,
- board members were non-compensated volunteers, and
- all members had participated in an initial orientation to board service and any additional training aimed at improving board performance within the last 2 years.

Before beginning the study, I conducted a preliminary Internet screening of the targeted NPO websites. The prescreening was done to determine the number of board members serving on each organizations' board, how often board meetings were held, the organizations' hours of operation, the name of the chief executive, and the name of the board chair. I first contacted the NPOs whose boards consisted of at least 10 members to determine which NPOs offered an initial orientation and ongoing training. Three of the organizations informed me they did not offer an initial orientation to their board members. For the NPOs that met this criterion, I contacted the office of the executive director to schedule an appointment to discuss the research project and solicit their participation. When I reached the executive director's office, my call was screened by the executive assistant who said the executive director would return my call. Upon receiving a call back, I was informed on three occasions that they would not be able to participate in the study.

Additionally, I was not able to reach some of the organizations. Two NPO's agreed via telephone to participate in the study, however, they later withdrew their commitment. I was able to meet in person with another executive director who agreed to participate in the study. Three board members from that organization participated in the study. When I met with the participating organization's chief executive and board chair, I asked the following questions: "Have all members completed an initial orientation?" and "Are members provided with ongoing training?" The answer was yes to the orientation question but indicated that no additional training had been provided at that time. Due to the difficulty, I was experiencing in recruiting participants and the beginning of the COVID pandemic, I moved forward with their participation

in the study. I requested the executive director to sign a letter of cooperation. Snowballing was used to recruit additional participants.

Sample Size

Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on random sampling and usually requires a larger sample size, qualitative research is concerned more with the richness of information and does not require a large sample size (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). There are no set rules for the number of participants in a sample size aside from relying on saturation, which is when no new information or themes are observed in the data (Guest et al., 2006). Research has indicated that saturation could be reached as early as six interviews or no more than 12 interviews (Guest et al., 2006). For this study, the goal was to recruit 10–12 participants from the human service NPOs that had experienced the phenomenon under investigation, which would allow for saturation of data obtained from the participants. However, due to difficulty in recruiting participants and the onset of the COVID pandemic, I was only able to recruit a total of five participants. Three of the participants were from the participating organization. The remaining two participants were recruited using snowballing.

Although the sample size in this study was small, enough information was gathered to replicate the study (see Fusch & Ness, 2018). In addition, all participants gave comments related to the emergent themes. After comparing the participants' answers to the research questions, no new themes were noted. Therefore, saturation was reached.

Participant Recruitment

Participants for this study were recruited from NPOs located in Santa Rosa, California and the surrounding cities. One organization and its board members were recruited from the pool

of 13 nonprofit human service organizations located in the area. Board members recruited met the criterion of having completed an initial orientation and in some instances ongoing board member training within the last 2 years.

A letter of cooperation was obtained from the executives of the organization that agreed to participate in the study, and permission for me to conduct the study with members of their organization was granted. Once the organization consented to participate in the study, I passed out recruitment flyers at the next board meeting to recruit participants for the study. The flyer contained a description of the study, the criteria for participation, and my contact information (i.e., name, telephone number, and email address). Potential participants were asked to contact me via telephone. At the initial contact, I confirmed the participation criteria and scheduled an interview time.

Instrumentation

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the research instrument (Chenail, 2011). As the researcher in this study, I collected, analyzed, and coded the data. An interview protocol was developed according to IRB requirements and was used to guide and focus the interviews. See Appendix for a copy of the interview protocol. The interview protocol also ensured that I captured all necessary information. The protocol started with an opening script, which allowed me to note the date and time of the interview, demographic information, and concluded with a closing script. The interview protocol also included an explanation of the purpose of the study, methods of disseminating results, and the interview questions.

Data Collection

I collected data for this study from board members currently serving on Human Service NPO boards in Santa Rosa, California, and surrounding cities, who met the criterion for participation in the study. The method of collection was in-depth interviews using open-ended questions. Each interview was audio-recorded to ensure full capture of what was shared by the participant. I used an interview protocol (see Appendix) to serve as a guide for conducting the interviews. Using an interview protocol allowed me to conduct each interview in the same manner and ask the same questions (Chenail, 2011).

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used to collect the data. The number of interviews conducted each day was limited to no more than two a day until all participant interviews were completed (taking approximately 5 days). Limiting the number of interviews per day allowed time after each day to transcribe the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Sutton and Austin (2015), one 45-minute interview can take up to eight hours to transcribe, even for an experienced interviewer; therefore, to allow sufficient time for transcription of interviews to be completed by me each day, no more than two interviews were conducted.

Scheduling of Appointments

Each participant was contacted by telephone to schedule an appointment time for their interview. A standard Day Planner was used to record interview appointment times and locations. Appointments lasted approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. However, each appointment was allotted a 2-hour slot to allow for any unexpected issues such as lateness or extended

interview time. Appointments were scheduled at a time and place of convenience for the participant. If the participant did not have a preferred meeting place, I had secured the use of a conference room at the local library.

Recording Device

The interviews were audio-recorded using my iPhone to capture the essence of the information shared by the participant. I made sure my cell phone was fully charged for each interview and made sure to have my phone charger with me. As an additional precautionary measure, I also had my digital recorder as a backup.

Informed Consent

Before the start of each interview, participants were provided an informed consent form that I went over with them. The informed consent contained information that explained the study and risks associated with participating in the study. Participants were informed that the interviews would be audio-recorded and asked for their permission for the recording to occur. In addition, I explained to each participant that a follow-up interview would be scheduled later, if necessary, to go over the transcripts of their interviews. The information contained in the informed consent was to assist the participant in making an informed decision about whether they were willing to participate in the study.

Reflective Journal

A standard journal purchased from the Office Depot supply store was used to document my thoughts, feelings, and emotions during the process of collecting and analyzing the data. The reflective journal was used to enhance the confirmability of the research (Anney, 2014).

Document Review

In addition to interviews, I conducted a document review of the participating organization's board orientation manual. Document analysis is often used in qualitative research along with other methods as a means of triangulation (Bowen, 2009). In addition, documents can serve many purposes, such as providing data on the context within which participants operate, past events, background information, supplementary research data, and historical insight. Information contained within documents can highlight some questions that need to be asked that the researcher may not have considered, and situations that may need to be observed as part of the research (Bowen, 2009). The document review was used as a means of triangulation to enhance the credibility of the research. See chapter 4 data collection for additional information regarding the document review.

Data Analysis

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions were used to conduct the interviews. An interview protocol was used to guide and keep the interviews focused. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour and was audio recorded. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim using Microsoft Word. Each line of text was numbered for easy reference when validating the transcription and for coding purposes (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Once transcribed, I validated the transcription by listening to the recorded interviews several times and comparing the transcript line by line to the audio recording for accuracy. Each participant was emailed a copy of their transcript for review and feedback.

Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step process was used to analyze the data. Colaizzi's process is frequently used in qualitative research as a means to identify meaningful information and

organize it into themes. Colaizzi's seven-step process consisted of the following steps. For Step 1. Familiarisation, I listened to each recorded interview several times to become familiar with the information contained in each recorded interview. I read through each interview transcript several times to become familiar with the information contained in each.

