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Mentoring Strategies for Enabling Employees' Career Progression

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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

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BS, University of Louisville, 2010

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Organizations without mentorship programs are at risk for leadership skill development. Using successful mentoring strategies, human resource managers may increase their talent pool, increase organizational opportunities, and improve the organization's overall climate. Guided by Kram's mentoring theory, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore mentoring strategies that some human resource management (HRM) leaders working in civil service within the federal government successfully use to assist the professional development of their employees. Participants included five civil service HRM leaders within the federal government in the southeastern region of the United States who used mentoring strategies to assist the professional development of their employees. Data were collected from semistructured interviews, reviews of publicly available company documents, and documentation of participants' body language during interviews. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis and Yin's five-step process. Three themes emerged: mentorship program policy development, developing mentors, and responsibilities of the mentee. A key recommendation is for HRM leaders to build professional relationships with employees to determine their needs. Implications for positive social change include the potential for increased federal employee volunteer in community-based organizations.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends for their continuous support, admiration, and encouragement to keep going. I hope that this achievement inspires those I touch in my lifetime to set out and achieve their perception of greatness according to God's will for their life. Especially my legacy Raya, my nieces, nephews, and goddaughters. I can only hope that I have set a great example for you not to mirror but to surpass. Just remember, with any goal, the journey may be long and can oftentimes seem rough but continue to press forward. As long as you are moving, you are making progress. To my mom, Dr. Lucretia Starnes, I could not think of anyone better to share this experience with, you have always had a word of encouragement and provided clarity in instances where things just were not clicking. You always reminded me of God's promise of cattle upon a thousand hills being mine (Psalms 50:10). The completion of this doctoral journey is a part of that promise. To my husband, Henry R. Alston Sr., I thank you for being you. For having my back, encouraging me to use my time wisely, and providing glimpses of what we can do together to make a positive change in our community utilizing the tools we have obtained. To my sisters Michelle Noel-Bolden and Jasmine Huston, I appreciate the phone calls and continuous encouragement to press forward on this journey and all that life throws along the way.

Acknowledgments

I first give honor to God, who planted the seed to reach such levels, who never allowed me to be comfortable with being mediocre nor complacent on this journey. For His constant reminder to me that I was created to be great. I thank God for aligning me with the necessary support system that both encouraged and held me accountable for the completion of this great task. This doctoral journey for me was not just about achieving a higher level of education, but about endurance and trusting in the Lord. As Philippians 1:6 says, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

I would like to acknowledge my committee members Dr. Kathleen Andrews, Dr. Matthew Knight, and Dr. Irene Williams for their dedication of time, continued counsel, and guidance. My sorority sister Avril Robinson, who became my second set of eyes during this process. Lastly, to the mentors I have obtained on this journey Dr. Gregory Jackson and Dr. Christalyn Bolling-Cooper, witnessing the ambition in you and the willingness to reach back and lend a helping hand has truly been a continuous source of encouragement for me, I thank you and genuinely appreciate you. In closing a scripture that is special to me comes to mind, Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

I am just amazed at the wondrous things that God has done for little ol' me.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Mentoring is recognized as an important tool in human resource development (Boeh, 2016). It is a method used to share knowledge in today's organizational culture (Bencsik et al., 2016). Boeh (2016) called mentoring a dyadic process where the quality of the relationship depends on the interaction of both parties. The term mentor is synonymous with the terms trusted advisor and coach (Chen, 2014; Steele, 2016). Mentoring is essential in human resource development due to its effects on organizations' alignment between people, organizational policies, and outcomes (Baker, 2015; Bencsik et al., 2016).

Background of the Problem

Leaders have a fundamental role in organizations to lead and leverage organizational learning to achieve maximum productivity (Greer, 2017). Through numerous efforts, leaders have customized career development programs in human resources. Furtherance of reinforcement to employ and encourage strategies in organizations is dependent on the evolution of mentoring in the human resource field. Having a fundamental knowledge of the past promotes new levels of innovation and ideas.

There was a need to explore this topic considering the current world climate. Leaders carry the burden of performing more work with fewer resources through more innovative means (Cummings & Bridgman, 2016). This study could potentially benefit leaders who want to fill competency leadership skills gaps in federal government professional leadership development programs. By informing leaders of successful

mentoring strategies if used, this might increase positive leadership development outcomes that enhance organizational social responsibility.

Problem Statement

Organizations without mentorship programs lack leadership skill development, employee commitment, and opportunities for professional networking (Mains & MacLean, 2017). 24% of employers have experienced difficulty with internal hiring due to gaps in leadership and executive skills that effective organizational mentorship programs can address (Messum et al., 2017). The general business problem is that some leaders at federal government organizations without mentoring programs fail to prepare employees for career advancement. The specific business problem is that some human resource management (HRM) leaders working in civil service within the federal government lack mentoring strategies to assist the professional development of their employees.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore mentoring strategies that some HRM leaders working in civil service within the federal government successfully use to assist the professional development of their employees. The targeted population consisted of five HRM leaders working in civil service within the federal government in the southeastern region of the United States who have successfully used mentoring strategies to assist the professional development of their employees. HRM leaders working in civil service within the federal government using mentoring strategies may increase positive leadership development outcomes that augment organizational

social responsibility. These leadership development outcomes could contribute to positive social change through increased volunteerism, financial donations, and enhanced organization and community cohesion.

Nature of the Study

The three research methods are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Quantitative researchers test hypotheses and use mathematical methods and theories to generalize results from a studied population (Grandison, 2017; Magruk, 2015). I did not test hypotheses or use mathematical methods to explore mentoring strategies with professional development strategies; therefore, the quantitative research method was inappropriate. According to McCusker and Gunaydin (2015), the qualitative researcher explores reasons, motivations, and trends related to subject phenomena. Because I explored mentoring strategies that some HRM leaders working in civil service within the federal government successfully use to assist the professional development of the command's employees, a qualitative method was appropriate for addressing the specific business problem. In using a mixed methodology, researchers incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods to create a holistic view of subject data to evoke understanding of an experience or identify the frequency or magnitude of a measured item (Bazeley, 2015). The mixed methodology was not suitable for this study because of its quantitative aspect.

The four principal qualitative research designs are narrative, ethnography, phenomenology, and case study. Narrative researchers paraphrase stories told to them by participants via a narrative list of events (Dornan & Kelly, 2017). The purpose of this

study was not to paraphrase stories told by participants in a narrative list of events. The focus of ethnographers is to understand a cultural phenomenon through shared patterns of beliefs and behaviors over a long length of time (Baškarada & Koronios, 2014; Baškarada et al., 2016). Because I did not seek to study shared patterns and beliefs over an extended amount of time, I did not choose an ethnographic method. Phenomenologists seek to define and understand a situation through the lens of participants and their perspectives of their lived experiences with a phenomenon (Simpson & Che, 2016). The phenomenology design was not appropriate for the study because the purpose was not to discover participants' lived experiences regarding the phenomenon but to study the phenomenon of developing and successfully implementing strategies for catalyzing employees' career development. A case study researcher collects data from one or more individuals regarding an event or process (Fusch et al., 2015; Yin, 2013). Because I collected data from five individuals regarding developing and successfully implementing strategies and processes for mentoring employees' professional development, the case study design was the most suitable.

Research Question

The overarching research question for this proposed study is: What mentoring strategies do some HRM leaders working in civil service within the federal government successfully use to assist the professional development of their employees?

Interview Questions

The following interview questions support the overarching research question:

1. What mentoring strategies do you use to aid employees' professional

development?

2. What mentoring strategies work best in aiding your employees' professional development?

3. How do you assess the effectiveness of mentoring strategies for your employees' professional development?

4. What obstacles have you encountered when implementing mentoring strategies to aid your employees' professional development?

5. What have you done to overcome obstacles for mentoring?

6. What other information would you like to provide about mentoring strategies you use to aid your employees' professional development?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was Kram's mentoring theory. Kram measured effective and successful mentoring techniques by determining the impact, quality, and level of satisfaction of participants. Kram (1988) identified enhancing individuals' development in the early, middle, and later career years and clarify relations between colleagues who provide mentoring. Mentoring geared towards career progression is essentially a process of identifying and obtaining work-related satisfaction and success (White et al., 2017).

Operational Definitions

Burnout: Burnout is the negative effect on the wellbeing of employees who have lost passion for their current career (VanMeter et al., 2016).

Career progression: Career progression involves internal mobility, retainment,

and reinvention of individuals in an organization (Bergelson, 2014; Bradley, 2018).

Mentee: A mentee is an individual who receives information and demonstrations of skills, knowledge, and wisdom from a mentor (Heeneman & de Grave, 2019; Schechter, 2014).

Mentor: A mentor is a person's (mentee's) trusted guide. The mentee is less experienced than the mentor (Gotian, 2016).

Mentoring strategies: Mentoring strategies are efforts that are initiated and managed in an organization through mentorship (B.T. Bradley, 2013; Heeneman & de Grave, 2019).

Mentorship: The person-to-person delivery and management of ideas from both inside and outside of an organization (Bergelson, 2014; Bradley, 2018).

Professional networks: Professional networks are organizations of like-minded people that allow for the sharing of ideas, making decisions, and solving problems (Macià & García, 2016).

Skill gap: A skill gap occurs when the basic skills of employees fall short of the standards or expectations of the organization (Cappelli, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

As the researcher, examining common assumptions restrained me from developing overly optimistic expectations. Ideas that researchers assume to be true but have no way of proving authenticity are known as assumptions (Megheirkouni & Roomi, 2017; Simon & Goes, 2013). I knew that the identified participants would willingly

complete interviews containing open-ended questions. The assumption I made was that participants who completed interviews provided truthful answers concerning mentorship in their organization.

Limitations

Being the researcher and examining limitations or potential weaknesses of the study allowed me to prepare for events and conditions that are out of my control. Potential weaknesses of a study that are primarily out of the control of the researcher are known as limitations (Megheirkouni & Roomi, 2017; Simon & Goes, 2013). The first limitation of the study was the possibility of a mentorship board member being an interviewee. As a member of the board, they are responsible for mentorship initiatives in their organization within the human resource field. This could potentially create a bias influencing interview responses due to the participants desiring a specific result. The second limitation was that the five HRM leaders I interviewed were not representative of the entire organization, which may result in receiving incomplete information.

Delimitations

Specifications and characteristics the researcher designed in the study are known as delimitations (Megheirkouni & Roomi, 2017; Simon & Goes, 2013). the study population was HRM leaders in a specific organization and not human resource leaders outside of the organization. At a minimum, participants had to at least be 18 years of age and had at least 2 years of experience The initial sample size was only five human resource leaders from the same organization and not HRM leaders from multiple

organizations. Due to the use of a small sample size, the study was at risk for not rendering enough relevant information.

Significance of the Study

Successful leaders in the HRM field attribute their success to having a competitive advantage, economic business growth, and having enough leadership talent (Delery & Roumpi, 2017). HRM leaders who successfully design and execute mentorship programs may help retain and prepare employees for future internal leadership positions within organizations. HRM leaders using successful mentoring strategies may provide an increased talent pool of skilled human resource employees, increases in organizational opportunities, and improved overall climate of the organization which would benefit employees, families, and communities.

