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## Noncompetitive Subordinate Employees' Descriptions of Adaptive Performance Following an Internal Promotion

Yemisi Milledge  
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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Yemisi Milledge

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Walden University  
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Abstract

Noncompetitive Subordinate Employees' Descriptions of Adaptive Performance

Following an Internal Promotion

by

Yemisi Milledge

MPHIL, Walden University, 2021

MS, Emporia State University, 2000

BA, Albany State University, 1999

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Research Psychology

Walden University

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## Abstract

Employees' views on internal promotions tend to influence outcomes such as support given to the promoted employee, employee organizational commitment, and employee job satisfaction. Research on the influence of internal promotions has focused primarily on the reactions of competitive non-promoted internal candidates and those of the promoted individuals. This qualitative study investigated how employees who did not compete for a promotion adapted to a coworker being promoted to become their supervisor and how the employees described the coworker's adaptation to the promotion. A taxonomy of adaptive performance and generic qualitative research formed the conceptual frameworks, and the leader-member exchange theory formed the theoretical framework. Written and audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 employees who did not compete for the supervisory position to assess the noncompetitive employees' adaptation to the promotion and their perceived adaptation of the promoted coworker by exploring their experiences, perceptions, and attitudes regarding the promotion. Interviews were transcribed, and transcripts were analyzed using generic qualitative analysis to determine themes. Results revealed that noncompetitive employees variously adapted to their coworker's promotion to supervisor with most having adapted well and the noncompetitive employees had mixed views about the adaptation of their promoted coworker with most having positive views about their promoted coworker's adaptation. Positive social change elements may be valuable to organizations and rewarding to employees, as internal promotions are organizational changes that can potentially affect employee morale, productivity, and success.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this scholarly work to God my Heavenly Father, the Most High, and Supreme Creator—I am my Father’s daughter. To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, my comforter and guide, I dedicate this work to you. Father God, I thank you for your protection, correction, and patience on this journey to discover what you had already done for me. To my earthly biological father, Jasper Milledge, you were a man held in high esteem, a master writer and orator. To you and your rich legacy, I dedicate this work. Again, I am my father’s daughter. To my mother, Thelma Milledge, to your encouragement, your support, to your listening ear, and your heart I dedicate this work. To Sasha, my sweet precious fur baby who parted my life more than a year ago, I dedicate this work to you. Thank you for being the perfect companion. I also dedicate this work to aspiring Ph.D. scholars. Do not be dissuaded when this world tells you, in its many ways, to turn against what God has for you—receive Him and all those He sends and win!

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

The process of promoting internally is prevalent in most business enterprises regardless of size. Small, medium and large enterprises alike would likely agree that it is an ongoing process that is an important part of management. Though internal promotion is quite common some companies are better prepared to cope with it than others. The sudden availability of a position could result in a process that may involve headhunters or recruitment agencies or a long-term proactive plan such as succession planning (Odeku, 2014; Nixon, 2019). Intra-organizational mobility or internal promotions, as it is more commonly known, may be used for filling vacant positions.

Promotions are often used as incentive mechanisms so that the hiring must occur from within to preserve worker incentives. This view is discussed by Chan et al. (2008). The argument is that external hiring reduces incentives for current workers. The firm can respond either by increasing the wage spread from promotion or by using an internal hiring policy as a handicap that favors internal workers. The latter policy seemingly seeks to avoid the problems of moral hazard and the industrial politics that can arise from large wage spreads. An alternative view presented by Waldman and Yin (2020) negated the social dynamics that may erupt and contends that firms promote internally to avoid the time-inconsistency problem arising when promotions are used to achieve both job assignment and incentive creation. This would involve significant outside hiring, and internal incentives would suffer. In this case, research has shown that employee organizational commitment also suffers (Dlugos & Keller, 2021).

Additionally, succession planning has become a workplace planning model involving the realization of a favorable candidate, training, mentoring, and the involvement of that candidate in the typical experiences of an employee holding such a position. Those organizations utilizing a succession program are seemingly better prepared for seamless transitions into advanced positions. Succession planning involves forecasting future requirements, realizing the available human resource, and providing them with necessary training, coaching, and mentoring until the time arises for the required promotion (Rothwell, 2010). However, an illustration of employees' experiences following an internal promotion and its subsequent impact on adaptive performance, these elements are absent in the current literature.