In Step 2: Identifying significant statements, after the initial two read-throughs of the transcripts, I then re-read each transcript line by line to identify statements that were relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. I documented the recurring themes in an Excel spreadsheet according to page and line number. This process of open coding was continued several times until no new themes were identified.

Step 3 was formulate meanings. This step in the data analysis was accomplished by formulating themes that were meaningful to the research. The goal of the process was data reduction. Themes were formulated from the significant statements identified in Step 2 and grouped together. Step 4 involved clustering themes. Using Axial coding, themes that were identified as having the same, or related meaning, were sorted into "categories, clusters of themes, and themes" (Shosha, 2012, p. 33). Each cluster of themes was coded using Excel.

For Step 5, I developed an exhaustive description. At this phase of the analysis, I merged all themes to write a full description of the findings of the phenomenon under study. A peer colleague who was part of the research and supervising research members were asked to review and confirm the results. Then in Step 6: Produce the fundamental structure, with the goal of data reduction, the data was condensed. The exhaustive description was reduced down to short, dense statements that captured only the information deemed essential to the structure of the phenomenon. Finally, Step 7 involved seeking verification of the fundamental structure –This

process serves as a means to validate the findings (Shosha, 2012). I conducted a transcript review by having participants review the findings and compare the descriptive results with their experiences. Participants were allowed to provide feedback on how well the results summarized their experiences.

Issues of Trustworthiness

There are four constructs in qualitative research that demonstrate trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004). The use of these terms is preferred amongst qualitative researchers instead of terms that are more strongly associated with quantitative research, terms such as internal validity, external validity or generalizability, reliability, and objectivity. Trustworthiness in this study was accomplished using the four constructs.

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research refers to the “confidence in the truth of the study” (Connelly, 2016, p. 435). To accomplish credibility in this study, I used prolonged engagement, a transcript review, and document review. Prolonged engagement consisted of me spending enough time with each participant, establishing rapport, getting acquainted, and attentive observation before and throughout the interview. Credibility, according to Rudestam and Newton (2015), is accomplished when the appropriate amount of time is spent with the participant to assure accuracy and explore participants’ experiences in detail. Credibility was also achieved through transcript review (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). A transcript review is where the participant reviews the transcript of their recorded interview to see if what they intended to say was captured accurately (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). Each participant could verify their interview transcript to see if

the essence of the information they shared was captured. A copy of each participants' transcript was emailed to them for review and feedback. A follow-up meeting and or telephone call was scheduled with the participant to answer any questions regarding the transcript and receive feedback. In addition, I conducted a document review of the participating organization's board orientation manual to further enhance credibility.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is obtained when other researchers can replicate the study (Shenton, 2004). It also refers to the constancy of the data over time and over the conditions of the study (Connelly, 2016). To establish dependability in this study, I will have a researcher colleague who is not connected to this study conduct an inquiry audit. An inquiry audit, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), occurs when another researcher who is not involved in the research process examines both the process and product of the research study to evaluate the accuracy and whether the data support the findings, interpretation, and conclusions. Additionally, an audit trail will be used throughout the research process. An audit trail, according to Shenton (2004), includes the raw data and how it is reduced, analyzed, and synthesized. For the audit trail, I kept a reflective journal that detail each phase of the study, including my thoughts, emotions, and feelings during the process. Keeping a reflective journal allows for transparency of research and enhances dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research is the equivalent of objectivity in quantitative research (Shenton, 2004). Connelly (2016) describes confirmability as the extent to which findings from a study can be repeated. Amankwaa (2016) indicates that confirmability is “a

degree of neutrality or the extent to which findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest” (p.121). A reflective journal was kept detailing the analysis process and included my thoughts during each phase. A reflective journal that describes the methodological decisions and the reasons for the decisions, the logistics of the study, and the researchers’ thoughts, adds confirmability to the study.

An audit trail was used to establish confirmability. Amankwaa (2016) describes an audit trail as a "transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings” (p.122). Keeping a detailed record of how the data was reduced, analyzed, and synthesized allows other researchers to replicate the study in the same manner in which it occurred (Shenton, 2004). Another method also proposed by Connelly was transcript review; Transcript review was accomplished by having the participants in the study review their interview transcripts and provide feedback on the accuracy of the captured data. The transcript review and an audit trail were used in this study to establish confirmability.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research equates to external validity in quantitative research. Transferability refers to the ability to generalize the results of the study to other settings. According to Connelly (2016), transferability is established when the researcher provides “rich,” detailed descriptions of the context, location, and people studied, and by being transparent about analysis and trustworthiness” (p. 435). Transferability in this study was accomplished by providing “rich descriptions” of the participants, the context for which they shared, and the detailed description of the data collection and analysis process. Providing sufficient detail of the

participants, the context of the study, collection of data, and analysis process allows for transferability to other settings (Connelly 2016).

Ethical Procedures

Ethics in research is concerned with the treatment of participants, recruitment materials, data collection, and storage. The ethical procedures for this research study were guided by Walden University Institution Review Board (IRB). The IRB is responsible for ensuring that all student research meets the ethical standards of Walden University and U.S. federal regulations. IRB approval was obtained before starting my research. Once IRB approval was obtained, the NPOs that met the preliminary internet screening were contacted and asked to participate in the study. A letter of cooperation was obtained from the organization which committed to participate in the study. The goal was to secure the participation of at least one organization with ten board members who met the criteria for participation in the study. Each participant was required to sign an informed consent form. Each participant was informed that their participation in the study was voluntary, and they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Potential risks associated with the study were explained in the Informed Consent form in addition to the benefits of the study. To address privacy and confidentiality concerns in this study; all information that identified the participant was removed from data documents and numbers assigned as the means for identification. A word document was created to link the confidential identifying information to the assigned number for recognition purposes and future reference. The document was then password secured in an online file.

Participants in the study were emailed a copy of their interview transcript to review for accuracy and if the essence of the information they shared was captured correctly. After the

study, participants received a final copy of the research study. Although there are minimal risks associated with qualitative research and generally around privacy, it was essential to build trust and confidence with the participants. I used the informed consent form to build trust and confidence by explaining the study in detail to each participant, reassuring them of the freedom and right to withdraw from the study at any time. The importance of their participation in the study was stressed, including how it benefited NPOs and their boards in improving board performance, which leads to improved organizational performance.

Summary

This chapter provided information on the methods used for this study. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions held by NPO board members regarding the initial orientation and ongoing training they received in preparation for board service and whether the training adequately prepared them to fulfill their roles. The sections discussed in this chapter included the introduction and a restatement of the research purpose. The research design and rationale were discussed, followed by the setting and sample. The study used criterion sampling to recruit participants who had lived the experience to be studied. The study focused on human service NPO's board of directors in Santa Rosa, California. The board members selected were those who had completed an initial board orientation and any ongoing board development training. A description of the role of the researcher as the instrument in qualitative research was also discussed. Instruments used in the study included interview protocol, recorded interviews, and a journal. Other topics covered in this chapter included the data analysis plan, the issues of trustworthiness, and finally, the ethical procedures followed. Before starting the research, I obtained IRB approval.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore nonprofit board members' perceptions of whether the training they received in preparation for board service adequately prepared them to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. The following research question guided this study: What are nonprofit board members' perceptions regarding whether the board training they received adequately prepared them to fulfill their roles and responsibilities for serving on the board? This chapter discusses the research setting, participant demographics, and how data were collected. I describe the data analysis procedures used, the themes that emerged from the analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness. The chapter concludes with the summary.