Contribution to Business Practice

HRM leaders who use mentoring engagements for catalyzing employees' career development may benefit from increased retention rates, as employees realize career growth opportunities within organizations. HRM leaders can use knowledge transferred from leaders to employees through mentoring initiatives to improve the leadership skills of in-house employees and inspire innovation. HRM leaders may find results from this study provide them with insights regarding how to develop and successfully implement effective mentoring strategies, resulting in more effective methods of training. HRM leaders may find the results of this study could potentially bridge gaps in terms of strategic development and implementation of mentoring programs used to enable employees' career progression, which could also result in decreased hiring and

replacement costs and higher organizational performance.

Implications for Social Change

As competencies of employees increase through mentoring efforts, so too may their desire for personal growth. The individuals who participate in mentoring programs may gain experience in terms of maximizing relationships, saving resources, and accepting civic responsibilities. Increasing volunteer participation in civic and social activities within the community employees reside may result in decreasing resource needs within nonprofit organizations. Also, financial donations of volunteers may increase due to individual acceptance of civic responsibility. Donations may fund additional teachers, better quality books and supplies, and improved emergency shelters for displaced families.

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A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

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The following literature review consists of peer-reviewed research regarding mentoring strategies used for internal promotion in the human resources field, organizational and individual benefits through mentoring, and associated theories. The following databases were used: ProQuest, Google Scholar, Thoreau, Business and Management, ABI/INFORM, Academic Search Complete, and EBSCOHost. Keywords and phrases in the search criteria were *mentoring*, *mentee*, *career progression*, *organizational culture*, *mentoring within human resources*, *formal mentoring*, *informal mentoring*, *mentoring in the government*, *theories and benefits of mentoring*, *mentorship theory*, *social cognitive theory*, *personal benefits of mentoring*, *organizational benefits of mentoring*, *career development*, *mentorship in the government*, *types of mentoring*,

professional development, establishing mentoring relationships, developing trust in the workplace, how to develop a mentoring program, cost of mentoring programs, and *roles in a mentoring relationship*. The literature review consists of 92 sources, 87% of which have been published between 2017 and 2021. Referenced sources included 77 peer-reviewed scholarly journals, six dissertations, seven books, and two web pages. Sections in the literature review involve Kram's mentoring theory, model of mentorship, mentoring in the federal government, role of the governing organization of the mentoring program, role the of mentor, role of the mentee, organizational benefits of mentoring, personal benefits of mentoring, and additional mentoring theories.

Kram's Mentoring Theory

Kram's mentoring theory serves as the conceptual framework for this study. Created in 1983, Kram's mentoring techniques were measured by determining the impact, quality, and level of satisfaction of participants (Kram, 1983). Kram (1988) identified two goals associated with effective mentoring: enhancing individuals' development in the early, middle, and later career years and clarifying relations between colleagues who provide mentoring. Mentoring geared towards career progression is essentially a process of identifying and obtaining work-related satisfaction and success (White et al., 2017).

Findings from Kram's studies on role reversal identifying benefits of younger mentors guiding senior mentees was a contributor to the development of the mentoring theory. Kram (1988) defined reverse mentoring as when the mentor is the junior associate who provides purposeful support aimed at enhancing the career of the senior ranking mentee enabling advancement. Gündüz and Akşit (2018) defined reserve mentoring as a

method that encourages the facilitation of cross-generational relationships where a junior employee acts as a mentor and transfers their expertise to the senior colleague. Based on their research, Gündüz and Akşit identified possible benefits of reverse mentoring for senior colleagues. Benefits that senior colleagues experienced through reverse mentoring included: learning more about the organization, stroking the mentor's ego, and increasing the protégés' self-esteem.

Smith (2019) suggested possible benefits for senior colleagues and junior colleagues in reverse mentoring relationships. Benefits for the senior colleague comprised of breaks from the normal routine, input from a younger generation, increased clarity about organizational topics, and development of leadership skills. Junior colleague could benefit from reverse mentoring relationships by obtaining knowledge about the organization and its future. They may also be afforded the opportunity to obtain more meaningful work to include a role or project geared towards developing their leadership skills.

Smith also wrote about organizational benefits that occur with reverse mentoring relationships. Organizational benefits include positive extra-role behavior through reserve mentoring participation. The acceleration of achievement of organizational goals. Lastly, more millennials in mid-level positions. Millennials are noted to have been the driving force of why reverse mentoring is used (Gündüz & Akşit, 2018). As a result of limited practical applications and little to no empirical evidence of the success or failure of reverse mentoring, research efforts continue to be limited.

Coaching, sponsoring, presenting challenging assignments, and providing exposure and visibility are all career functions that aid in mentee learning and preparation for career advancement (Jackson, 2019). Kram (1988) identified those functions as the career function's umbrella of mentorship. Mentorship is a psychosocial function that includes role modeling, friendship, acceptance and confirmation, and counseling (Lawrence, 2017).

Kram (1988) said mentoring at work is about establishing and maintaining relationships in organizations that enhance individuals' development during the early, middle, and later years of their careers. Kram's mentoring theory illustrated the optimal timeframe and phases of a mentorship relationship. Initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition are the essential four phases required for effective mentoring to take place (Kram, 1983). The first 6 months to 1 year are considered the initiation phase. The initiation phase is when the mentoring relationship begins (Kram, 1983; Lawrence, 2017). According to Bradley (2018), in the initiation phase, two individuals enter a mentoring relationship and create agreed-upon expectations. Cultivation is the phase that takes place during the next 2-5 years intended for career support (Bradley, 2018). The cultivation phase is considered a primary phase for learning and development (Bradley, 2018). During this phase, discussion of potential issues in the individual's career field concerning the mentee's experience and technological insights takes place (Bradley, 2018). Cultivation is followed by the separation phase, signifying the end of the relationship, occurring between 6 months and 2 years (Kram, 1983; Lawrence, 2017). The separation phase is when the mentor and mentee realize expectations have been met

and success is achieved (Bradley, 2018). The last phase is the redefinition phase where the purpose of the initial relationship is reached, and therefore a new relationship develops (Kram, 1983; Lawrence, 2017).

Kram (1988) said relationships are considerably affected by circumstances which evolve during mentoring. Circumstances may include the identification of expectations, needs, and skills the involved persons bring to the relationships (Jackson, 2019). Social interactions between individuals that are formed based on mutual interest and understanding within an enjoyable environment, may forge a friendship that can identify a clear path to the desired goal (Jackson, 2019).

Many researchers have used Kram's mentoring theory as the foundation for their study as they discovered intercessions within different mentor relationships. Lawrence (2017) explored mentoring relationships in sports from a mentee's perspective using Kram's mentoring theory as the foundation of the study. A Likert-type scale titled The Coach Mentor Role Instrument was used to collect data.

The Coach Mentor Role Instrument is composed of 30 items and includes a five-point Likert-type scale from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). Results indicated there are 10 primary roles a sports coach plays with mentoring. The primary roles include challenger, accepter, sponsor, friend, coach, role model, counselor, and protector. The role of friend ranked most often while protector was the lowest (White et al., 2017). White et al. (2017) found psychosocial functions ranked more often than career development functions.

Kram (1983) identified the importance of matching mentors and mentees by reflecting on mentors' career status and competencies and mentees' potential. Lawrence (2017) described psychosocial functions as emotional support, personal feedback, and friendship. Peer mentoring relationships amongst coworkers forge a way for information sharing, career mapping, and feedback related to the mentee's job. Banerjee-Batist and Reio (2016) said mentoring relationships extending throughout an individual's career increase career performance and psychosocial functions.

Model of Mentorship

Mentorship or mentoring is the voluntary act that takes place when a person (the mentor) takes interest in another person (the mentee) to help, guide, correct, and lead the mentee along his or her journey (Wilson, 2017). Chua and Lessing (2013) said knowledge exchanged in a mentoring relationship involves instruction, encouragement, and inspiration. Kram (1983) identified phases of mentorship that coincide with stages of a career as initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. Makhanya (2018) said mentorship was a vital aspect of career development.

Career development can be described as the process in which individuals manage various tasks, behaviors, and experiences both in and across their jobs and organizations over time (Zacher et al., 2019). Mentoring is not always performed formally. Mentoring sometimes involves asking for advice or help (Jones et al., 2018). Informal mentoring differs from formal mentorship because it is less structured and more naturally cultivated (Jones et al., 2018).

Polikoff et al. (2015) and Pavao (2018) suggested components of a mentoring policy. Some examples of the components are

- content expertise

- mentor location

- the time during the day to meet

- full/part-time mentor

- mentor training

- evaluative role

- mentor caseload

- mentor compensation

According to Kram (1985), regardless of the type of mentoring a mentor uses, all mentoring types and mentors share the same goal which is to provide purposeful support aimed at enhancing their mentees' career enabling advancement.

There is scant research available to determine if mentoring program policies are being developed and used in organizations. Francis (2019) recommended when designing a mentoring program policy, the following should be considered and identified:

- long-term human resources support;

- a mentoring handbook that will guide faculty, mentors, and mentees;

- creation and identification of strategic goals towards retention and sustainability;

- mandatory participation when one commits to the program; and

- integration of community service initiatives.

Attributes of informal mentorship are higher salaries and greater promotions are (Jones et al., 2018). Whether formal or informal, mentorship opportunities are valuable for the mentor and mentee alike (Whittaker & DeWald, 2017). Formal mentoring programs are an important means of encouraging ongoing learning for both mentees and mentors (Bear, 2018).

Mentoring programs can be completely free, costing nothing more than time (Poling, 2015). When individuals leading mentoring programs connect to other organizations, resources such as advertising become available for use. It is possible to implement a mentorship program with limited resources. The minimum requirement for the implementation of a formal mentoring program is it is supervised by the administration of the organization (O'Malley & Steverson, 2017). Administrators match mentoring pairs and provide them with orientation materials (O'Mally & Steverson, 2017). In most instances, mentors volunteer their time and knowledge as it pertains to mentoring relationships. Therefore, the cost of a mentorship program is practically free. O'Mally and Steverson (2017) said incentives could include discounted stocks, single monetary payments, and royalties.

Management within organizations can use their culture of mentorship to promote social change (Walden University, 2019). One example of that is the higher education organization of Walden University. The administration at Walden has established social change as a priority to be discussed and acted upon in its culture of mentorship between faculty and students. One instance of mentorship towards social change at Walden

University (2019) is that through faculty mentorship, doctoral students must be able to defend doctoral projects and dissertations as affecting specific, positive social change.

Mentorship in the Federal Government

Yoon et al. (2015) realized like government agencies in Eastern cultures, agencies in the United States concentrate their focus on key areas within one of their roles as a training provider. These key areas include organizational and employee/leadership development, focusing on strategies, performance, and accountability. All identified key areas fall into the business setting, described to be one of the focuses of Kram's research and writings. How these areas connect to mentorship is that they have the common goal of developing people. By determining and identifying strategies that both improve performance and outline measures of accountability, organizations can determine whether their initiatives are a success (Yoon et al., 2015). Kram (1983) credited successful mentoring with satisfaction and quality. The importance of the availability of mentoring initiatives and the quality of the initiative has a heavy influence on job satisfaction in organizations that employ mentoring opportunities (Castanheira, 2016; Xu & Payne, 2014). The following paragraphs elaborate on mentoring programs and initiatives in the federal government.