Career mobility, such as an internal promotion, yields transition challenges for the individual such as adapting to the responsibilities at the new level and to the organization such as providing the optimum support for the promoted individual (Terblanche et al., 2017). This study involved assessing how employees describe adaptation to an internal promotion by exploring their experiences, perceptions, and attitudes following such a promotion. Though research has been conducted to investigate employees' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes who competed for an internal promotion but were not promoted (Truxillo et al., 2018; Konradt et al., 2017; McCarthy et al., 2017), the investigation of the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of noncompetitive employees following an internal promotion is lacking. A noncompetitive employee is understood to be an employee who does not apply for an advertised position that constitutes a promotion within an organization. This study explored, in particular, noncompeting subordinate

employees' perceptions following an internal promotion of their coworker to be their supervisor.

Approximately 60% of senior managers hired from the outside usually fail within the first 18 months because of poor execution of ideas due to ill-formulated leadership strategies, resulting in a primary focus on internal issues such as performance management and minimal focus on external issues such as remaining current on technology trends (Bauer, 2019; Carucci, 2017). The literature has also established that those promoted internally are generally more successful than those hired from the external labor market (DeOrtentiis et al., 2018). Manzoni & Barsoux (2009) underscored the power and influence subordinates have on bosses to be successful or unsuccessful leaders. For example, in an effort to prove preconceived ideas about the boss, the subordinate can take an important role in influencing the reactions of their boss; the subordinate can elicit a reaction in a forum where those reactions might be misconstrued by others, leading to an ineffective boss-subordinate relationship (Manzoni & Barsoux, 2009). Similarly, through certain behavioral responses, passivity, for example, the subordinate might not be forthright about work-related problems that need to be addressed, detracting from the boss's decision-making power (Manzoni & Barsoux, 2009). The authors contend that subordinates not only play a role but can play a leading role in the quality of the boss-subordinate relationship. Because of the potential for the attitudes and perceptions of noncompeting subordinate employees to affect the promoted individual's and the organization's success, it is important to understand how noncompetitive employees describe their adaptation to an internal promotion of a



coworker to become their supervisor and how they describe the promoted individual's adaptation to this change.

Researchers have explored ways in which employees may influence their supervisors/managers (Brower et al., 2009; Geertshuis et al., 2009). However, because subordinate roles support leadership responsibilities, the impact of that support role toward the success of the internally promoted individual is important to study as not to dismiss the potential subordinate contribution to leadership's success and not to dismiss the nuances that might influence the boost in employee morale, that the literature communicates, that comes along with an internal promotion (Berger, 2020).

The success of the internally promoted supervisor may rest partly or perhaps mainly on the role, intentions, perspectives, experiences, and actions of subordinates as it has been determined that employees' perception of impact is most prominent when they know they can stimulate change in organizational outcomes (Chan et al., 2008). Therefore, this study's potential social implications include an understanding of perceptions of noncompetitive subordinate employee perceptions of the customarily successful internally promoted individual as they both adapt to the promotion change dynamic. How the noncompetitive employee adapts and perceives the adaptation of their supervisor who was previously their coworker, may assist in better understanding the elements that may contribute to supervisor success beyond 18-month retention alone. As human resources departments and executive-level leaders make decisions regarding internal promotions, the revelation of the noncompetitive subordinate employee experience could give rise to

greater recognition for the noncompetitive subordinate's role on supervisor and organization success.

The central concept to be explored in this study is employee adaptation, as illuminated by the eight-dimensional taxonomy of adaptive performance developed by Pulakos and colleagues (2000). It has been noted that organizational change causes organizational researchers to become focused on understanding workplace adaptability and causes organizational practitioners to desire to strengthen adaptability and understand the, largely unexplored, nature of workplace adaptability (Pulakos et al., 2000). Pulakos and colleagues (2000) stated that immediate changes within organizations require employees to be “adaptable, versatile, and tolerant of uncertainty” (p. 300).