Setting

The interviews were conducted in locations requested by the participants. If a participant did not have a specific location, I had arrangements to use a conference room at the local library. However, when scheduling the appointments, two of the participants requested to be interviewed at a small local café, which was relatively quiet with only one or two other customers in the building at the time of each scheduled meeting. We were able to meet in a small, secluded area of the restaurant that was about 25 to 30 feet away from the other patrons and that afforded privacy. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the remaining participants requested to be interviewed online and via telephone. I emailed the informed consent forms to them, which they completed and returned via email.

Demographics

Demographic information such as gender, age, ethnicity, and educational background was collected on all participants in the study (see Table). Five board members participated in the study. All five participants were female; four were African American, and one was African. Participants ranged in ages from 28 years to 73 years of age. The participants' educational background included mostly bachelor's degrees (three participants). Three of the participants had served on the board for less than 3 years, and one participant had served on several boards, including at one time as board chair. Two of the participants had completed their orientation within the last month and a half, and the others ranged from completing 2 months prior to interview to 4 years prior with a recent refresher.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Age	Education	Profession	Years on Board	Orientation Completed
1	Female	34	BA in Education	Teacher	8 months	1 month
2	Female	58	PhD Theology	CEO	3 years	1.5 mos.
	Female	28	BS in Experimental Psychology	Administrator	2 years	1 mos.
4	Female	73	BS Business	Auditor	1 year	1 mos.
5	Female	70+	Master's in Education	Retired Teacher	15 years	4 years + recent refresher

Data Collection

Five board members currently serving on NPO boards participated in the study. The study consisted of in-depth interviews that lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. Three participants were from an NPO in Santa Rosa, California; the remaining two participants served on two different boards in nearby cities. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the remaining two

participants preferred to be interviewed via telephone. I emailed the informed consent form to them to accommodate their request, which they reviewed, signed, and returned to me via email. I interviewed the three members of the organization that committed to participating in the study in person. At each interview, I went over the informed consent form with each participant and obtained their consent to participate and be recorded before starting the interview. I used my cell phone to record each interview instead of the voice-activated recorder I had purchased for that purpose as indicated in Chapter 3. I set aside the voice-activated recorder to use as a backup. I also had my cell phone charger with me in case the battery became low on my phone.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used to collect the data. Each interview was audio-recorded after obtaining the participants' consent. An interview protocol (see Appendix) was followed to ensure that each participant was asked the same question. I conducted one interview a day to allow sufficient time for transcription. Due to participants scheduling issues and the COVID-19 crisis, the interviews were conducted over a period of 2 months.

Initially, the goal was to recruit 10–12 participants from human service NPOs in Santa Rosa, California who had experienced the phenomenon under investigation. However, after the initial prescreening of the 13 organizations, only three agreed to participate in the study. Two of the three organizations backed out of the study, leaving one organization with three board members willing to participate. Using snowballing, I recruited two additional board members from two different organizations who were willing to participate in the study.

Document Review

I conducted a document review of the participating organizations' board orientation manual. Document analysis is often used in qualitative research along with other methods as a means of triangulation (Bowen, 2009). The review of the manual corroborated information shared by the participants. The manual contained a welcoming statement to the new board member and highlighted the importance of being a board member. Further review of the manual revealed information on the organization such as its origin and purpose. The manual also contained the vision, mission, and values of the organization. There was also a list of current board members and the officers of the board. One section of the manual included the definition of a board member, the definition of a board of directors, governance, and a description of the three legal responsibilities of a board member. Included also was a list of the roles and responsibilities of a board member and a board member job description. There was also a copy of a board member contract. The document review corroborated the information participants shared in their interview responses. The document review, transcript review, and prolonged engagement were used as a means of triangulation to enhance the credibility of the study.

Data Analysis

I took an inductive approach to the data analysis, which uses frequent detailed readings of the raw data to allow themes to emerge (Thomas, 2006). Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step process was used to analyze the data. I read through each transcript several times to become familiar with the data (see Colaizzi, 1978). I then read through the transcripts again to identify descriptive statements. Using an Excel spreadsheet, I listed the descriptive statements and then grouped them into categorical themes until no new themes emerged. The descriptive statements and

themes were again entered into an Excel spreadsheet. Due to the small sample size, I used Microsoft Excel for the analysis process instead of NVivo software, as indicated in Chapter 3. Enough information was gathered from the small sample size to replicate the study (see Fusch & Ness, 2018).

Using open coding, I highlighted recurring themes. The descriptive statements were once again coded using axial coding and entered in a separate spreadsheet until no new themes emerged. The themes identified as having the same or related meaning were sorted into clusters and again into themes. Interview Questions 1 and 3 were grouped, and the responses were analyzed as both questions elicited the same type of information. The same was true of Questions 2 and 10. A detailed discussion of the interview questions and resultant themes are presented in the Results section of this chapter.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in this study's findings was achieved using the four constructs of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is accomplished when the appropriate amount of time is spent with the participant to assure accuracy and explore participants' experiences in detail (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). To accomplish credibility in this study, I used prolonged engagement, transcript review, and document review. Prolonged engagement consisted of spending extended time with each participant, getting acquainted, establishing rapport, and attentive observation before and during the interview. Each interview was scheduled in a 2-hour slot to allow for an extended time with each participant. The actual interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. Credibility was also achieved through transcript review. Each participant received a copy of their transcript to review for accuracy and whether

the essence of the information they shared was captured (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). In addition, I conducted a document review of the participating organizations' board orientation manual. The manual provided insight into what was covered in the orientation and information on the organization and enhanced the credibility of the study.

Transferability

Transferability was achieved by providing detailed descriptions of the research process, the methodology, the data collection, and the data analysis process. Transferability was further accomplished by providing detailed descriptions of the study participants, the demographics, the context for which they shared, and the interpretation of the findings. Providing sufficient detail of the participants, the study's context, data collection, and data analysis process allows for transferability (Connelly, 2016).

Dependability

Dependability was established through an audit trail. The data collection and data analysis process were documented in detail to enhance dependability. A detailed journal was kept outlining the research process, the data collected, the analysis, and the findings. All data, such as interview transcripts, analysis documents, recorded interviews, were securely stored. Documents related to this research study are locked in a file in my home office. Digital file copies are stored in a cloud folder and passcode protected for future reference. In Chapter 3, I indicated I would have a researcher colleague who was not connected to the study to conduct an inquiry audit. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, the researcher's colleague was unable to conduct the inquiry audit, and time did not allow for the recruitment of another. However, transcript review was used to enhance dependability. Participants were given the opportunity to

review their transcripts for accuracy and whether the essence of what they shared was captured.