Government agencies established a history concerning the implementation of mentoring initiatives. Many government agencies are linked to online mentoring (Castanheira, 2016; Xu & Payne, 2014). Online mentoring provides individuals with both access and flexibility for engagement irrespective of physical location (Jayatilleke et al., 2017). Online mentoring can also include available online networking tools like LinkedIn

and Facebook (Holton & Dent, 2016). Semoamadi (2016) stated networking should be

included as a key strategy when it comes to career advancement in the workplace. Some

specific agencies that use online mentoring initiatives include the Bureau of Alcohol,

Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the Department of Housing and Urban Development;

the Energy Department; and the General Services Administration (Jayatilleke et al.,

2017).

Researchers offer the idea of speed mentoring as another method that can be used

to employ mentoring in an organization (Jayatilleke et al., 2017). Essentially individuals

are paired for short intervals (Cellini et al., 2017). Cellini et al. (2017) suggested speed

mentoring provides mentoring and networking opportunities.

Leaders of the U.S. National Security Agency, among its diverse and fast-paced

workforce, focused efforts on developing and implementing group mentoring programs

(Bradley, 2018; Zasloff & Okurowski, 2012). The Federal Women's Program was

implemented to address and possibly alleviate the perception that leaders in the federal

government were not providing equal motivation and incentives for female employees

(K. B. Black et al., 2015). The goals among leadership in the U.S. Office of Personnel

Management (2017) included those that were to address needs in training, education,

upward mobility, career counseling, and mentoring (K. B. Black et al., 2015). Reverse

mentoring is a common occurrence in the federal government that can occur in a group

mentoring environment. Reverse mentoring is when the mentor is the junior associate

who provides purposeful support, aimed at enhancing the career of the senior ranking

mentee enabling advancement (Kram, 1985; White et al., 2017). In the United States

federal government, senior executives participating in virtual teams can practice

reversing mentoring (Charlier et al., 2016; Yoo & Alavi, 2004).

Employees of the federal government are also allowed to participate in leadership

development programs offered by the Federal Executive Institute and Management and

Development Centers (U.S. OPM, 2017). During these programs, skills and competencies

needed for executive core qualifications are addressed (U.S. OPM, 2017). The Defense

Civilian Emerging Leader Program (DCELP) is a federally sponsored career

development/mentorship initiative geared toward employees in the GS-7 thru GS-12

grade range (Nash, 2018). Nash (2018) identified knowing yourself, communicating,

building teams, and managing organizations/knowing your environment as the four

components that comprised the program. As a DCELP participant, Nash said, "the skills

we learn benefit our organizations and the Department of Defense in the long run. The

people we meet and the new skills we acquire will have a significant impact on our lives

in the years ahead" (p. 54-55).

Role of the Organization

Developing employees and building talent are the most significant reasons why

organizations are implementing mentoring programs (Welsh & Dixon, 2016). When

preparing for the implementation of a mentoring program, researchers Jyoti and Sharma

(2017) suggested specific factors be considered: flexibility, ownership, clarity, and

feedback. Through the implementation of mentoring programs, organizations can offer

education and training opportunities in the workplace (Kraiger et al., 2019).

Organizations that have implemented mentoring programs, may find that they can impact individual performance and increase career advancement (Castanheira, 2016).

Establishing a mentoring culture is a critical task for leadership within an organization (DeAngelo et al., 2016). The successful establishment of a mentoring program may enhance a sense of organizational culture towards the organization (Castanheira, 2016). Research suggests that when viewing mentoring as a process versus a program, strategic alignment is more likely to be ensured (Kraiger et al., 2019).

Sheridan et al. (2015) added that organizational development assisting with the acquisition of resources is vital. Sheridan et al. believed that organizational development in this form will promote further development and sustainment of mentoring activities. Sheridan et al. proposed that through supervisory support, development of opportunities, and compensation when available, organizations may establish an environment of continuous learning that values mentoring. Mentoring may also have the ability to be an effective means for managing organizational change (Kraiger et al., 2019).

Role of the Mentor

A mentoring expert is a knowledge base mentor, developed in a non-linear, interactive, and complex manner acquired through the repetitive interaction of three fundamental components, (a) assessment of learning, (b) identification of the learner's needs, and (c) how the context nests their learning (Langdon, 2017). Carbajal (2018) also referred to mentors as sponsors. A sponsor is defined as an individual in a leadership position who can mediate on behalf of the mentee, assists in guiding the mentee's career, and helps develop their skills and abilities (Carbajal, 2018). Though mentors' knowledge

base is complex, the results from many studies indicate that mentors dilute this knowledge into the simplest form, when they encourage mentee development by sharing their personal experiences (Langdon, 2017). Conklin (2016) offered the following tips for having a successful mentoring relationship: establishing clear career goals, developing a plan of action to support the established goals, and continuously monitoring the established plans and goals even after the mentoring relationship has ended.

Researchers sought to explore the direct impact that a mentor, who held dual roles within the mentee's professional career, played on the success of the mentoring relationship (Boswell et al., 2017). Boswell et al. (2017) found that mentors and mentees who had the experience of dual relationships amongst one another, rendered higher career-related progress, than someone who lacked the experience. Results of the study align with many other studies that have concluded mentoring relationships are key factors to the mentee's self-development and professional fulfillment. Kram (1985) explored the dyad between the mentor, who is usually senior in rank, and the mentee who is often the junior associate. The example that researchers Boswell et al. provided, was that of a supervisor and an employee where the supervisor became a mentor to the employee. This example shows that being a supervisor in an authoritative position can heavily contribute to becoming a mentor. Another example offered by Boswell et al. was of a chair from a student's dissertation committee, who later hired the student as a research assistant, thus transitioning from a supervisory role to a mentor role.

Balafoutas et al. (2018) suggested strategies for increasing the positive effects of mentorship including power priming. The ability to imagine yourself in a situation of

power, which can result in the willingness to be competitive enough to obtain power, is referred to as power priming (Balafoutas et al., 2018). Research results showed that some mentees prefer their mentor to provide more emotional support versus instructional support or assistance with socialization (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016). As indicated in Table 1, a single theme served as the focus group's topic for discussion. The information in Table 1 includes key informant perceptions from interviews with mentees and mentors, regarding their experiences and perceptions of the mentorship program at the School of Medicine, College of Health Sciences, Makerere University.

Table 1

Role of a Mentor

Mentees Perceptions	Mentors Perceptions
Provides career, academic, and personal guidance	Provides career, academic, and personal guidance
Provides motivation and encouragement to mentee	Acts as a role model
Helps mentees realize their weaknesses	Guides in professionalism and ethical issues

Rowe-Johnson (2018) proposed that mentors have two primary functions: fostering the mentee's professional development and providing psychosocial support.

Boswell et al. (2017) and Rowe-Johnson agreed that mentors must hold various roles

including being a guide to

- welcome the mentee to the values and norms of the organization;

- be a teacher assisting in teaching the mentee how to successfully cross-function;

- be a role model demonstrating acceptable behavior;

- be a protector supporting the mentee during stressful situations; and

- be a confidant providing support, and lastly, a colleague.

Sinclair et al. (2015) proposed that the mentor-mentee relationship should include

a preparation stage where first impressions are made. This stage is also known as the

initial phase of Kram's mentoring theory, where two individuals entering a mentoring

relationship are matched and then create an agreed-upon list of expectations. The mentor-

mentee pair will establish rules of engagement, of how learning will occur during the

negotiation's stage. While in the enabling stage, the mentee will apply what they have

been taught (Sinclair et al., 2015). During the feedback stage, the mentor is provided with

the opportunity to express their observations of how the mentee is behaving, as well as

addressing any issues or concerns (Sinclair et al., 2015). DeAngelo et al. (2016);

provided a summation explaining that, although a person assumes the extra role of being

a mentor, the quality and intent of the interaction will not necessarily increase.

Role of the Mentee

Cleaver and Fincheme (2017) suggested the top 10 tips for mentees to adopt are to

- be appreciative

- do not take your mentor for granted

- recognize that change is up to you, not your mentor

- prepare well for meetings, do your homework, be punctual

- discuss expectations

- be committed to the process

- if something is not working, discuss it with your mentor

- respect the boundaries of mentoring remit

- do not try to become like your mentor

- try to become a better version of yourself

- do not take things personally

- be aware of spin-off learning (e.g., communication skills.)

Shadle (2016) suggested there are eight tasks mentees should do to develop their mentor:

- ask questions that are geared towards strategic growth

- set expectations that will encourage improvement, not perfection

- take a learning position

- remain objective and critical of your mentor

- respect your mentor but avoid idolizing them

- apply what you learn as soon as possible

- be disciplined and consistent

- reward your mentor by displaying growth

Implementation of suggested efforts may provide a mentor with purposeful support aimed at enhancing the mentee's career and enabling advancement.

Organizational Benefits of Mentoring

Organizations obtain many benefits and advantages by fostering an environment that encourages and supports mentoring (J. Stewart & Harrison, 2016). Benefits and advantages obtained by organizations include employee retention and productivity, increase improvement of mentor leadership skills, and the enhancement of organizational culture. Swayze and Calvin (2016) noted in their study that mentorship can be seen in the form of knowledge gained through educational, professional, and community-based programs that contribute to the success of leadership development. By developing mentoring programs, leaders in the organization may gain better insight into the lived experiences and perceptions of their employees. These programs may also inform leaders of how they can support a diversified workforce while implementing organizational strategies that target upward mobility and retention (Hughes, 2016).

Decaro (2017) suggested that organizations with mentorship programs are more likely to retain and develop talent in employees than organizations without mentorship programs. Decaro explained through his works how the development of an individualized career plan within the company, contributes to the necessary skills to succeed for both the employee and the organization. Positive outcomes in an organization are possible through the increase of representation of people in leadership positions (Gündermir et al., 2017).

Personal Benefits of Mentoring

Mentees often view investment in career development as a positive benefit (Walker & Yip, 2018). According to Hammond et al. (2018), satisfaction and exposure to new opportunities are among the multiple benefits that a mentoring relationship can yield

for mentees. Ismail et al. (2015) showed that participating in a mentoring program positively increases the self-efficacy of the mentee. Bullister (2017) shared these sentiments, as the results of his study showed that by connecting a mentee with the right mentor, the mentee will feel important, as if their opinion matters, and that his or her development and quality of work is a priority. Rolfe (2016) identified additional advantages for mentees receiving mentoring and coaching:

- personalized learning and growth are likely

- individual needs, personal styles, and time constraints can be dealt with

- multiple locations (virtually)

- formal training and educational experiences can be complements

- processing real-life issues, problems, and decisions are conceivable

- access to information is available

- choices about new behaviors and actions receive facilitation; and

- achievement of positive outcomes is a result of being a mentee

Work experience and exposure to advancement opportunities are what Carbajal (2018) called key strategies towards becoming a leader. Leadership-centered seminars and training are types of mentoring activities that mentees can participate in and may result in work exposure (Carbajal, 2018). Aspiring leaders can further develop both leadership and soft skills through mentorship by way of leadership development (C. Stewart, 2016). Soft skills include communication, emotional intelligence, motivating, and managing others (C. Stewart, 2016).