This chapter consists of 12 sections following this introduction. The first and second sections provide a background of the study and the problem statement, respectively. The nature of the study is explained in the third section, and research questions are provided in the fourth section. The fifth and sixth sections' content consists of the purpose of the study and the conceptual framework. Operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and scope and delimitations are the subjects of the next four sections, followed by a section on the study's significance. The final section summarizes the chapter.

### **Background of the Study**

The consequences resulting from a change in the workplace status quo, such as an internal promotion, is partially dependent on the size of the organization, the organizational culture, and whether or not the change has occurred at the leadership level

or at subsidiary levels (DeVaro, 2020; DeVaro et al. 2019; Subramanian, 2019; Ghouri, 2016). However, when change in the workplace has occurred, there is a clear expectation of adaptation irrespective of the size of the organization (Pulakos et al., 2000). Human resources departments, as well as individuals in the organization who have no authority over who is hired and why they are hired, are concerned with workplace change that involves filling vacant positions; for example, as the promotion process may lead to an eruption of notable attitudinal and emotional reactions in employees impacted by the promotion outcome (Shah et al., 2017; Johnson & Salmon, 2016). The current study is intently concerned with exploring noncompeting subordinate employees' attitudes, emotions, experiences, and perceptions following an internal promotion of their coworker to be their supervisor. The overall literature review for this study expounded on various aspects within five comprehensive categories: (a) a brief history of research on interpersonal organizational issues, (b) internal labor markets, (c) external labor markets (d) perceptions of fairness related to internal promotions, and (e) employee adaptation to an internal promotion.

Behavioral studies such as the Hawthorne studies, led by Elton Mayo, gave rise to a more sophisticated applied psychology, and Elton Mayo increased the interest of the human factor in employee behavior (Muldoon, 2017). Mayo and his associates sought to determine the impact of the work environment on worker behavior in the industrial plant (Muldoon, 2017). During the study, Elton Mayo and his associates determined that the more attentive relationships between management and employees were much more influential to worker behavior than work conditions even when those conditions were at

their worst (Muldoon, 2017). Consequently, interpersonal relationships and employee attitudes within organizations became a point of interest to management and leadership professionals and to organizational behavior researchers because understanding, in part, psychological factors such as building good relationships with employees and direct qualitative attention can transform and elevate employee productivity even when environmental conditions are at extremes is paramount to improving organizational outcomes (Muldoon, 2017; Bk et al., 2019).

The social elements of work-life behaviors such as diligence on the job, display of power, competitiveness, organizational commitment, have indeed been explored (Becton et al., 2014). Promotion decisions, specifically, have been shown to result in emotional and attitudinal reactions and social dynamics in the workplace decision (McCarthy et al., 2017; Konradt et al., 2017). The promotion process and the decision to promote can bring about numerous emotional reactions related to perceptions of fairness and justice regarding the promotion process and the grounds for the decision (Truxillo et al., 2018; Konradt et al., 2017). In their influential work, Tzafirir and Hareli (2009) determined that perceived organizational justice can evoke emotional and behavioral outcomes; and when employees' internal mobility expectations were satisfied or denied "fairly," they displayed more favorable work-related attitudes. Tzafirir and Hareli (2009) found that when nonpromoted employees' emotional reactions were all negative, their behaviors were also negative. Promotion decisions also have the potential to evoke behavioral outcomes relative to organizational commitment; and work-related attitudes and perceptions have also been shown to be impacted by job advancement (Sirola & Pitesa,

2018). Zhu et al. (2020) postulated that internal job movement should be managed more meticulously to encourage managers to better communicate promotion outcomes to the selected candidate and to the candidate denied the promotion and to encourage more realistic internal mobility expectancies.

Regarding the external labor market, the choice of external hiring is a choice that risks incurring incentive costs for current employees of the respective organization; the organization can respond by increasing the wage spread from the promotion (Bidwell & Keller, 2014). In this response, a large gap would exist between the salary range minimum and the salary range maximum for the open position, and the midpoint in the salary range would then not completely and reliably reflect the competitive marketplace thereby, making the salary range maximum seemingly above eligibility to receive (Bidwell & Keller, 2014). Or the organization can respond by using an internal hiring policy as a handicap that favors internal workers (Bidwell & Keller, 2014). In this response, the organization with the open position may implement an internal hiring policy that favors internal employees but may not be applied to fill the position in favor of an internal candidate, ultimately (Bidwell & Keller, 2014).