Further, a review of my research process has been reviewed by my committee to ensure the accuracy and completeness of this study.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the “neutrality or the degree findings are consistent and can be repeated” (Connelly, 2016, p. 435). I followed an interview protocol during the interviews to remain neutral and not influence participants in their answers. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. To ensure the accuracy of the interview transcripts, a transcript review was conducted by emailing each participant a copy of their transcript to review and provide feedback. Participants were also allowed to revise or clarify their answers. Two of the participants revised or clarified their answers to two of the questions. Participants 2 and 5 revised their answers to one question when I called regarding feedback to their transcript. Participant 2 indicated her answer to Question 5 was that there was no weakest part of the orientation. Participant 5 changed her answer to Question 12 to indicate she would rate herself at a 10 for board service and that she was an “excellent board member, familiar with and invested in my organization.”

I also kept a reflective journal that detailed the data analysis process and included my thoughts during each research phase. A reflective journal that describes the methodological decisions and the reasons for the decisions, the study’s logistics, and the researchers’ thoughts add confirmability to the study (Connelly 2016). Additionally, the audit trail was used to establish confirmability. Keeping a detailed record of how the data was reduced, analyzed, and synthesized allows other researchers to replicate the study in the same way it occurred.

Results

This section discusses the results of the study. The results were used to answer the research question: What are nonprofit board members' perceptions regarding whether the board training they received adequately prepared them to fulfill their roles and responsibilities for serving on the board? Each of the five board members was asked a series of 12 questions during the interview process. The 12 questions were grouped into four categories, as shown in Table 2. The four categories were (a) adequacy of training provided, (b) additional training, (c) recommendations for training, and (d) perceptions of competence as a board member.

Table 2*Topics and Themes*

Topics	Themes
Adequacy of Training Provided	
Content of the training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provided job description/roles/responsibilities • clarification of organization objectives • presented legal requirements
How the Orientation prepared you for board service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased knowledge of roles • outlined board member requirements • opened mind to what knowledge was needed
The most helpful part of the Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information about legal responsibilities • explaining the values of the organization • explanation of the responsibilities of each board member
The weakest part of the Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too general, • lack of history • too much lecture
Additional Training	
Frequency of additional board training received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none • Yearly retreats
Content or focus of additional training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting assets • financial oversight
Recommendation for Additional Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include activities related to the organization • provide information about other organizations doing the same or similar work. • allow more time for interactions/questions
Perceptions of Competence as a board member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepared to step in and serve, • illuminated areas for improvement, • committed and invested in the organization

Adequacy of Training

Each participant was asked a series of four interview questions to determine their perceptions of the adequacy of the training they received in preparation for board service. Four of the questions were combined since each elicited the same information. Responses to Interview Questions 1 and 3 were grouped, which were “Describe the training you received in the initial orientation to board service” and “What areas of training did the orientation cover?” The other two questions grouped together were Questions 2 and 10: “Explain how the orientation prepared you for board service” and “How did the orientation help you to understand your role as a board member?”

Content of the Training

Four interview questions were grouped under the category regarding the content of the training. A total of 12 themes emerged from the participants’ responses to determine the adequacy of the training. Three themes emerged for each question category. The themes that emerged from the content section were (a) provided job description, (b) clarified organization objectives, and (c) described legal responsibilities.

Provided Job Description. Three of the five participants indicated that the orientation included a job description. The job description provided members with information detailing the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of each board member. For example, each board member was expected to know the organization’s mission, the policies, programs, and needs of the organization. Board members were expected to read and understand the organizations’ financial statements, act as advocates and ambassadors for the organization, commit to donating to the organization personally, fundraising, attend board meetings, and participate in a committee.

Participant 1 indicated that the job description covered a range of topics. Participant 1 indicated she was expected to: “Know the organization’s mission, policies, programs, and needs, and faithfully read and understand the organizations’ financial statements, serve as an advocate and ambassador for the organization and fully engage in identifying and securing the financial resources.” Participant 5 gave a similar response by stating that the board orientation covered the “Roles and fiduciary responsibility of the board of directors and the importance of being a community leader.”

Identified Organizational Objectives. Participant 4, recruited to serve on the board of a new organization that was just getting started, felt her orientation focused on the organization’s objectives, what they hoped to accomplish, and how they were going to accomplish them. Participant 4 stated that the training “Covered the objectives of the organization and information about all the potential board members.” Participant 1 stated that as a result of the training, she gained “knowledge about the organization, the goals, mission, and the vision of the organization.”

Presented Legal Requirements. Three participants shared that the training they received covered the legal responsibilities of the organization. Participant 1 response captured the three themes related to the content of the training. According to Participant 1, the training:

Required me to know and understand my roles and responsibilities as a board member.

And it required me to have knowledge about the organization. And it prepared me to be ready to serve and to understand the fundamental legal duties of each individual.

Participant 4 indicated that the training covered the organization, different positions, legal requirements, best practices, tasks, and duties of board members. Participant 5 said the training

covered “Roles and fiduciary and legal responsibility of the board of directors and the importance of being a community leader.”

How The Orientation Prepared You For Board Service

The participants were asked to describe or explain how the orientation prepared them for board service. The following three themes emerged from the participants’ responses: (a) Increased knowledge of roles, (b) outlined board member requirements, and (c) opened mind to what knowledge was needed.

Increased Knowledge Roles/Responsibilities. Each of the five participants indicated they gained increased knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of board members, indicating a lack of clarity, or understanding previously. Participant 1 stated the training:

Required me to know and understand my roles and responsibilities as a board member. It required me to have knowledge about the organization. And it prepared me to be ready to serve and to understand the fundamental legal duties of each individual.

Participant 3 stated, “the orientation made me think of and beware of what I am doing as a board member.” Participant 4 shared, “It made me aware of what they were looking for, and I felt that my experiences and interest matched what they were looking for.” Participant 5 stated the training made her aware of her duties. Increased knowledge was the overall perception of how each board member felt. Participants generally indicated their knowledge and understanding of board service had increased after attending the orientation.

Outlined Board Member Requirements. The members stated the orientation outlined board member requirements and defined what a board is. Participant 2 felt the orientation clearly outlined board member requirements, including defining what a board is and what a board does.

The detailed response from Participant 2 regarding the outlining of board responsibility is presented below:

It covered the functionality of the board. You know, how the board exists, why the board exists. Um, to bring order if you will, to an organization that is primarily charitable. Um, a non-profit organization is one that is created not for the purpose of obtaining a profit but for public service.

Participant 4 described the orientation as making her aware of what they were looking for in a board member and how her experience matched their criteria.

Opened Mind to What Knowledge Was Needed. Each participant stated they had gained a deeper understanding of what it means to serve on a board and serve the community.

Participant 1 indicated the orientation “Opened her mind to what she needed to know as a board member, such as the organization’s mission, vision, and values. Board members are to be knowledgeable and ready to serve the community.” Participant 3 shared that “The orientation made me think and be more aware of what I am doing as I go forward in my board service.”

Participant 2 stated that her mind was “opened to the fact that serving on a board is not about me, but the people we serve.”