McKinsey (2016) offered an opposing view. Results of the study showed that people should avoid mentoring relationships in all situations. McKinsey wrote that individuals involved in mentoring foster an environment where friendship can exist and could easily translate into favoritism. Meschitti and Smith (2017) claimed that individuals are not able to get a holistic perspective on whether mentoring/mentorship is beneficial, because there is a lack of studies indicating success or failure utilizing mentorship programs. In turn, it is hard for other researchers to accurately provide a different perspective while conducting similar studies, because of the lack of studies to use for comparison.

Additional Supporting Mentoring Theories

As the researcher for this study, I recognize that I could have used other theories instead of Kram's to assist with explaining how mentoring strategies enable employees' career progression. In the next paragraphs, I discuss three additional theories that support Kram's theory, (a) social cognitive career theory, (b) Vroom's expectancy theory, and (c) social learning theory.

The social cognitive career theory (SCCT) developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett in 1994 was based upon Bandura's general social cognitive theory. Bandura created a social cognitive theory in 1986. The SCCT was introduced with three interdependent models (a) career and academic interest, (b) choice-making, and (c) performance (Lent et al., 1994). Later, the theory was increased to include two additional models, totaling the composition of SCCT to five interdependent models.

The first model addition focused on educational and occupational well-being or satisfaction. The other model addition, SCCT philosophy established by Lent, Brown, and Hackett in 1994, focused on the process of self-managing a career over time (Brown & Lent, 2019; Lent et al., 1994). The paradigm of the second model addition considered career interests of a person, aspirations, choices, educational pursuits, and reaching career success (Harris, 2017). Harris's (2017) findings resulted in four constructs: career hindrance and associated experiences, challenges that rose from responding to career hurdles, identification of strategies used to overcome the barriers, and mentorship offered that encourages career progression. Results of the research show that SCCT confirms that career ambitions and objectives geared towards career advancement are influenced by self-efficacy (Harris, 2017). Raque-Bogdan et al. (2013) acknowledged the implication that the perception individuals hold regarding their career progression could either help or hinder their success.

Bandura's perception of a person's success in performance indicates two main factors as the determinants (Veronika et al., 2018). Factor one, the expectation that a problem can be solved without contention when the opportunity presents itself to execute an activity. Factor two, the outcome of expectancy or when a person is assured that specific results can be achieved. Researchers who apply the SCCT can distinguish those influences affecting a person's behavior such as one's belief they can succeed, expected outcomes, social structure factors, and goal influence (Beauchamp et al., 2019).

What makes SCCT unique is that researchers using the theory incorporate the ideology that an individual's behavior is a codetermining factor, involving relationships

between two people and their environment (Brown & Lent, 2019). SCCT is also used to explain a person's career interest, choice, and performance. Harris (2017) examined career barriers and self-imposed career impediments, that could prevent individuals from advancing. These types of studies, all took place before further exploration of work satisfaction and workplace self-management strategies (Tatum, 2018).

SCCT could be used to replace Kram's mentorship theory, if the subject of my study were more focused on a person's self-development, deciding on ones' career, or the determinant of a person's driving factors of success (Tatum, 2018). The goal of this study is to explore mentoring strategies that some HRM leaders working in civil service within the federal government successfully use to assist the professional development of the command's employees. This differs from an employee's self-development because these developmental efforts have direct support from their leadership Therefore, SCCT is not suitable for the foundation of this study.

In 1964, Vroom realized a research gap between that which was performed by industrial psychologists and practical models demonstrating motivation in the workplace (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018; Vroom, 1964). The results of research conducted by Vroom identified a gap between the employable manager motivational workforce models and studies he conducted himself (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018; Vroom, 1964). This insight resulted in what became known as the expectancy theory of motivation (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018; Vroom, 1964). Motivational force, according to VIE originates from the culmination of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence:

- expectancy: effort → performance (E→P)

- instrumentality: performance → outcome (P→O)

- valence: V(O) (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018; Vroom, 1964)

Baumann and Bonner (2017) viewed the expectancy theory in a heuristic manner. The expectancy theory is comprised of both motivation and choice of behavior.

Table 2

Vroom's Expectancy Model

Expectancy	Instrumentality	Valence
Self-efficacy	Trust	The perceived value of reward
Goal difficulty	Acts as a role model	
Perceived control	Guides in professionalism and ethical issues	

In the VIE model, the term expectancy is used to describe an individual's perception about their effort made towards improving performance. The individual believes that based on his or her efforts, compensation with a reward of some sort is due. The personal perception of the employee determines the value of the reward (Nimri et al., 2015). The ratio of desired outcomes being achieved to the outcomes is known as instrumentality (de Blume & Candela, 2018). Valence is the emotional response individuals attribute to outcomes in terms of importance, satisfaction, and desirability (de Blume & Candela, 2018).

Kenny (2019) explored the ad-hoc and haphazard training and manpower development of employees in organizations, where training programs are not supported by the organization (Kelly et al., 2017). Force and ability are the fuel by which job performance is emphasizing, the VIE model expectancy component takes into consideration a person's capacity and ability to complete a job rather than willingness (Kenny, 2019). Therefore, the fact that the individual could complete the job is motivation enough and may lead to higher levels of performance (Kelly et al., 2017).

The basis of the VIE model is to explore the motivating factors of a person. The intent of this study is not to explore the motivating factors of a person. The intent instead is to explore what mentoring strategies HRM leaders use to enhance an individual's career progression. Therefore, this model was not used as the foundation of this study.

The social learning theory (SLT) also developed by Bandura in 1986, shifted diagnostic focus from a medical model to exploring how a person is influenced by their environment (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2019). Bandura (1977) believed that an individual's personality interlinked with three psychological processes: environment, behavior, and psychological processes as reflected in Table 3 (Bandura, 1977; Henderson, 2016). Table 3 also identifies possible outcomes based on the influence of that particular psychological process (Bandura, 1977; Henderson, 2016).

Table 3

Social Learning Theory

Psychological Processes

Environment	Behavior	Individual Psychological Processes
Vicarious learning	Self-efficacy	Desired outcomes
Social norms	Skills	Knowledge
Model behavior	Practice	Attitude

SLT identifies principles and processes such as how the influence of others'
behavior can internally motivate an individual (Mastroguiseppe, 2018). Mastroguiseppe
(2018) noted that many mentoring and coaching programs are developed around these
principles. SLT suggests that a futuristic and change-driven way of thinking derives from
changing circumstances in a person's life. It is due to this change that an individual learns
to process, adapt, and react to environmental factors (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2019).
Xie et al. (2019) observed Banduras' SLT from a mentor-mentee model. Here, the
subordinate perceived their supervisor as a role model that mediated the relationship
between the two (Xie et al., 2019).

Coleman et al. (2019) found that while using SLT as the foundation, individuals
attend to other individuals like themselves. This is about perceived attractiveness, power,
and behavior-driven rewards (Coleman et al., 2019). Tolle (2017) posited those

individuals can learn any type of behavior through social mechanisms. The exact moment that learning occurs is when individuals with shared norms, practices, and values spend a substantial amount of time together in a social environment (Tolle, 2017).

The intent of my study from a mentor's perspective is to explore mentoring strategies HRM leaders successfully use to assist the professional development of the command's employees. It is not my intention to explore the personal factors, environmental influences, or the behavior of the mentee. Therefore, I did not use SLT as the foundation for this study.

Transition

Section 1 began with the statement of the purpose and identification of the problem to be addressed in the study. This section concluded with an examination of the literature regarding Kram's mentoring theory that serves as the conceptual framework of this study. Mentoring strategies used for internal promotion in the human resources field, organizational and individual benefits through mentoring and associated theories were explored. In Section 2, I reiterated the purpose of this case study. Section 2 included a discussion of the role of the researcher, a description of participants, the research method and design, the population and sampling, and an explanation of ethical research. I also discussed the identification of participants and outlining how participants were selected. In addition to explaining why the case study design was selected for use in this study while referencing researchers like Yin (2018) and others. Section 2 concluded with a breakdown of ethical research duties, the withdrawal process, and data collection instruments, technique, and analysis. Section 3 concluded the study with the presentation

of findings, application to professional practice, and implications for social change

recommendations for action and further research, reflections, and my conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

A qualitative single case study approach was suitable for exploring mentoring strategies that HRM leaders successfully use to assist the professional development of their employees. Section 2 of the study includes the restatement of the purpose, a discussion of the role of the researcher, descriptions of participants, the research method and design, population and sampling methods, and an explanation of ethical research. Also included in Section 2 are details regarding data collection, instruments, collection techniques, and analysis. Finally, a discussion addressing how reliability and validity can be achieved concludes Section 2.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore mentoring strategies that some HRM leaders working in civil service within the federal government successfully use to assist the professional development of their employees. The targeted population consisted of HRM leaders working in civil service within the federal government in the southeastern region of the United States who have successfully used mentoring strategies to assist the professional development of their employees. HRM leaders working in civil services within the federal government using mentoring strategies may increase positive leadership development outcomes that augment organizational social responsibility. These leadership development outcomes could contribute to positive social change through increased volunteerism, financial donations, and enhanced organization and community cohesion.

Role of the Researcher

As the qualitative researcher and the main data collection instrument in this study, my responsibilities included selecting participants and designing the study. I made a conscious effort to avoid cultural and experiential bias by following *The Belmont Report's* guidelines for research involving human subjects: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. I also ensured I conducted research ethically and was a good listener. The ability of a researcher to listen effectively to seek an understanding demonstrates respect towards interviewees' perspectives and helps alleviate bias (Alby & Fatigante, 2014). My role as the researcher was to explain the overall process to each participant, as well as observe and document participants' body language during interviews in a journal.

Collecting and interpreting data was my main function until I achieved data saturation. My profession as a senior HRM leader for the Department of Defense provided me with knowledge and experience on the subject. During the data collection process, I used an interview protocol script (see Appendix A) as my guide. The use of an interview protocol provides the researcher with a means of maintaining an organized interviewing session while simultaneously ensuring step-by-step instructions are followed (Van de Wiel, 2017). I used my interview protocol, with its structured approach when collecting data, to help reduce bias and subjectivity within my study.

As the researcher, I also mitigated bias by following *The Belmont Report's* guidelines for research involving human subjects. I ensured that my participants had a full understanding of how they contributed to the study. I ensured that questions

addressed principles of *The Belmont Report*.

Participants

Eligibility criteria for participants required that they be HRM leaders working in civil service within the federal government. Participants were at least 18 years of age and had at least 2 years of experience successfully implementing mentoring strategies which have been used to assist the professional development of their employees. I provided an electronic overview of the purpose of the study and eligibility criteria to my professional associates in the human resource industry (see Appendix B). Ideally, this resulted in a sizeable participant pool being created. Identified eligibility criteria helped ensure that characteristics of participants aligned with the overarching research question.