The implementation of the internal hiring policy seemingly seeks to avoid the problems of moral hazard and the industrial politics that can arise from large wage spreads; however, when there are eligible employees within the organization emotional and attitudinal reactions will ensue (Bidwell & Keller, 2014; Tzafrir & Hareli, 2009). Generally, whether one is addressing personal or professional goals, people tend to follow a goal ladder where the accomplishment of one goal leads to aspiration for

accomplishing a more complex goal. Koo and Fishbach (2010) contended that people follow such a ladder specifically in the workplace as the entry-level position acts as a step toward a more advanced position in the organization. External hiring trails internal promotions in effectiveness (DeOrtentiis et al., 2018). An investigation of employee experiences following the generally successful internal promotion is, therefore, the focus of the current study.

Other research has underscored some important experiences relating to the internal promotion. An internal promotion has the potential to boost morale within an organization as it presents a clear upward career path that employees can strive for; also, with an internal promotion, an organization can retain its most talented staff (Berger, 2020). Furthermore, one of the job-related conditions important to many employees is the opportunity for promotion and personal growth. Internal promotion encourages employees' motivation (Asaari et al., 2019; Li et al., 2019), as well as their positive career expectations, which strengthen their sense of organizational obligation and their discretionary work efforts (Frenkel & Bednall, 2016).

In addition, evidence suggests that internal promotions are generally more successful individually and collectively in relation to job performance than external hires (DeOrtentiis et al., 2018). For example, studies conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership revealed that 66 percent of senior managers hired from the outside usually fail within the first 18 months (Bauer, 2019; Leslie & Peterson, 2011), and there is evidence that usually, externally hired CEOs usually underperform those who are internally promoted (Harrell, 2016). Because internal candidates' career development has occurred

within the organization and therefore has been evaluated along the way by managers and key leaders (DeOrtentiis et al., 2018), they seem to have a better developed organizational network and a keener understanding of the organizational culture. The research on internal promotions that has been done is generally concerning the perceptions and attitudes of competitive employees (Konradt et al., 2017; Li et al., 2019). There is a lack of research that assesses the adaptation experience and perceptions of noncompetitive employees regarding the promotion of a coworker to become their supervisor. This study added to the existing literature by exploring noncompetitive employees' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes following an internal promotion within their immediate work environment and may be of value to organizations who use internal promotion.

Upward intraorganizational mobility characterized by internal promotions is a natural process in business enterprises. Many enterprise leaders would agree that promoting internally is an ongoing process that can have myriad consequences and is an important part of management (McCarthy et al., 2017). Multiple theoretical models explain why organizations rely on internal promotions and these models also indicate that internal promotions are a widespread practice (DeVaro, 2020; DeVaro et al., 2019; Truxillo et al., 2018; Harold et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2019; McCarthy et al., 2017; Konradt et al., 2017). Research literature examines the influence of internal promotions at the employee level and at the organizational level by focusing primarily on the reactions of competitive non-promoted internal candidates and those of the promoted individual (Dlugos & Keller, 2021; Truxillo et al., 2018; Truxillo et al., 2017; Harold et al., 2016;

Wang et al., 2019). However, the reactions and experiences of those employees who did not compete for the supervisory position, the position to which the internal candidate was hired, are lacking in the literature. This noncompetitive employee may evoke, encourage, support, or contribute in some meaningful way to the consequences of promoting internally and this potential contribution to organizational outcomes is important to explore (Marstand et al., 2017; Sepdiningtyas & Santoso, 2017; Terblanche et al., 2017; Manzoni & Barsoux, 2009).

The lack of research on noncompetitive employees' account of their work experiences and perceptions following an internal promotion, their appraisal of those experiences for themselves and their supervisors and the future implications of the noncompetitive employees' account, determined the path for the current study as a whole and for the literature review presented in Chapter 2. The literature review includes detailed discussions of the progressive interest in workplace behavior, emotional and attitudinal reactions following promotions, and the methodological approach supporting this study.