Most Helpful Part of the Orientation

The participants were asked what areas of the orientation they considered most helpful to them. Three themes emerged: a) information about legal responsibilities, b) explaining the values of the organization, and c) explanation of the responsibilities of each board member. A discussion of each theme is presented in the paragraphs which follow:

Information About Legal Responsibilities. When asked to describe the most helpful part of the orientation, two of the participants responded that it was the information provided regarding the “legal responsibilities” of the board. One participant described it as “the legal duties” of a board, while another participant described it as “the legal values of the organization.” Participant 1 stated that “The most helpful part of the orientation was that it showed me that it is not about me; it is about the people we serve and understanding the legal values of the organization.” Participant 5 further commented that the training required her to “Demonstrate understanding of the nonprofit’s mission. This also includes being conscious of the issues (operational, legal, and ethical) that are related to the organization’s mission.”

Explained the Values of the Organization. Several participants indicated the orientation covered the values of the organization. Participant 1 stated, “the most helpful part of the orientation was that it showed me that it is not about me; it is about the people we serve.” Participant 5 referred to the values as the ethics of the organization. The ethics of an organization are guided by the values of the organization. Another participant felt that explaining the values also included “knowing what the organizations’ objectives are, and what they hope to accomplish.”

Explained Responsibilities of Each Board Member. When describing the most helpful part of the orientation, each participant at various points described learning about the roles and responsibilities. Participant 1 shared, “That I must understand what the job is about and the roles and responsibilities of the board governance as a board member.” Participant 2 compared it to “the basic outline for board members’ responsibilities duties.” Participant 3 described it this way, “Um, for me, I think the most helpful part was, um, finding out and getting a clear picture of

what is required of each board member.” Participant 5 indicated it was the explanation or requirement that board members “demonstrate an understanding of the nonprofit’s mission. This also includes being conscious of the issues (operational, legal, and ethical) that are related to the organization’s mission.” In addition, participant 5 felt “fiduciary responsibilities, and the importance of being a community leader” was also beneficial.

Weakest Part of Orientation

The participants were asked to describe the weakest part of the orientation. Each participant held a very different perspective regarding the weakest part of the orientation with no common themes. Participant 1 felt there was no weakest part to the orientation and stated,

I don’t know if I can describe the weakest part; I don’t know if there was a weakest part because it was all knowledge to me. I only got knowledge of what I am supposed to do as a board member. What is required of me, and how I must serve. That is all I needed to know being a part of, being a board member.

Based on the other participant’s responses, the following themes are highlighted: (a) too general, (b) lack of history, and (c) too much lecture.

Too General. Participant 2 indicated the training had been too general and stated, “I would say maybe the weakest part of the orientation was the fact that um, it was general and there might not have... maybe it was more focused on the larger boards and not on such a small board as ours with just three people.” “It was more focused on larger boards and not smaller boards that are relatively new.”

Lack of History. Participant 4 stated, “because it was a new organization with no history, only what they planned to do,” was the weakest part of the orientation. So, the lack of

history was the weakest part of the orientation. Participant 4 further stated, “the orientation focused more on the organizations’ goals and objectives and how they planned to accomplish those objectives.”

Too Much Lecture. Participant 5, who had previous experience serving on boards, including serving as board chair at one time, described her orientation as having “too much lecture by the presenter.” She indicated the orientation would have been more effective if there were less lecture and more activities with a time for questions and answers.

Additional Training

The next question I sought answers to was what additional training each of the participants had received since their orientation. Each participant was asked to describe any additional board training they had received. The following is a listing of their responses.

Frequency of Additional Board Training

None. Participant 1 and 3 indicated they had not received any additional training since the orientation but expected to receive training in the future. Participant 3 also indicated she had served on a board before and had gone through training. Participant 4 stated she had not had training outside of the orientation, but there had been a lot of “meetings focusing on how they were going to accomplish their goals.” Several participants indicated they had not received any additional training. Participant 2 indicated the only additional training she had received was training that she had sought on her own. Participant 2 further stated she had not received additional training through the organization but felt her bachelor’s degree in Administration counted toward additional training, specifically since she had learned about NPOs while working toward her degree.

Yearly Retreats. Participant 5 had served on boards before, including at one time as board chair. The board she was currently serving on held “yearly retreats” and training that included board orientation refresher training.” Except for participant 1, who had no previous experience serving on a nonprofit board, each of the other four participants had experienced some type of previous, current, or ongoing training that was not associated with the orientation.

Content or Focus of Additional Training

The participants were asked to describe the content or focus of the additional training they had received. Participant 2 described the training as “very generalized...rules, regulations, policies, procedures, purposes, missions, and that sort of thing.” She went on to say the training at the state was “a lot of the state laws and what the state would do.” Participant 3 noted that the focus of the training she had attended “was on each board members’ specific duties and not overall duties of board members. Participant 5 described the training as covering “financial oversight, protecting the organizations’ assets, enhancing public standing, and building a network of supporters.”

Recommendations for Additional Training

Board members were asked to describe any improvements they would recommend for future training. Participant 1 did not offer suggestions for improvement because it was her “first time having received this training, and I have never been in this field before in the United States, so I have yet to find out what I would recommend.”

Include Activities That Relate to the Organization

Participant 3 recommended training that would include activities for members to work through together related to the organization. “Um, a big one is um, that if there was some way to

intertwine, um activities that allowed us to directly apply to our organization to work through together during the orientation, I think that would be beneficial.”

Provide Information About Other Organizations

Participant 4, who had been recruited to serve on the board of a new organization, stated, “Perhaps information about other organizations that are doing the same or similar things.”

Providing information on other organizations doing the same or similar work might help members better understand the work of their organization and how it is being done by other organizations. It might also help or encourage members to look for potential areas for collaboration, particularly for a new organization.

Allow More Time for Interactions

Although the other participants recommended future training include activities, Participant 5, who had served on several boards before her current board position, shared, “I would recommend more interaction and time for questions and examples.” Participant 5 further suggested that the lecture time of orientations be reduced to allow for interactions and a specific time for questions and answers. Her recommendation stemmed from years of experience as a board member who had also served on numerous boards previously and being a retired schoolteacher. As a schoolteacher, she had experience both in teaching youth and adults and understanding the best method to use in teaching adults where they will retain the information.

Perception of Competence as a Board Member

Overall, the participants felt the Orientation was beneficial in preparing them to be a productive board member from the start of their board service. When asked to describe or rate themselves as board members, the following themes emerged: (a) prepared to step in and serve,

(b) prepared but illuminated areas for improvement, and (c) excellent board members committed and invested in the organization. Some participants assigned a numeric number to their competence level after the orientation, while others did not.

Prepared to Step in and Serve

In response to the question of how you would rate or describe your level of competence to serve as a board member, Participant 1 rated her competence level to be 60 percent out of 100. When asked in a follow up to clarify, she indicated that she “considered herself to be prepared to step in and serve after the orientation.” Participant 2 rated herself at an 8 out of 10 after the orientation and indicated “she was prepared to serve.” Participant 2 gave the following comments regarding being prepared to serve as a board member:

Prior to my orientation, I would say probably about out of 10, maybe a 2. Because even though I had the knowledge, I did not have the practical. With that in mind, I now feel more equipped to like to handle the meetings, the notes; I see that it has come full circle. I see the big picture more. I see the overall big picture more. Before it was, I see this piece over here; I see this piece over here. What the orientation did was bring them all together. So, I feel more equipped. I would say I am at an 8 now.