Based on the list received from my professional associates, I sent recommended participants an email requesting their participation in the study (see Appendix C). I continued to request participants until five people agreed to participate. To establish a working relationship with the confirmed participants, I demonstrated transformational leadership skills. Transformational leaders focus on connections and working relationships between leaders and followers that ensure coexistence and cooperation (Weiss & Suss, 2016). Specific demonstrations of transformational leadership can be observed through maintaining positive humor in terms of employees' work engagement, job performance, friendliness, and organizational citizenship of employees (Goswami et al., 2016). Remaining individuals remained on a backup list in case primary participants withdrew from participating in the study.

Research Method and Design

Qualitative research refers to a set of approaches used to analyze data involving language and expressions of experiences (Levitt et al., 2018). The qualitative case study design was the research methodology I chose for this study. This methodology best aligned with my desire to explore mentoring strategies that HRM leaders use to prepare and retain employees for future internal leadership positions. A qualitative methodology design was the more effective choice over other methods for addressing the research question. Through the research strategy, method, and design I used, results of the study led to in-depth knowledge and understanding of mentorship in the human resources field via the context of real-life experiences.

Research Method

Qualitative researchers explore reasons, motivations, and trends involving lived experiences of individuals (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). I explored mentoring strategies that HRM leaders in the human resources industry used to retain and prepare employees for future internal leadership positions. I selected the qualitative research methodology for this study. Lived experiences shared by interview participants were used for data collection based on the research question.

Quantitative researchers test hypotheses and use mathematical methods and theories to generalize results from a studied population (Grandison, 2017; Magruk, 2015). Quantitative researchers' overarching goal is to construct statistical models to depict and explain what they have observed (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). I did not test hypotheses or use mathematical methods to explore mentoring strategies with

professional development rates; therefore, the quantitative research method was inappropriate for my study.

The mixed research methodology also received consideration. Mixed methodology researchers incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods to create a holistic view of subject data to evoke understanding an experience or identify the frequency or magnitude of a measured item (Bazeley, 2015). Bazeley (2015) suggested that by using a combination of methods, the results of the study appeal to a greater audience. The goal of the study was not to test hypotheses involving quantitative issues, so the mixed methodology was inappropriate for my study.

Research Design

A case study researcher collects data from one or more individuals regarding an event or process (Fusch et al., 2015; Yin, 2013). With a case study, the researcher collects data from a single source, such as a research site, organization, or team (Fusch et al., 2015; Yin, 2013). If the case study has multiple sources to pull data from, it is referred to as a multiple case study (Fusch et al., 2015; Yin, 2013). The single case study was the most appropriate design for this study because I gathered data from one organization.

I collected data from five individuals from a single organization. Because all participants were from the same organization, this study was classified as a single case study. Participants had at least 2 years of experience with developing and successfully implementing mentoring strategies and processes, all of which are geared towards enabling employees' career progression.

I also took narrative, ethnographic, and phenomenological designs into consideration. Narrative researchers paraphrase stories that participants expand upon via a narrative list of events (Dornan & Kelly, 2017). The purpose of the study was not to paraphrase stories told by participants to expand upon a narrative list of events, so a narrative design was not appropriate.

The focus of ethnographers is to understand a cultural phenomenon through shared patterns of beliefs and practices over a long length of time (Baškarada & Koronios, 2014; Baškarada et al., 2016). My intent was not to study shared patterns and beliefs over an extended amount of time. Therefore, I did not choose an ethnographic design.

Phenomenologists seek to define and understand a situation through the lens of participants from their perspectives (Simpson & Che, 2016). The phenomenological design was not appropriate for the study because the goal was not to discover and understand a phenomenon. The advantage of a case study over other research designs was the ability to access data involving a controlled population in a limited amount of time, resulting in a complex understanding of relationships through perceptions of participants.

I reached data saturation once the research question was thoroughly answered by participants. Fusch et al. (2015) defined data saturation as the point when collecting more data no longer presents new themes necessary to answer the research question. Once there was no indication of new themes or concepts emerging, I concluded that further interviews were unnecessary.

In addition, I provided participants via email with a summary of results upon completion of data analysis. I requested that participants provide additions, corrections, and deletions via email within 5 days of receipt of the summary. After the 5 days, I used feedback to ensure the accuracy of interpretations of information obtained from interviews. This method is known as member checking and is used by researchers to mitigate personal biases while collecting data (Madill & Sullivan, 2017). I used member checking to lower the risk of my personal biases affecting data collection and analysis. I am familiar with the topic of the role of mentoring in career progression.

Population and Sampling

The population for this case study was HRM leaders working in civil service within the federal government in the southeastern region of the United States who have successfully used mentoring strategies to assist the professional development of their employees. I used criterion purposeful sampling to ensure participants met criteria. I also ensured their responses aligned with the research question to identify valuable information. Criterion purposeful sampling allows for the selection of participants who offer unique, diverse, or compelling perspectives on phenomena (Robinson, 2014; Yin, 2018). I went back and reviewed the list of confirmed participants ensuring they met participation criteria. Rule and John (2015) suggested that the number of participants in a qualitative case study should range from five to 10, allowing the researcher to achieve data saturation when reaching redundancy. I had a sample size of five participants. I concluded that I reached redundancy once I identified that participants repeated concepts without emerging of any new concepts. I used member checking to thoroughly explore

the research and interview questions (see Appendix D) with participants to ensure answers no new themes or concepts were emerging. At that point, I achieved data saturation.

Interviews when used in case studies are one of the most important sources of data (Barnes, 2017; Yin, 2018). Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2013) said interviews help researchers better contextualize qualitative findings by enhancing their interpretations. Therefore, I used interviews as the data collection method within this study. I conducted virtual interviews at the convenience of participants. Sharing of experiences by interviewees makes in-depth qualitative interviews more fruitful compared to simply answering questions (Aragon-Correa et al., 2017). Conducting qualitative research interviews involves gathering information based on viewpoints of interviewees (Agran et al., 2016).

Ethical Research

Researchers must abide by ethical standards that promote the core values of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice outlined in *The Belmont Report*. Researchers are subject to ethical compliance (Barnes, 2017; Yin, 2018). To ensure ethical protection of participants, I obtained informed participant consent, ensured both privacy and confidentiality, and used fair participation selection procedures. Per Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines (IRB Approval #01-19-21-0371903), I made certain that individuals willing to participate responded to the emailed consent form with "I consent" before participating in semistructured interviews.

Prevalent ethical protocol and standards for research involving human participants include:

- informed consent

- privacy of participants

- avoiding harm

- participants' right to withdraw

- restricted use of data

- proper care in storing data

- avoidance of conflicts of interest (Stacey & Stacey, 2012).

This subsection involves the withdrawal process. Participation in the study was voluntary; I informed participants that they were able to withdraw consent at any time. If withdrawal took place, I destroyed all notes and recorded interview data provided by the person who withdrew. The right to withdraw was at the discretion of the participant at any time during the study.

Kelly et al. (2017) said incentives matter when seeking participation in a study that involves a qualitative interview. Having no monetary incentives may result in a smaller participant pool (Kelly et al., 2017). Researchers who use incentives may encourage participation within a study (Fu et al., 2017). Research participants may have found personal incentives by participating in the study, but no other incentives were provided.

I protected participants' rights to confidentiality and privacy. I will also keep electronic data on a password-protected USB drive and paper data in a locked cabinet for

5 years. I will delete the digital data and shred the paper data at the end of 5 years in compliance with Walden University's protocol.

As required by Walden University IRB, none of the collected data contained any personal identifiers that may jeopardize the identity of participants or the organization. Personal identifiers may include names, emails, or addresses. I coded participants' data using alphanumeric coding such as P1, P2, etc., to ensure these identifiers remained confidential. All email correspondence took place through my university email only, and security identification options were enabled. I conducted communication with participants confidentially. Recommended participants who met the criteria for participation received an invitation and consent form (see Appendices C and F) via secured email. Those who elected to participate were asked to respond with "I consent" to show agreement. I ensured the enforcement of complete confidentiality measures.

Data Collection Instruments

I served as the primary data collection instrument. Within a qualitative case study, sources of evidence incorporated may include interviews, direct observation of participants' body language during the interviews, and physical artifacts (Barnes, 2017; Yin, 2018). Semistructured interviews served as the data collection instrument. Using the semistructured interview approach, I engaged in conversation with the interviewee, while using guided questions (see Appendix D) to prompt the interaction for the study.

The participants provided personal perspectives about their mentoring program experience, when responding to the six open-ended questions (see Appendix D). During the virtual interview, I also utilized documentation and direct observation of participants'

body language if visibility was available, as a tertiary within data collection methods. I captured my observations in a journal. To enhance the reliability and validity of the instruments, I elected to use the member-checking technique after the interviewing process. Kornbluh (2015) suggested that accuracy can be determined by summarizing participants' responses and providing each with a copy for review. Therefore, I restated or summarized my interpretations of the responses given by each participant to determine accuracy.

Data Collection Technique

The virtual interviews were comprised of open-ended questions (see Appendix D) allowing the exploration of issues, as they may arise during the interview. Yin (2016) suggested that open-ended questions are most effective when predetermined answers are not available. While interviewing participants, maintaining the sequence of the guided interview questions (see Appendix D) and implementing the interview protocol (see Appendix A) helped me to sustain the organization of the data. Although the interview questions guided the participants through the interview process, I encouraged participants to share their experiences freely. Fostering a safe and relaxed environment was important for the success of the study.

Interviews took place at the convenience of the participants, with time and method. Mealer and Jones (2014) proposed that interviewing includes utilizing documentation and direct observation of participants' body language is the most used method. I used documentation and observation as a tertiary data collection method based upon constraints in the current world climate.

I recorded the interviews using a digital audio recorder, in addition to taking notes on body language that I observed during the interview when visibility was available. I will store the recorded and written data in a locked cabinet located in my home to which only I have access for 5 years. After 5 years, all maintained data and information related to this study will be properly shredded or deleted.

Data Organization Technique

To ensure that I have not omitted any data or observations of participants' body language during the interview, I took interview notes on my laptop using Microsoft Word. The audio recorder used was a Samsung Galaxy mobile device. Audio recording allowed me to capture verbal emotional content as exhibited by the participant. Additionally, I used a mobile device as the audio-recorder, as well as handwritten notes to have a consistent reference during the data collection and transcription processes. A regular recorder was used as a backup recording device to ensure that interview data was not lost. I tested this tool before conducting interviews to make sure the device functioned correctly and that it was a reliable tool during the interview process. I will store all raw data in a locked cabinet located in my home to which only I have access for 5 years. After 5 years, all maintained data and information related to this study will be properly shredded and deleted.

Data Analysis

For a qualitative case study, triangulation is described as a well-suited data analysis process, to increase the validity of the results (Fusch et al., 2015; Yin, 2018). The goal of triangulation is to encourage researchers to embrace more than one

perspective during the collection and analysis of data (Tibben, 2015). I used data from semistructured interviews and documented participant body language observed during the interview when visibility was available. I captured my observations in a journal.