### **Problem Statement**

Internal promotion as an organizational change dynamic has been studied widely, with considerable research being dedicated to exploring the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of the promoted employee and the competitive unpromoted employee (Nikolaou & Georgiou, 2018; Dlugos & Keller, 2021). However, despite the potential influence of an internal promotion on job satisfaction and employee turnover (Hadidjaja, et al., 2020; Stankovska et al., 2017; Valaei et al., 2016), certain organizational change



dynamics related to internal promotion have not yet been explored. Some change dynamics concerning internal promotion that was explored in the current study consists of the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of employees who did not compete for the promotion in relation to a promoted colleague, particularly the promoted individual who is, as a consequence, in a supervisory position over the noncompetitive employee.

Research indicates that internal promotions are associated with many notable experiences and perceptions at the employee level (e.g., employee organizational commitment, promotion satisfaction, emotional reactions, and perceptions of fairness such as those relating to gender, personality characteristics, cognitive ability, and appropriate use of affirmative action) as well as with variables at the organization level (e.g., industry rank, flaws in the internal labor market, and employee turnover) (Hadidjaja et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019; Gevrek et al., 2017). Once an individual is promoted, their title and responsibilities change, resulting in an interruption in the social institution's status quo, which may also alter interpersonal relationships with others in the workplace (Marstand et al., 2017; Sepdiningtyas & Santoso, 2017; Pulakos et al., 2000). Through his investigation, Kosteas (2011) stated explicitly that "promotions are... an important aspect of a worker's career and life, affecting other facets of the work experience" (p. 174).

The research problem for this study is the need to understand how employees who did not compete for a promotion adapt to the promotion of one of their coworkers to be their supervisor and how the employees describe the coworker's adaptation to the promotion. Several studies have investigated various aspects of the employee-supervisor

relationship (e.g., Babalola, 2016; Pham & Panuwatwanich, 2016) and the attitudes of competitive employees after a coworker has been promoted has been examined (e.g., Johnson & Salmon, 2016). However, there is a lack of research attention given to noncompetitive employees' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes regarding the internal promotion of a colleague to become the employee's supervisor. Thus, the experience of such an internal promotion on noncompetitive employees is not fully understood. This experience may be substantial. When a co-worker is promoted to become a noncompetitive co-worker's supervisor, this is an organizational change. The question is, how does the noncompetitive co-worker (the one who is not promoted) adapt to this change in relationships, and how does the noncompetitive co-worker describe the new supervisor's adaptation to this change?

For instance, even employees who were not competing for the position to which a coworker was promoted may have views on the appropriateness or fairness of the promotion that may affect their evaluation of their new supervisor, their organizational commitment, or other important outcomes (Rubel & Kee, 2015). Furthermore, a promotion may change not only a noncompetitive employee's professional relationship to the promoted individual but also their personal relationship as they transition from being a former colleague to becoming a subordinate of the promoted individual (Marstand et al., 2017; Sepdiningtyas & Santoso, 2017; Pulakos et al., 2000; Landry & Vandenberghe, 2009). Such changes in professional and personal relationships may affect the support the noncompetitive employee provides to the promoted individual (Marstand et al., 2017; Sepdiningtyas & Santoso, 2017; Manzoni & Barsoux, 2009).

It is important to close this gap in the literature. From prior research, we know some things about how competitive employees who are not promoted perceive a co-worker being promoted (Konradt et al., 2017; Li et al., 2019). But there is a lack of research on how noncompetitive employees perceive a co-worker being promoted to become their supervisor. Regarding this issue, facets of adaptive performance (Pulakos et al., 2000), which is the central concept that was explored in this study and the leader-member exchange theory, which is the central theory that was explored in this study, assisted in illuminating an understanding of how noncompetitive employees view such a promotion, whether they support the promoted individual, how these noncompetitive employees adapt to the promotion of a co-worker to be their supervisor, how the noncompetitive employees describe their supervisor's adaptation to the promotion, how they describe their and their supervisor's handling of emergencies or crisis situations, solving problems creatively, dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations, learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures following this change, how the noncompetitive employees describe how they and their supervisor's adapt interpersonally and professionally to the change and how they adapt culturally (Pulakos et al., 2000). These are issues that are relevant to the organizational change that occurs when one employee is promoted to become the supervisor of his or her former co-workers, and relevant to how the noncompetitive employees do their job after such a promotion.