Prepared but Illuminated Areas for Improvement

The participants were asked to rate their level of competence after the orientation. Some of the participants gave a numeric and written interpretation of their competence level. Participants 3 and 4 did not give a numerical level but felt they were prepared to "step in and be productive." Participant 3 described her competence level as, “I think with the training I have

received; I was prepared to step in as a board member; however, I do think there are areas that were illuminated during the orientation that I definitely can use improvement.

Committed and Invested in the Organization

Participant 5, initially, when responding to the question to rate her competence level as a board member, rated the orientation instead of her level of competence. However, after I called to ask her to clarify her answer, she rated her ability as a board member to be at a 10 level. She went on to say, "Overall, I would rate myself as an excellent qualified, loyal, and focused board member who is attuned to the organization."

Based on the participants' responses, each member held an overall positive view of the orientation and their ability to serve effectively as board members. In addition, there was an indication that they recognized a need for improvement and their continued learning. As shared by Participant 1,

Like as I said, I didn't know, but when I had this training, it made me go deeper in to wanting to know the missions and understanding the mission, the vision, and the values in order for me to be resourceful on the board. I must have knowledge and understand the purpose of the organization.

Document Review

To further enhance the study's credibility, I conducted a document review of the participating organization's orientation manual. The document review served as one of the triangulation methods, along with the transcript review and prolonged engagement with the participants. I reviewed the manual documents and compared them to the information the participants shared in response to the interview questions. The document reviews corroborated

information shared by the participants in their responses to the interview questions. It was clear what was contained in the manual was what was shared in the orientation. The review also confirmed the missing information that the participants described as missing from the orientation, such as no board meeting minutes and the organizations' financials.

Composite Summary

Findings from this study revealed that overall, the participants held positive views regarding the initial orientation and ongoing board member training. The participants felt the orientation had improved their competence level as board members and enabled them to be effective as members. Some of the themes that emerged in answer to the research question of "What are nonprofit board members' perceptions regarding whether the board training they received adequately prepared them to fulfill their roles and responsibilities for serving on the board?" Are summarized below.

Three out of five of the participants indicated the orientation had included a job description. The other two described the training as outlining the roles and responsibilities of board service. The job description provided the members with foundational information detailing the members' role as a board member. A job description serves as a guide to help members understand their role and what is expected of them. When a board member is provided a clear description of their roles and responsibilities, it minimizes or eliminates what Doherty and Hoye (2011) described as role ambiguity.

Some of the board members' views suggest the orientation covered information on the organization's objectives and how they would accomplish the objectives. Clearly defining the organization's goals and objectives provides a road map for the members regarding what the

organization is trying to do and how they plan to get there. Sharing the objectives and goals of the organization is part of strategic planning and is one element of the three-factor framework.

Board members should understand the legal requirements of serving on a nonprofit board. Three of the participants described the orientation as covering the legal responsibilities associated with board service. All NPOs are governed by federal and state law. It is the board members' responsibility to make sure their organization operates within the laws' guidelines. To do this, they must be aware of and understand those laws.

Each of the five board members felt they gained increased knowledge of board member roles and responsibilities from the orientation. The increase in knowledge of roles and responsibilities verifies a lack of knowledge prior to the orientation. That was not to say that they did not have some knowledge, but that the knowledge was limited.

The members were asked to describe or rate their level of competence before and after the orientation. The members overwhelmingly indicated the orientation was beneficial in preparing them to be productive board members. In each case, the members described an increase in their level of competence.

The results of the study revealed the participants held positive perceptions regarding the orientation. However, the members also felt there were areas of improvement needed in the orientations and made recommendations to that effect. The recommendations include adding activities to the orientations that members could work through together. One suggestion was that the lecture time be shortened to allow for questions and answers. A final suggestion was that orientations include information on other organizations doing the same type of work.

Summary

This chapter presented the setting, demographics, data collection and analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, the results, and finally, the summary. The study was undertaken to answer the research question: What are nonprofit board members' perceptions regarding whether the board training in the form of the initial Orientation they received adequately prepared them to fulfill their roles and responsibilities for serving on the board? Based on the participants' answers, the board orientation prepared them to step in and perform their roles effectively at a particular level, but still required additional training. The research design was a generic qualitative method. The results showed orientations generally cover areas that fall within the three-factor framework of strategic activities, operations, and resource planning. The study also affirms other research (Brown, 2007) that board member performance is improved when provided an initial board orientation. The results also suggest that members feel more confident to serve as board members after Orientation. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore nonprofit board members' perceptions of whether the training they received in preparation for board service adequately prepared them to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. The findings from this study suggest that prior to the board orientation, board members did not have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This lack of understanding was referred to by some researchers as role ambiguity (Doherty & Hoye, 2011). Researchers have stressed the importance of bringing new members up to speed and functioning in their roles by providing a strong orientation to board service (Fish, 2016). The findings revealed that providing new board members with an initial orientation to board service provides them with a foundational starting point to enter board service and be effective members from the start of their service. Findings from the study also revealed that board members who are provided an initial orientation to board service overall hold positive perceptions of the orientation and are more confident in their ability to serve. However, although members held positive views of the training, some participants felt that training could be improved by including more activities that relate to the organizations. Additionally, participants recommended that orientations include information regarding organizations doing the same or similar work.

Interpretation of the Findings

The literature review in Chapter 2 revealed that NPO board members struggled with understanding their roles and responsibilities as board members, which is known as role ambiguity (Doherty and Hoye, 2011). This study's results revealed a lack of clarity among some

of the participants in this study regarding their roles and responsibilities before the orientation. However, when the participants were asked to describe how the orientation prepared them for board service, each of the members indicated that they gained increased knowledge of board members' roles and responsibilities.

Similar research has also indicated the importance of training and orientation to address role ambiguity. Taylor et al. (2013) described how board performance was linked to organizational performance and suggested a need for board member training. Fish (2016) also stressed the importance of bringing new members up to speed and functioning in their roles by providing a strong orientation to board service. Suggestions by Taylor et al. (2013) and Fish (2016) were confirmed in this study by the board members' ratings of their competence before and after the training. The participants felt more confident in their ability to perform their role after completing the orientation. The improved competence level also confirmed research that asserted that board members perform better after completing an initial orientation to board service (Brown & Guo, 2010).

Further research has suggested that board members orientation training should include (a) mission, (b) community, and (c) governance (Tempkin, 2015). In the current study, the participants shared that the orientation provided them with a job description. The job descriptions provided the members with information detailing the roles and responsibilities as well as expectations of each board member. The participants shared other areas of the training that were covered, such as the mission, vision, values, community, and governance. The results indicate that each of these areas were covered and may have added to the participants' confidence in their ability to perform their role as board members after the orientation. The results from this study

thus confirm that board orientations positively impact board members and improve their ability to be productive board members from the start of service (Denny, 2015; Fram, 2016).

The results also confirm that orientations and board training include components that reflect Inglis et al.'s (1999) three-factor framework of strategic activities, operations, and resource planning and include components from each of the three areas. Findings also showed that the participants held positive views regarding the orientation.