Theoretical, investigator, data, and methodological are the methods of triangulation that I took into consideration. Theoretical triangulation allows the researcher to use as many theoretical concepts in a study as possible (Sántha, 2019). This results in motivation for researchers to conduct further research, seek to identify theory interactions and associated relationships, and possibly rethink the theory altogether (Sántha, 2019). A single theory was used as the conceptual framework of this study, therefore theoretical triangulation was not appropriate. The investigator method is used when the goal of the researcher using triangulation, is to minimize the subjective influence that is commonly present in qualitative research, because of involving serval researchers and analysts in the process (Sántha, 2019). Because a single researcher was conducting this case study, the investigator method was not appropriate. Data triangulation is described as involving the three factors of time, space, and persons (Sántha, 2019). Data triangulation is not the most appropriate approach out of the different triangulation methods because this study was limited to all three factors.

I used methodological triangulation for this study. Methodological triangulation is described as the central concept of triangulation typologies (Sántha, 2019). The utilization of methodological triangulation may result in a distinction being made when comparing qualitative methods to see if similar results can be found (Sántha, 2019). Methodological triangulation was the most appropriate for this study because I utilized

more than one method to gather data. I collected data through virtual interviewing, documented participants' body language if visibility was available, and publicly available documents.

During data analysis, the researcher forms an understanding of the identified concepts presented during the exploration (Mitchell, 2015). After the initial categorization of data, the researcher should apply an organization technique (Barnes, 2017; Yin, 2018). The overall process I used for data analysis was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method used to analyze qualitative data in the form of a set of texts such as interview transcripts (L. S. Nowell et al., 2017). To accomplish thematic analysis, I used pattern matching. Pattern matching is finding occurrences of a specific pattern of characters resulting in themes within a large amount of text (Oladunjoye et al., 2017). Pattern matching was the most applicable technique for a case study analysis for obtaining codes and themes (Barnes, 2017; Yin, 2018). Therefore, I made use of the pattern matching technique for data analysis.

I used a mobile phone for audio-recording data from five individuals regarding the processes they use in developing and implementing strategies for mentoring employees' professional development. Using the completed transcripts and hard copy documents given to me by the participants, I used NVivo 12 qualitative research software to help identify brief phrases that may assist with linking reoccurrences in the data. The findings were displayed using the query function that allowed the analysis of the data. I used thematic analysis with Yin's (2018) five-step process: (a) compiling the data; (b) disassembling the data; (c) reassembling the data; (d) interpreting the meaning of the

data; and (e) concluding the data. By employing these two methods, I correlated the key themes that emerged from the literature review, research question, and conceptual framework of the study. I provided participants via email with a summary of the results upon completion of data analysis. I requested that the participants provide additions, corrections, and deletions via email within 5 days of receipt of the summary.

Reliability and Validity

Qualitative researchers can establish reliability and validity by addressing Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four universally accepted criteria, which are dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability. According to Leung (2015), researchers can assess the criteria listed above by using applicable methods and designs. Within a qualitative case study, data sources incorporated that a researcher may use to ensure validity and reliability include interviews, direct observation of participants' body language, and physical artifacts (Barnes, 2017; Yin, 2018). Korstjens and Moser (2017) suggested the following strategies as suitable methods to ensure credibility: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and member checking.

Reliability

Reliability depends on the consistent themes of data collection, member checking, and transcript review of processes (Yin, 2018). Future researchers will have the ability to repeat the study to prove the reliability of the design. The bottom line of qualitative research is to paint a meaningful picture of an experience by recognizing associated patterns in a study (Lawrence, 2017). Lawrence (2017) suggested that due to the connectivity of non-numerical information and ties to the human senses and emotions,

biases regarding the quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research may arise.

McIntosh and Morse (2015) suggested that dependability, confirmability, credibility, and

transferability are used to access reliability and validity in qualitative studies.

Dependability

Dependability relates to being able to repeat the study of the phenomenon of

mentoring strategies HRM leaders use to develop their employees. When considering the

dependability and conformability of a study, Korstjens and Moser (2017) encouraged the

researcher to consider the following questions: Is the analysis process in line with what is

deemed acceptable for the design of this study? Is the interpretation of the study

indoctrinated in data or my preferences and point of view? Data included interview

questions (see Appendix D), interview recordings, observation notes, coding notes, and

feedback received during the member checking process, all of which will help enable

future researchers to repeat the process.

Validity

Validity means the researcher checks for accuracy and trustworthiness of the

findings by employing certain procedures, including triangulation (Fusch et al., 2015).

The validity of a study is determined by how the study's findings based on a selected

sample can represent the reality of the population (Fink, 2013). A sample of participants

from the same organization minimizes threats to validity (Fink, 2013).

I engaged in methodological triangulation. The methodological triangulation

method was the most appropriate as it was my goal to identify all distinctions between

method, across method, and within this study by collecting data by conducting

semistructured interviews of the five participants. Methodological triangulation is described as the central concept of triangulation typologies (Sántha, 2019). Researchers often apply methodological triangulation to implement more than one technique to ensure the data is both valid and reliable (Fusch et al., 2015). The utilization of this method may result in the distinction made between the method, across the method, and within the method (Sántha, 2019).

Credibility

Credibility is synonymous with what quantitative researchers refer to as internal validity (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Korstjens and Moser (2017) suggested the following strategies as suitable methods to ensure credibility: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and member checking. Triangulation and member checking are two methods used to verify credibility in this study. I conducted triangulation by cross-checking the findings from semistructured interviews, literature, publicly available documents, and observations during the interviews to embrace more than one perspective. I provided participants with a summary of the results upon completion of data analysis. I asked the participants for additions, corrections, and deletions, within 5 days. I incorporated the appropriate feedback I received. If by chance some of the participants did not reply after five5 days, I followed up with another email or a phone call and continued until I received a response.

Transferability

My responsibility was to provide my readers with a thorough description of both the participants and the research process, equipping the reader to assess whether the

findings of my study were transferable to their research (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). I accomplished this goal by providing revealing information that detailed the context of the research, setting, qualifying participant criteria, sample size, demographic, interview procedures and questions, and the interview protocol (see Appendix A) developed specifically for this study.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the demonstration that the data collected in the study is the interpretation of the participants' and does not include researcher bias (Yin, 2018). Being both a human being and a researcher, having my own set of beliefs, assumptions, and responses based on my experiences was inevitable. Therefore, to avoid my biases impacting the research, I ensured self-awareness of any biases. I ensured that all qualitative study performing expectations were met to include substantiating all elements of trustworthiness. I provided participants with a summary of the results upon completion of data analysis. I asked the participants for additions, corrections, and deletions, within five days. Harvey (2015) suggested that during member checking, participants may suggest changes as deemed necessary.

Data Saturation

Data saturation is the point when a researcher concludes that all themes in a study are identified (Tran et al., 2017). If a researcher does not reach data saturation or if the duration of the interview sessions failed in answering the research question, the researcher must continue the interviewing process, until data saturation is achieved (Fusch et al., 2015). Five participants took part in semistructured interviews geared

towards obtaining data saturation. Had data saturation not been reached after interviewing the original five participants, I would have continued my investigation beyond five interviewees (Tran et al., 2017).

Transition and Summary

Section 2 encompassed a description of the project, purpose statement, role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, data analysis, along with reliability and reliability. I utilized a case study approach to gather data exploring mentoring strategies that some HRM leaders working in civil service within the federal government successfully use to assist the professional development of the command's employees. Section 3 consists of an introduction, presentation of findings, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for further research, reflections, a summary, and conclusions of the study.

Section 3: Presentation of the Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore mentoring strategies that some HRM leaders working in civil service within the federal government successfully use to assist the professional development of their employees. The population for the research study was comprised of five HRM leaders working in civil service within the federal government in the southeastern region of the United States who have successfully used mentoring strategies to assist the professional development of their employees. I used member checking and methodological triangulation which included reviewing publicly available organizational documents on mentorship to strengthen the study's validity and reliability.

The conceptual framework of this study was Kram's mentoring theory that measured effective and successful mentoring techniques by determining the impact, quality, and level of satisfaction of participants. Kram (1988) identified the following goals associated with effective mentoring: enhancing individuals' development in the early, middle, and later career years and clarifying relations between colleagues who provide mentoring. After conducting thematic analysis using pattern matching, three themes materialized: mentorship program policy development, developing mentors, and responsibilities of the mentee. The following section includes the presentation of findings, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further research. Section 3 concludes with my reflections and conclusions of the research study.

Presentation of the Findings

The objective of this single case study was to answer the overarching research question: What mentoring strategies do some HRM leaders working in civil service within the federal government successfully use to assist the professional development of their employees? To answer the research question, I used semistructured interview questions. All interview questions were open-ended to empower research participants to explore what mentoring strategies they employed to enable career progression among their employees.

I used thematic analysis with Yin's five-step process: (a) compiling data, (b) disassembling data, (c) reassembling data, (d) interpreting the meaning of data, and (e) concluding and analyzing collected data. After each interview, I transcribed the recorded data by paper and pen and transferred it into a Word document. I uploaded the Word document into NVivo 12 to assist me with data coding. Data coding consisted of finding keywords, common terms, and themes. All participants were assigned a unique code (P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5) to maintain their confidentiality. Summaries of my interpretations of participants' responses during interviews were provided to each participant to ensure accuracy of my analysis.

Table 4 demonstrates evidence of subthemes which emerged during participant interviews. Information within the table include number of sources, representing the number of participants who referred each subtheme. References represent the number of times the participants made mention of such. P5 said, "It is the responsibility of leaders to

structure and govern all policies and procedures relating to tying together the mission, vision, values, and culture of the organization."

Table 4

Theme 1: Evidence of Subthemes of Mentorship Program Policy Development

Subtheme	Number of sources	References
Mentorship Program	5	12
Mentorship	5	10
Policy	5	5

Table 5 includes evidence of subthemes identified by participants during interviews relating to developing mentors. Information within the table includes number of sources and how many times these sources were referenced. P1 said, "Mentors can be developed at all levels within an organization."

Table 5

Theme 2: Evidence of Subthemes of Developing Mentors

Subtheme	Number of sources	References
Leadership	5	9
Relationship	5	7
Mentoring	5	7

Within Table 6, evidence of subthemes which emerged during participant interviews supporting responsibilities of mentees is shown. The table includes number of sources supporting the subtheme as well as number of times participants referenced the subtheme. P3 said, "Mentees should position themselves to be receptive to guidance and direction but maintain control of the mentoring process."

Table 6

Theme 3: Evidence of Subthemes of Responsibilities of a Mentee

Subtheme	Number of sources	References
Goals	5	10
Behavior	5	5
Plan	5	5

Theme 1: Mentorship Program Policy Development

Leaders have a fundamental role in organizations to lead and leverage

organizational learning to achieve maximum productivity (Greer, 2017). P2 stated:

> The important part of mentorship is knowing that mentorship is not a checklist. It
> is not a check the box. It is I want to see this person be successful, and even if it
> means them being even more successful than I am.