This study, therefore, aimed to close an apparent gap in the scholarly literature as studies are lacking on the specific issue of reactions of noncompetitive employees to a colleague's internal promotion to become the employee's supervisor. Upper-level

positions within an organization are usually attained by internal promotions (DeOrtentiis et al., 2018). Consequently, for many organizations, promotions from within the organization are more frequent than external recruitment, creating a need for a more comprehensive understanding of the influence of an internal promotion on the role and contribution of the noncompetitive subordinate employee.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore noncompetitive employees' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes following an internal promotion of a colleague who then became the employee's supervisor in order to determine how the noncompetitive employees describe their adaptation to the promotion and their supervisor's adaptation to the promotion. Additionally, the study investigated the employees' accounts of how these experiences, perceptions, and attitudes may impact future organizational conditions. The objective was to contribute to the understanding of the context of internal promotions and further new perspectives in organizational psychology education. The study did this by investigating noncompetitive employees' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward the internal promotion of a colleague to be their supervisor.

### **Research Questions**

The study had the following research questions.

1. How do noncompetitive employees adapt to an internal promotion of a co-worker to become their supervisor?

2. How do noncompetitive employees describe the new supervisor's adaptation to their promotion from co-worker to the noncompetitive employees' supervisor?

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Leader-Member Exchange Theory**

The leader-member exchange (LMX) leadership theory emphasizes the dyadic relationship between a leader and each of his or her followers (López-Ibort et al., 2020). Employees tend to perceive managers as a reflection of the organization and when the employee's relationship with the leader is a good relationship/high-quality relationship, the employee tends to experience positive self-concept, have self-efficacy, and self-respect (Paik, 2016). Likewise, an employee's core beliefs motivate and regulate behavior such that when a leader satisfies an employee's work values by providing the employee with what they want (e.g., interesting and challenging work, access to information and training, and benefits), positive feelings toward the leader are activated leading to a better leader-member exchange relationship (Marstand et al., 2017).

Employees who have high-quality leader-member exchange encounters (e.g., positive social interaction) experience better dialogue within the organization; while low-quality leader-member exchange encounters (e.g., when the supplied and wanted amount of the work value are both equally low) experience low job satisfaction (Marstand et al., 2017). The leader-member exchange relationship is reciprocal between subordinates and leaders (Sepdiningtyas & Santoso, 2017). Thus, subordinates are more likely to support their leaders when they are supported by their leaders and subordinates are more likely to provide their leaders with access to information and training when they have been

provided with access to information and training (Marstand et al., 2017; Sepdiningtyas & Santoso, 2017; Manzoni & Barsoux, 2009).

The interpersonal exchanges between subordinate and leader can influence both the subordinates' experiences and the subordinates' perception of the leader's experiences (López-Ibort et al., 2020; Pulakos, 2000). The current study sought to question and explore the outcomes of leader and member/subordinate interpersonal exchanges as experienced and perceived by the subordinate. A more detailed explanation of the LMX is highlighted in Chapter 2.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Eight-Dimensional Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance**

The current study's intent is illustrated in the research questions, which also guided the study. The research questions sought to explore how noncompetitive employees describe their adaptation in the workplace as their former co-worker becomes their supervisor due to an internal promotion. How the noncompetitive employees describe their supervisor's adaptation to the supervisor role was also explored. Thus, the central concept that was explored is employee adaptation. Because the topic of this study appears not to have been addressed in the literature, rather than a single conceptual framework, two conceptual frameworks were utilized. In particular, the eight-dimensional taxonomy of adaptive performance developed by Pulakos and colleagues (2000) and the generic qualitative research methodology explained by Percy et al. (2015) formed the conceptual basis for this study.

The growing rate of organizational change has caused organizational researchers to become increasingly focused on understanding workplace adaptability and has caused organizational practitioners to desire to strengthen adaptability (Pulakos et al., 2000). Pulakos and colleagues (2000) stated that immediate changes within organizations require employees to be “adaptable, versatile, and tolerant of uncertainty” (p. 300). Though “numerous authors have discussed adaptation as it relates to different phenomena at the individual level..., the nature of adaptability remains largely unexplored” (p. 300).