Content of Training

The participants were asked to describe the training they received. Three primary themes emerged when participants were asked to describe the content or focus of the board orientation: (a) provided job description and roles and responsibilities, (b) clarified organization objectives, and (c) described legal requirements. The theme regarding providing job descriptions and roles and responsibilities revealed that the focus of training included content recommended by previous researchers. For instance, Manas et al. (2018) recommended that orientation training should define board members' roles and functions. Jaskyte and Holland (2015) specifically suggested that orientation training should cover a nonprofit agency's organizational strategy. Findings from this study supported Jaskyte and Holland's recommendation when the participants revealed that the orientation covered the objectives of the organizations and how the organization planned to accomplish them. The participants' responses also included the additional planning meetings, which is consistent with organizational strategy. Further, the findings revealed themes related to the content area of the training support Tempkin's (2015) recommendation that orientation training should include the organization's objectives.

Preparation for Board Service

The board members were asked to describe their level of preparation for serving as a board member. Three themes emerged from participants' responses to how the orientation prepared them for board service: (a) increased knowledge of board member roles, (b) outlined board member requirements, and (c) opened mind to what knowledge was needed as a board member. The three themes provided evidence that their training was consistent with Bruni-Bossio et al. (2016), who recommended that orientation training define board members' roles and functions. Participants indicated that the explanation and clarification of each board member's responsibilities were especially useful in helping them understand their responsibilities. Bruni-Bossio et al.'s recommendations were also evidenced by the themes that emerged from the question that addressed the most helpful part of the orientation.

Most Helpful Part of Orientation

When asked to describe the most helpful part of the orientation, participants indicated that one of the most helpful areas covered in the orientation was the information shared about board members' legal responsibilities. Researchers like Fish (2016) similarly described three different areas of orientation in which board members should train: (a) the legal aspects of governance, (b) training and education about the organization, and (c) the current situations the board and organization are dealing with (i.e., issues, trends, staff, economy, budget). The values of an organization describe the ethics and principles that guide the organization. Board members have shown low performance ethical oversight and other areas (Jaskyte & Holland, 2015), but the primary reason a nonprofit board exists is to govern the organization, fulfill the organization's mission, and provide accountability (Piscitelli & Geobey, 2020). Thus, there are

legal duties associated with board governance that board members should keep in mind such as the duty of care, which requires members to make informed decision when decisions are made pertaining to the organization (Picitelli & Geobey, 2020). Board members are also required to remember their duty of obedience to make sure the organization stays in alignment with the organizations' mission and articles of incorporation. Last but not least, members should remember they have a duty of loyalty or fiduciary responsibility to the organization. Several of the participants indicated that the legal information in the orientation was helpful as well as the explanation of the responsibilities of each member. Based on the findings of this study, participants increased their knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of board service and the organizations' mission, vision, and values through board member training.

Weakest Part of Orientation

Without a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, board members might experience role ambiguity (Doherty & Hoye, 2011). Therefore, orientations should be clear and concise, providing the information necessary for board members to clearly understand their roles and responsibilities and what is expected of them. When the members were asked to describe the weakest part of the orientation, three themes emerged: (a) too general, (b) lack of history, and (c) too much lecture.

One participant in the study described the weakest part of the orientation as too general or that it was geared more toward larger organizations and not necessarily to smaller organizations. Findings from this study suggest that board orientations may need to be more tailored to each organization, considering the size and uniqueness of the organization. Although basic board

information is generally standard to all NPO boards, the information provided in a board orientation should be adjusted to the organization's type and size.

One participant felt the board orientation was lacking the history of the organization. The organization was new, just getting started, and therefore lacked history. However, Tempkin (2015) indicated that training that covers the organizations' mission increases the members' understanding of the organization's history, the clients they serve, success stories, the number of people they serve, and its effect on the lives of the people served. Providing detailed information regarding the mission and objectives of the organization along with information regarding other organizations doing the same or similar work may provide a historical foundation for new board members who are starting with a new organization.

Participants indicated the orientation included too much lecture. Some adults learn better and retain information when the training includes activities (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011). Other participants also recommended that orientations include activities. Future orientations should take into consideration that adults learn differently and incorporate activities into future orientations. Findings from this study are consistent with the findings from a Morrison et al (2019) study where participants communicated the desire to have less lecture during orientation training. Participants in the Morrison et al (2019) study also expressed the desire to have more hands-on activities that allowed them to connect the content of the training to actual cases or scenarios.

Need for Additional Training

Finding from this study contradicted findings from previous research which indicated the need for ongoing training for leaders of NPOs in that only one of the participants in this study

indicated having received any follow-up board member training. Morrison et al. (2019) in their study on volunteer perceptions of leadership training, denoted the need for volunteer leadership development. According to Morrison et al., nonprofit board members are unpaid volunteers who serve willingly on nonprofit boards usually without the benefit of adequate training prior to service. It becomes important that members receive not only an initial orientation, but also ongoing training and development. Morrison et al. (2019) indicates there are three areas of need when training volunteer leaders: (a) a need for refresher courses on training, (b) a need to connect or disconnect training from prior experiences, and (c) the need for hands on activities or examples to support the training. Bruni-Bossio et al. (2016) also recommended that boards provide members with an initial orientation, ongoing development, and an annual assessment of the board and each director.

Hopkins and Meyer (2019) also stressed the need for leadership development in human service organizations. Particularly to strengthen the leadership skills of both emerging and current leaders with the skills necessary to improve their organizations' capacity and effectiveness. Board members as well as other volunteer leaders in human service organizations have taken leadership roles but lack the requisite leadership skills to effectively carry out the duties or responsibilities of the job. The organization, board members, and other volunteers in leadership roles must recognize their limitations in leadership skills and work to develop the skills necessary to improve their performance.

Content or Focus of Additional Training

The board members were asked to describe the content of the additional training they received. Two themes were identified from the responses: (a) protecting assets and (b) financial

oversight. One participant shared that her organization offered yearly board retreats that included an orientation refresher. The training covered the boards' responsibility related to protecting the organizations' assets and financial oversight. One participant described the additional training as general information, general board rules, regulations, policies, procedures, purposes, and mission. The training was offered through the state and was in conjunction with the organization where she currently served as a board member. Researchers (Bruni-Bossio et al., 2016; Tempkin 2015; Jaskyte and Holland 2015) recommend organizations provide ongoing board development and training for board members. Bruni-Bossio et al. (2016) also recommend that boards conduct an annual evaluation of the board and each director. However, there is a shortage of volunteer leadership training material, or the material is outdated (Morrison et al. (2019). Hence, NPOs are in need of more contemporary leadership training materials.

Recommendation for Additional Training

Board members were asked to describe any improvements they would recommend for future training. The themes that emerged were: (a) include activities related to the organization, (b) provide information about other organizations doing the same or similar work and, (c) allow more time for interactions and questions. The participants recommended orientations include activities related to the organization that board members could work through to increase their understanding of their role as board members. It would also increase their understanding of the organization. One participant recommended that activities include board officer roles, particularly the role of the secretary, including how to take minutes, and the role of the treasurer, including preparing a financial report. Morrison et al., (2019) also recommended that the training being offered to volunteer leaders be provided in a manner and method that not only fits the need

of the organization, but also take into consideration the volunteers age and ability. In addition, training resources should be contemporary and “meet the needs of the modern nonprofit organization and volunteer” (p.82).