P1 also stated, "If an organization has a strong mentoring program, it can improve workplace culture." Sheridan et al. (2015) said organizational development in the form of mentorship programs promotes further development of employees and sustainment of mentoring activities. Organizations without mentorship programs lack leadership skill development, employee commitment, and opportunities for professional networking (Mains & MacLean, 2017). Mains and MacLean (2017) said understanding and accepting mentorship as a responsibility was a key strategy for enabling the career progression of others. It is vital that organizational leadership, via mentorship development, assist with the acquisition of human resources (Sheridan et al., 2015). Welsh and Dixon (2016) said by developing employees and building talent, organizations are successful in terms of implementing mentoring programs. Castanheira (2016) said mentoring programs can enhance the culture of an organization. Mentoring can also lead to effective means for managing organizational change (Sheridan et al., 2015). Based on Kram's mentorship theory, initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition are the four essential phases required for effective mentoring program policy development to take place.

Through supervisory support, development of opportunities, and compensation when available, organizations may establish an environment of continuous learning that values mentoring (Sheridan et al., 2015). P3 said, "It definitely is the leadership's

responsibility to mentor." With senior leadership support, HRM leaders could create opportunities that allow the transfer of knowledge throughout the entire organization (Chaudhary, 2017). Representation of people in leadership positions makes positive outcomes possible (Gündermir et al., 2017). Compensation offered to participants of a mentoring program could be a vital part of leadership efforts to reduce employee turnover (Labrague et al., 2018). P1 stated, "Leadership buy-in is pivotal for a successful mentoring program policy regardless of what sector you are in." P1 also said, "Sometimes, the lack of leadership buy-in will prevent a mentee from achieving their professional development goals."

Leaders have challenges related to assisting with the professional development of their employees (Francis, 2019). P3 reported that funding, mission, and the mentees willingness to be mentored also created obstacles when developing a mentoring program policy. According to P4, everyone does not have an open mind or the mindset to learn new things. P5 said, "You have to have open lines of communication and then develop goals and how they will be accomplished."

However, through mentorship programs, leaders become accepting of the responsibility to mentor, perceived leadership support, and lack of effective communication. Francis (2019) said that when designing a mentoring program policy, the following should be considered and identified:

- long-term human resources support;
- a mentoring handbook that will guide faculty, mentors, and mentees;
- creation and identification of strategic goals towards retention and sustainability;

- once you commit to the program, your participation is mandatory; and

- integration of community service initiatives.

Conklin (2016) stated that successful mentoring relationships establish clear strategic goals, plans of action to support established goals, and continuously monitor established plans and goals even after the mentoring relationship ends. P1 said, "an integral part of establishing a mentorship program includes the development of an individualized career plan as the plan outlines the necessary skills and goals to succeed for both the employee and the organization." All participants agreed that goals should be both realistic and measurable. Participants also agreed that goals should align with the organization's mission.

P3 identified the individual development plan (IDP) as a tool that can be used to establish plans and strategic goals. P3 stated, "An immediate 5-year plan needs to be established." P2 noted that a 3- to 5-year individual development plan would capture both short- and long-term strategic goals. P4 and P5 said the IDP ultimately identifies strategic goals, establishes a timeline, and serves as a guide for mentoring. According to Kram (1988), developing goals in the early, middle, and later career years not only clarifies relations between the mentor and mentee but also enhances the mentees individual development.

Theme 2: Developing Mentors

A mentor is a knowledgeable individual developed in an interactive and complex manner acquired through the repetitive interaction of three fundamental components: (a) assessment of learning, (b) identification of the learner's needs, and (c) how the context

nests their learning (Langdon, 2017). Cronan et al. (2020) said the most important

characteristic of both a good and bad mentor was their personality. P3 stated:

> Personally, I look at mentoring employees from two aspects: one is mentoring by
>
> modeling the behavior you want the young employee to emulate, and the other
>
> part discovering what an employee needs and not thinking of mentoring as a one
>
> size fits all.

> P2 said, "you bring a certain amount of care and passion to the mentoring

relationship ensuring the mentee knows your desire of wanting them to be better."

Additionally, P1 stated:

> Serving as a mentor in any capacity shows the positive energy that comes from
>
> the mentor in desiring to see people excel. Commitment, communication, and
>
> consistency are key. It is vitally important for the mentor to dedicate time and
>
> effort to be able to guide the mentee.

P4 explained:

> I want to make sure my mentee is involved in every aspect of the time we spend
>
> together. I want to ensure that they feel important, and their opinions are valued
>
> and are being heard. I do not want to just take control; I want them to feel like
>
> they are making the decisions and that I am just leading. Not forcefully but
>
> leading them in a positive direction for what they are trying to achieve.

> P2 stated, "everyone does not want to be a mentor. Many people feel that they do

not have the time." Ayyala et al. (2019) said individuals who lack the desire to be a

mentor may have experienced a failed mentorship relationship. Reasons for failed

mentorship relationships may include:

- poor communication

- lack of commitment

- personality differences

- perceived competition

- clarity around intellectual property

- conflicts of interest

- lack of experience (Ayyala et. al, 2019)

    In addition, P3 stated:

    Mentorship is part of your daily responsibilities. It is always a part of your

    responsibilities. It is not something that you scramble to make time for, or that

    you figure out how to squeeze time to do. It is part of your duties.

Rowe-Johnson (2018) proposed that mentors hold many responsibilities in a mentoring

relationship, which include:

- welcoming the mentee to the values and norms of the organization

- being a teacher

- being a role model demonstrating acceptable behavior

- being a protector supporting the mentee during stressful situations

- being a confidant providing support and a colleague

    Career functions that mentors can use to aid in the mentee's learning and

preparation for career advancement include coaching, sponsoring, and presenting

challenging assignments (Jackson, 2019). According to P4, "mentors have to get to know the individual to figure out what a particular individual needs because not all individuals need the same thing." Mentoring is not always formal (Jones et al., 2018). Mentoring can involve someone asking for advice or help (Jones et al., 2018). Informal mentoring varies from formal mentoring because informal mentoring is less structured and more naturally cultivated (Jones et al., 2018). P5 said:

> The thing with formal mentoring is that mentors can really hold the mentee accountable. The individual knows that they can call on you if they need you. Sometimes with informal mentoring those lines of communication are not established.

When a formal mentoring program is developed, there is generally a formal policy identifying items, such as who can be a mentee and who can serve as mentors (Ghawji et al., 2017). P1 stated, "most of the successful mentoring strategies I have seen are those that are not structured, they just sort of happen." According to Kram (1985), regardless of the type of mentoring, all mentoring types and mentors share the same common goal, which is to provide purposeful support aimed at developing and improving mentees' knowledge and career advancement opportunities.

Theme 3: Responsibilities of the Mentee

According to Heeneman and de Grave (2019), a mentee is defined as an individual who receives information and demonstration of skills, knowledge, and wisdom from a mentor. P4 stated,

A mentee is a person who can learn from the experience of others. The experience can increase social and academic confidence to aid them with becoming more empowered to make decisions. The experience can help develop communication and personal skills and help in developing strategies for dealing with both personal and academic issues.

Handayani et al. (2017) stated that employees who trust their leadership, know their value, and are actively engaged in their work, can be more productive and align themselves with organizational goals. P1 shared,

The mentee must be both vocal and clear about the type of mentorship they are looking to gain from the mentor. The mentee must effectively communicate their aspirations in the federal government, outside of the federal government, and in their personal life.

P4 shared, "It all starts with having open communication. At this stage, I want to start building trust." P5 stated, "The advice I would give a mentor as their mentee would be to stay engaged, be available, and give the proper advice. Understand that it is only advice." P2 stated, "If the mentee isn't willing to accept advice and accept constructive criticism in the mentor-mentee relationship, they're not going to grow."

Cleaver and Fincheme (2017) believed the following characteristics and behaviors are vital for a mentee to possess:

- be appreciative
- do not take your mentor for granted
- recognize that change is up to you, not your mentor

- prepare well for meetings

- do your homework, and be punctual

- discuss expectations

- be committed to the process

- if something is not working, discuss it with your mentor

- respect the boundaries of mentoring remit

- do not try to become like your mentor

- become a better version of yourself

- do not take things personally

- be aware of the spin-off learning (e.g., communication skills.)

Kram (1988) explored the dyad between the mentor who is usually senior in rank and the mentee who is often a junior associate. Boswell et al. (2017) found that mentors and mentees who had the experience of dual relationships with one another, rendered higher career-related progress, than someone who lacked the experience. P5 simplified the consensus of the group by stating, "Mentorship has to go both ways." However, more mentorship programs address the expectations and characteristics of the mentor versus addressing the same for the mentee (Black & Taylor, 2018).

Mentee benefits of a mentorship relationship: increased job satisfaction, career mobility, increased opportunities, and career satisfaction (Kram, 1988; White et al., 2017). Some mentees prefer their mentor to provide them with more emotional support versus instructional support or assistance with socialization (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016).

Emotional support, personal feedback, and friendship are often described as psychosocial functions (Lawrence, 2017).

Peer relationships are often offered to forge a way for information sharing, career mapping, and feedback related to the mentee's job, which could result from an existing closer and more personal bond (Lawrence, 2017). Matching mentors and mentees by reflecting on the mentors' career status, competencies, and the mentees' potential is extremely important (Kram, 1983). To define the mentee and mentor relationship and determine compatibility, Shadle (2016) suggested the mentee:

- ask questions that are geared towards strategic growth;

- set expectations that will encourage improvement and not perfection;

- take a learning position;

- remain objective and critical of your mentor;

- respect your mentor but avoid idolizing them;

- apply what you learn as soon as possible;

- be disciplined and consistent; and

- reward your mentor by displaying growth.

Preparing a mentee to one day assume the responsibility and role of a mentor, will assist in future recruitment and evaluation of the program in the future (Crisp et al., 2017). P1 stated,

It is my opinion that once the mentee sees that the mentoring they are receiving is getting results and career progression is taking place, the mentee should share

their success amongst colleagues, subordinates, and associates. This is what opens

the door for more mentoring to take place.

P2 shared, "A mentee is capable and prepared to be a mentor when they want to assist

others with surpassing their success."

According to Ssemata et al. (2017), a mentee can evolve into a mentor when they can

provide career, academic, and personal guidance. Having the ability to act as a role

model, and guide in professionalism and ethical issues is also indication that a mentee

can evolve into a mentor.

In this study, the responses of the participants aligned with Kram's mentoring

theory. Participants established the development of leadership-supported mentoring

programs that implemented strategic mentoring strategies, career stages based on both

organizational and personal goals of the employee which would postulate the best

possible outcome. However, the participants acknowledged the challenges they faced

within federal organizations. The participants confirmed Kram's mentoring theory.

Through their responses, it became evident that individual attitudes towards a result will

vary depending on the individual's perceptions of the mentoring relationship.

Applications to Professional Practice

Organizational leaders who use effective mentoring strategies to launch

employees' career progression may benefit from increased retention rates, as employees

realize career growth opportunities within the organization they may want to remain.

HRM leaders can use the knowledge transferred from the HRM leaders to the employees

through mentoring initiatives, to foster an environment that promotes improvement of

leadership skills of in-house employees while inspiring innovation. HRM leaders may find that the results from this study provide them with insights on how to develop and successfully implement effective mentoring strategies, resulting in more effective methods of training for mentors and mentees.