According to the eight-dimensional taxonomy of adaptive performance developed by Pulakos et al. (2000), the characteristics of adaptive performance are (1) handling emergencies or crisis situations, (2) handling work stress, (3) solving problems creatively, (4) dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations, (5) learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures, (6) demonstrating interpersonal adaptability, (7) demonstrating cultural adaptability, and (8) demonstrating physically oriented adaptability (p. 617). Referencing these facets of adaptive performance assisted the researcher in gaining a greater understanding of what patterns and themes may be present in the responses of the participants to interview questions. In addressing the research questions of how noncompetitive employees adapt to a colleague's promotion to be their supervisor and how they perceive their newly promoted supervisor has adapted, the eight-dimensional taxonomy specified various types of adaptation the employees may have experienced. A more thorough discussion of the conceptual framework is presented in Chapter 2.

### **Nature of the Study**

Another conceptual aspect, in addition to the eight-dimensional taxonomy of adaptive performance, that formed the conceptual basis for this study is the generic qualitative research strategy. Though there are many strategies utilized in qualitative research, a qualitative approach is generally described as exploratory as the investigator primarily develops themes from emerging data by collecting responses to open-ended questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The generic qualitative research strategy can take any of three forms: step-by-step inductive analysis, theoretical analysis, and constant comparison analysis. The form chosen for this study was step-by-step inductive analysis. Inductive analysis is an approach that is driven by the data collected, with the researcher not seeking to impose preexisting categories on the data. Rather, the researcher aims to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, beliefs, and/or attitudes about some matter based only on the participants' own words (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Percy et al. (2015) contrasted generic qualitative research with the phenomenological method that is commonly held to be based on the writings of Husserl (2014). Percy et al. (2015) explained that phenomenological research is appropriate to use in studies that focus only on the self-reported lived experiences of a sample of participants regarding some type of event, practice, or situation, where the study intent is to determine the structure of those experiences. However, they held that in studies that inquire not only about interviewees' experiences concerning some matter but also about their perceptions, attitudes, and judgments concerning what they have experienced, the more appropriate method is generic qualitative research.



In interview studies such as the current study, the inductive method was used to reveal patterns and themes that arise based on a close examination of the participants' responses to interview questions (Percy et al., 2015). This study relied on a constructivist paradigm which allowed the participants to "construct" meaning while interacting with that which they were interpreting, making sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives. I then utilized an inductive research strategy in which I generated meaning from the data collected. The generic qualitative research strategy was used to explore the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of noncompetitive employees regarding the internal promotion of a coworker to be their supervisor to determine how the noncompetitive employees described their adaptation to the promotion and their supervisor's adaptation to the promotion.

The purposive sampling strategy, criterion sampling, was used in the current study. There was adherence to theoretical saturation, and, therefore, not necessary to continue expanding the sample size as interviewees revealed no new data relative to the research questions (Low, 2019; Rowlands et al., 2016). Data was collected through interviews with the participants over a specified timeframe as to make the study practical for the researcher. Data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews that were audio-recorded or captured in written form. Each participant was asked several open-ended questions, with probing questions, to capture their subjective interpretation of their experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs following the promotion of a colleague to become their supervisor. Their recorded responses were transcribed and then analyzed using Braun and Clarke thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The research

population consisted of 10 participants, the final sample size was determined by theoretical saturation. The methodology adopted for the current study is further discussed in Chapter 3.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Adaptive performance:* A multidimensional concept that encompasses a broad range of behaviors requiring individuals to bring matters to the desired end by engaging in creative problem solving, managing unpredictable circumstances, learning new skills, and demonstrating interpersonal, cultural, and physical flexibility (Pulakos et. al., 2000).

*Competitive employees:* Employees who compete with other employees for an advertised internal promotion (Kilduff et al., 2010).

*External labor markets:* Competitive labor markets where employees can move fluidly between firms and where neither firms nor workers have discretion over wage setting or wages paid (Santos-Pinto & de la Rosa, 2020).

*Internal labor market (ILM):* The internal labor market is a process or administrative entity within an organization that makes internal mobility (i.e., an employee's hiring or transfer movement up or down the hierarchy of managerial positions, the employee's hiring or transfer movement within and between departments of a single organization) possible; thereby, enhancing the competitiveness of the individual employee and the organization (Fedorova et al., 2019).