Three of the board members recommended that orientations include information on other organizations doing the same or similar work to understand the organization’s work better. Although researchers have recommended certain areas the orientation should cover, I did not find in my literature search the recommendation to include information on other organizations doing the same or similar work.

Just as other participants suggested the orientation include activities, another participant described it as “there should be time allotted for interactions and questions.” The interactions can be assumed to be the same as the activities. The recommendation is well worth being implemented into board orientations especially given the possibility of improving the orientations’ impact. Although researchers made recommendations regarding information covered in orientations, I did not find a recommendation that included activities in my literature review.

Findings Relative to the Theoretical Framework

Inglis et al. (1999) three-factor framework posits that all board roles fall within three categories: strategic activities, operations, and resource planning. To determine if the orientations covered areas from any of the three-factor frameworks. I again looked at the data shared by the participants. I compared the data to the three categories of the three-factor framework.

The data revealed the orientations covered certain areas within each of the three categories. In the area of *strategic activities*, the orientation covered the mission, vision, values,

goals, and objectives of the organization. The participants described the orientations' content as including information on the legal and ethical responsibilities, values, fiduciary responsibilities, and policies. The second factor of *operations*, which has to do with developing and delivering services, the data revealed the orientations included tasks and duties, roles and responsibilities, and procedures. Also included in the orientations described by the participants was the focus on the community and the people they serve. The third factor of resource planning was evidenced in the orientations' description when the participants were asked about the additional training they received and when identifying the most helpful part of the orientation. The members described the orientation as including the qualifications of different positions, fiduciary responsibilities, and asset protection. The results revealed that the third-factor areas were the least covered in the orientations or not covered in-depth or clarity.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation to consider regarding this study is the small sample size. Five participants participated in the study. Although, unlike quantitative research, which usually requires a large sample size, qualitative research is concerned more with the richness of information and does not require a large sample size (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). In addition, Guest, Bunce, & Johnson (2006), suggest there are no set rules for the number of participants in a sample size but "relies on the concept of saturation" (p.59). Saturation according to Guest et al., is reached at the point where no new information or themes are observed in the data. Fusch and Ness (2018) indicate that "saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study, when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, and when further coding is no longer feasible" (p.1408). Although the sample size in this study was small, enough information

was gathered to replicate the study. A total of 23 double spaced pages of information was gathered from the five participants. In addition, all participants gave comments related to the emergent themes. After comparing the participants answers to the research questions, no new themes were noted.

The small sample size limitation was due to the limited number of human service NPO's within the chosen location. Most of the NPO's were not willing to participate in the study. Three NPO's initially committed to participate; however, two later canceled. In addition, the unanticipated COVID-19 pandemic caused many organizations to shut down and limited contact with members. Due to the limitations, I had to implement snowballing to recruit additional participants and was only able to recruit two additional board members from two different organizations. Therefore, due to the small sample size this study may be limited.

Another limitation is that the participants were not representative of diverse culture or gender and may limit this research's transferability in that respect. All participants were female and of either African or African American descent. Another limitation is that the study's focus was on human service nonprofit board members located in Santa Rosa, California; consequently, the findings may not be transferable to nonprofit boards in other regions operating under different circumstances.

Researcher bias is another potential limitation. Qualitative research is subjective in that the researcher is the instrument in the data collection. As the instrument, the researcher comes with pre-existing ideals and values, which could impair his or her ability to conduct and analyze the data objectively. According to Chenail (2011), the researcher as an instrument can be the greatest threat to trustworthiness in qualitative research. Any biases would need to be managed

through adequate preparation by the researcher, reflexivity, and other measures to minimize biases and increase trustworthiness in the study.

Recommendations

Based on this study's limited sample size, it is recommended that further research be conducted on board member perceptions of the initial orientation and ongoing training with larger and more diverse sample size. The sample size should be both ethnically diverse and include both male and female participants. The larger sample size would provide a broader range of information regarding the orientation's adequacy in preparing members for board service.

Implications

Results from this study have implications for social change. First, the results provide information regarding board members' perceptions of whether they were adequately trained to fulfill their required roles and responsibilities. Findings revealed areas in which board members need additional training and development. The implication of this finding would advise nonprofit boards and organizations of the need to incorporate training areas not currently covered in board orientations, thus leading to improved training and improved board member performance. The participants' recommendation to reduce the amount of time on lecturing and include interactive activities about the organization that members can work through together builds board cohesiveness, creates a camaraderie, and a better board environment, which creates better working conditions. Presenting information regarding other organizations doing the same or similar work would enhance the board members' understanding and perception of the organization's type of work, its value, and how it impacts the community. In turn, human service and other professionals could use the information from this study to enhance, redesign, or

develop their board development practices. Improved design and development practices would lead to improved board member performance and social change by improving organizational oversight and enhanced delivery of goods and services to the communities and individuals they serve. The improved delivery of goods and services further promotes social change by improving the lives of the families and individuals living in marginalized communities often served by human service NPO's.

Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the findings from this study, the limitations, recommendations, implications, and potential social change. The study's focus covered only one element of how members become effective in their role as a nonprofit board member, and that is through providing them with board orientation. The board orientation is just the first step in building an effective board that will improve its performance and the organization's performance.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Date of Interview: _____

Location: _____

Start time: _____ End time: _____

Name of Interviewee: _____

Ethnicity: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____

Profession: _____ Educational background: _____

How long have you served on the board? _____

Interviewer: Janice Trapp

Recording mechanism: Olympus VN-541PC Digital Voice Recorder and one back-up

Informed consent form signed? Yes _____ No _____

Note to the interviewee:

Thank you for taking the time out of your schedule to participate in this study. Your answers to these questions and any additional comments will be valuable to this study. Your identity, answers, and comments will be strictly confidential.

Approximate length of interview: 45-60.**Purpose of the study:**

To explore nonprofit board members' perceptions of the initial orientation and ongoing training they received in preparation for board service.

Methods of disseminating results:

A copy of the interview transcript will be emailed or mailed via the United States Postal Service to each participant for review.

Appendix: Interview Questions

Interview Question	Notes
Describe the training you received in the initial orientation to board service	
Explain how the orientation prepared you for board service.	
What areas of training did the orientation cover?	
Describe the most helpful part of the orientation.	
Describe the weakest part of the orientation.	
How long ago did you complete your board orientation?	
What additional board training have you received?	
What has been the content or focus of the training?	
How often have you received additional training?	
How did the orientation help you to understand your role as a board member?	
Thinking about the board member orientation that you received, describe any improvements you would recommend.	
What is your overall perception of your level of preparation for serving as a board member?	

Conclusion:

That concludes our interview. Thank you again for taking time out of your schedule to meet with me today. Do you have any questions? As soon as the notes from our interview today are transcribed, I will be getting in touch with you to go over the transcript to make sure your thoughts were captured correctly. Thank you again for your time.