The results of this study affirmed the themes of (a) mentorship program policy development, (b) developing mentors, and (c) responsibilities of the mentee. HRM leaders should embrace mentoring as a part of their behavior. Supervisors or those in leadership positions must be flexible knowing that mentoring relationships may extend beyond a working relationship and within the initial agreed-upon time constraints. As previously mentioned, researcher Kram (1988) identified that mentoring relationships could take place in the early, middle, and later career years of the mentor and mentee. The consensus among the participants agreed was that as a mentor, HR management leaders must exhibit the change that is expected of the mentee. HRM leaders could use the results of this study to bridge gaps in the strategic development and implementation of mentoring programs used to enable employees' career progression.

These results could also aid in decreased hiring and replacement costs and encourage an increased organizational performance. Kram (1983) described successful mentoring as measuring effective and successful mentoring techniques by determining the impact, quality, and level of satisfaction of the participants. In this regard, the quality would be a higher-performing employee and success could be retention.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this single case study revealed several implications for social change. With current efforts to better empower and prepare HRM leaders for career progression, federal organizations may need to address how to effectively mentor these individuals to ensure that they are prepared. Implications for positive social change may include creating resources for mentors and mentees to facilitate and guide the mentorship relationship. Participants voiced concerns about mentors' behavior and attitudes about mentorship. The implication for social change is to create a positive reputation in the community associated with the mentorship programs and the federal government. Participants did not mention diversity within their organizations' mentorship programs. The implication for social change is to develop a mentorship program specifically geared toward addressing concerns of leadership about minority, gender, and disabled leadership within the organization.

The individuals who participate in mentoring programs may gain experience in maximizing relationships, saving resources, and accepting civic responsibilities. For some individuals, successful mentorship may result in a salary increase. This increase in salary and an individual's desire to give back may be inspirational to give monetarily to others. These donations made by individuals who participate in mentoring programs may provide funds for additional teachers, better quality books and supplies, and improvement of emergency shelters for displaced families. Some individuals may feel compelled to be giving of their time and effort to pass down the benefits mentorship afforded them to others. Increasing volunteer participation in civic and social activities within the

community whose focus is mentoring may result in the resource needs of the organizations being met.

Recommendations for Action

HRM leaders within any organization should consider if the findings of this study could augment current mentorship strategies used to assist the professional development of employees. They may discover the study's findings helpful in laying the foundation for new mentoring programs. HRM leaders in any industry who desire to enable the career progression of their employees through mentoring strategies should pay heed to the results of this study. Senior leadership in organizations who are considering new strategies to mentor and progress employees should consider the findings of this study helpful in fulfilling the goal of employees.

The results of this study rendered two recommendations of action for HRM leaders. Formalization of the recommendations could increase professional development in the workplace. The first recommendation is to build a professional relationship with the employee. The optimal outcome could mean exhibiting commitment and consistency through the dedication of time and effort. Getting to know the employee and learning of their personal and professional goals, allows for effective communication and goal alignment to take place. Leaders may contribute to the excepted responsibilities of being a mentor. Regularly scheduled meetings and the practice of clear and concise communication are instrumental methods that can be utilized to encourage open lines of communication.

The second recommendation is the application of Kolb's (1984) experiential

learning model. Kolb's experiential learning five-step model includes the following: (a) experience; (b) share; (c) process; (d) generalize; and (e) apply. The basis of the model is to foster an environment that allows learning to take place through real-world and hands-on experiences. An important key to this recommendation is for HRM leaders to set the appropriate example by being or exhibiting the change they want to see in the organization. Mahatma Gandhi (1958) supported this sentiment by stating, "We but mirror the world." Leadership support could create mentorship opportunities to include desk-side training sessions, job swapping, and job shadowing (Chaudhary, 2017).

The results of this study will be disseminated through Walden University's scholarly works for academic purposes. Doctoral students who are compiling research in the future may deem the findings of this study valuable. I might publish an article and present at conferences to educate others about the importance of utilizing mentoring strategies to enhance the career progression of employees.

Recommendations for Further Research

The study included two principal limitations: the first limitation of this study was the possibility that a participant had an association with mentoring efforts within the organization and could influence the results of the study. The second limitation was that the five participants selected to interview would not be representative of the entire organization. Based on the limitations, further research could be conducted in other industries, including random selection of leaders from other departments, and increasing the number of participants adding into the data collection. Additionally, further research could focus on expounding on the identified themes for this study. Researchers could also

conduct further research by using different geographical locations, explore differences of cultural approach, and gender differences to the implementation of mentoring strategies used to successfully assist the professional development of employees. Further research in these areas, may assist HRM leaders who want to implement these successful mentorship strategies to enable career progression.

Reflections

This stretching experience has been a monumental passage for me both professionally and personally. The experience of completing my doctoral study has taught me to implement a greater level of perseverance. I have held to my faith in God with being both steadfast and unmovable in pursuing the completion of this journey. My skills as a researcher, scholar, and critical thinker are heightened. I was given the opportunity through this study to expand my knowledge base on the intricacies of developing and implementing successful mentoring strategies through the lens of participants selected employing purposeful sampling.

Throughout this process, my passion and appreciation for the study and those who assisted with its completion continuously increased. The results of this study highlight a path for continued research opportunities of the subject. I eagerly await new opportunities to continue my contribution to the research on mentoring. I believe that mentoring will continue to be a major component of successful organizations and the professional development of employees.

Conclusion

The effects of mentoring are vital to an organization's alignment between people,

organizational policies, and outcomes (Ivey & Dupré, 2020). Mentoring is an essential tool for HRM leaders within any organization (Ivey & Dupré, 2020). Organizations without mentorship programs lack leadership skill development, employee commitment, and opportunities for professional networking (Mains & MacLean, 2017). Strategies implemented by HRM leaders within mentorship programs could address gaps in the strategic development and implementation of mentoring programs used to enable employees' career progression. (Messum et al., 2017). The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore mentoring strategies that some HRM leaders working in civil service within the federal government, in the southeastern region of the United States successfully used to assist the professional development of their employees. The conceptual framework of this study was grounded by Kram's (1983) mentoring theory.

Through analysis of literature, semistructured interviews, and organizational publicly available documentation, three themes derived from the study: (a) mentorship program policy development, (b) developing mentors, and (c) responsibilities of the mentee. These results show that there are successful mentoring strategies organization leaders can implement to enable employees' career progression. Organizations are encouraged to regularly review and modify these strategies to ensure their continued success.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Participants will respond "I consent" to the email sent to them containing both the participant invitation and consent form. This will indicate their willingness to participate in the study. At the start of their interview, each participant will be reminded that their participation is voluntary. It is both unpaid and uncompensated. The following statements provide the structure and procedure protocols for the interview:

1. Schedule each virtual interview and send each participant a calendar reminder with the date and time of the interview.

2. Ask the participant for permission to begin the audio recording for the interview.

3. If the participant agrees to the audio recording, move on to protocol 4.

4. Begin the audio recording

5. Ask the person if they read the consent form in its entirety and agree to continue as a participant in this study.

6. Welcome each participant with these opening remarks: "Hello, My name is Anticia Alston and I am a Doctoral student at Walden University. Thank you so much for volunteering your time to participate in this study."

7. "The total time for this interview should be about 45 minutes."

8. If the participant decides not to give their permission to do an audio record of the interview: "Thank you (participant's name), I respect your decision. I need to take written notes of your responses to capture your perceptions about the mentoring strategies. The interview may require an additional time commitment to ensure I write your responses accurately. Are you still willing to participate?"

9. Assure the participant that all responses will be confidential: "(Participant's name), all of your responses are confidential, and the published doctoral study will not include any recognizing information in order to protect your identity."

10. Check to make sure they received an email response indicating their agreeance to participate with a response of "I consent." Did you receive the document? The consent form includes a) the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) number for this study, b) an email address for the Chair of my Doctoral Study Committee, and c) an email contact for the IRB if you have additional questions beyond this interview about the nature and purpose of this study."

11. "Are you still willing to participate?"

12. Explain the study's purpose and interview procedure: "The purpose of my study is to explore mentoring strategies that human resource management leaders working in civil service within the federal government successfully use to assist the professional development of their employees."

13. The interview format is open-ended questions. Please feel free to add clarifying remarks you deem appropriate.

14. Statement of consent and option to withdraw from the interview process: "(Participant's name) this interview is voluntary, and you may decline to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. Additionally, you may withdraw your consent at any time, during this interview, and all notes, references, and recorded information previously collected enters a destruction process. Your withdrawal does not impose any reprisal or negatively affect your

professional standing"

15. Begin asking the interview questions.

16. After the participant answers all questions, "Thank you (participant's name) again for your willingness to participate in the study

17. Advise the participants that they will receive via email a summary of the results upon completion of data analysis. I will request the participants to provide additions, corrections, and deletions via email within 5 days of receipt of the summary.

 Thank you again for your time and experience.

Appendix B: Request for Participation Recommendation

Greetings fellow professionals,

I am writing to enquire about possible recommendations you may have for participants that may be willing to be interviewed for my doctoral study. As the researcher, I am seeking a total of five participants. The purpose of my study is to explore mentoring strategies that human resource management leaders working in civil service within the federal government successfully use to assist the professional development of their employees. The inclusion criteria for the recommended person(s) is(are) as follows: they must be over 18 to participate in this study and be a human resource leader with at least 2 years of experience who have successfully implemented mentoring strategies used to assist the professional development of their employees.

If you could provide me with the name and contact information of the person(s) you would recommend, it would be greatly appreciated. The contact information that you provide must be publicly available. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Respectfully,

Anticia Alston

Appendix C: Participation Request

Hello [Add the name of recipient],

Your name was mentioned by a professional acquaintance as someone who may be willing to be interviewed for my doctoral study. The participation invitation and consent form have been sent to you to ensure that you are provided with all needed information to decide if you would like to participate in this study. The purpose of my study is to explore mentoring strategies that leaders in the human resource management leaders working in civil service within the federal government successfully use to assist the professional development of their employees.

As the researcher, I am seeking five participants for this study. The inclusion criteria for this study are as follows: you must be over 18 to participate in this study and be a human resource leader with at least 2 years of experience who have successfully implemented mentoring strategies used to assist the professional development of their employees. The interview which will be conducted virtually will consist of a few open-ended questions and will last 45 minutes or less. Your responses and identity will remain confidential at all times, and you have the right to withdraw your participation at any time.

If participating is something you may be interested in or even have a recommendation for a participant, please refer to the attached consent form. Should there be any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to reach out by responding to this email directly.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Respectfully,

Anticia Alston

Appendix D: Interview Questions

1. What mentoring strategies do you use to aid your employees' professional development?

2. What mentoring strategies work best in aiding your employees' professional development?

3. How do you assess the effectiveness of the mentoring strategies for your employees' professional development?

4. What obstacles have you encountered when implementing mentoring strategies to aid your employees' professional development?

5. What have you done to overcome the obstacles for mentoring strategies and employee professional development?

6. What other information would you like to provide about mentoring strategies for employee professional development?

Appendix E: Human Subjects Research Certification

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 18-Feb-2020
Expiration Date   N/A
Record ID   34887606

This is to certify that:

Anticia Alston

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Student Researchers (Curriculum Group)
Student Researchers (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course   (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Walden University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wf0b98083-4455-4aa3-9114-30a2fd7054c0-34887606