*Internal promotion:* A promotion within an internal labor market involving change in a worker's tasks (Bayo-Moriones & Ortín-Angél, 2006); according to Medsker

and Berger (1990), a promotion is “upward movements in an organization’s hierarchy” (as cited in Bagdadli, Roberson, & Paoletti, 2006, p. 84).

*Interpersonal adaptability:* An aspect of adaptive performance that involves altering or tailoring one’s behavior in response to another’s needs and/or interests (Pulakos et. al., 2000).

*Interpersonal interaction:* A direction of change in individuals relative to each other to determine the pattern of collective action that allows individuals to act together as a group (Bar-Yam & Kantor, 2018); a type of resource that can determine how a person performs at work (Gaither & Nadkarni, 2012).

*Intraorganizational mobility:* Within an organization, intraorganizational mobility refers to significant occupational changes impacting levels within the hierarchy, titles, and work responsibilities (João & Coetzee, 2012; Feldman & Ng, 2007); intraorganizational mobility involves transitions requiring new training and education and the acquisition of new skills and routines within the organization (Wilcox, 2018).

*Multidimensional taxonomy:* Refers to a construct that comprises multiple interrelated dimensions or facets, and exists in multiple domains or parts with the relationships between the construct and its dimensions being well-defined; a multidimensional taxonomy is theoretically meaningful (Law et al., 1998).

*Nepotism:* A part of preferential treatment (Kerse & Babadağ, 2018); actual or perceived preferences given by one family member to another family member (Jones & Stout, 2015).

*Noncompetitive employees:* Employees who do not compete with other employees for an advertised internal promotion.

*Organizational culture:* A construct that is related to anthropological concepts, it is characteristically holistic, historically determined, socially constructed, and difficult to change (Hofstede et al., 1990).

*Promotion:* Procedure for greater employee responsibility and personal advancement; used to encourage a competitive spirit, to develop loyalty, enhance employee self-confidence, and to reward hard-working employees (Julius et al., 2017).

*Promotional opportunity:* Prospect that allows an employee to move upward on the organization hierarchy typically with an increase in status, pay, and responsibility (Heery & Noon, 2017); one of nine measures of employee job satisfaction (Spector, 1985).

### **Assumptions**

It was assumed in the current study that, through purposive sampling and voluntary participation, an appropriate and willing population would be identified. It was also assumed that participant self-selection would not bias the study results and that the reported experiences and perceptions of participants would also be representative of employees in their organization who did not choose to be part of the study.

As is essential for qualitative interview research designs, it was further assumed that the participants would express openly and honestly their individual views of their experiences and perceptions following an internal promotion, thereby supporting the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study (Edmunds & Scudder, 2009). To encourage

open and honest reporting, the researcher emphasized to participants that their names and identities would remain anonymous, and the researcher would strive to achieve rapport with participants.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

In the case of the present study, the research questions were not only about the participants' experiences following an internal promotion, but also about their self-reported perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes concerning how the promotion had affected them and their work, the new supervisor and their work and how the noncompetitive employees described their adaptation to the promotion and their supervisor's adaptation to the promotion. Thus, in the current study, Percy et al.'s (2015) generic qualitative research was chosen as the more appropriate methodological approach. However, due to the qualitative approach, one delimitation in the study is that results are not statistically generalizable although they may be suggestive for and transferable to other organizations with noncompetitive employees for whom a coworker has been promoted to be their supervisor due to ensuring the use of participant background data, an appropriate sample size, and the suitability of the sample.

The purposive sampling strategy, criterion sampling, was used in the current study. There was adherence to theoretical saturation; however, as a delimitation, data was collected through interviews with the participants over a specified timeframe as to make the study practical for the researcher. The scope of the study was also delimited by relying only on: (1) participants who met certain criteria and (2) participants' responses

to interview questions (no other information, such as responses to surveys, work records, or supervisor evaluations was sought).

### **Limitations**

In the current study, participation was limited to 10 individuals from the Walden University Participant Pool, “Research And Me”, and Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) who expressed interest in participating in the study and meet the specified criteria. Due to the constricted sample, the limited demographic information collected on participants, and the use of qualitative research methodology, it was not expected that the findings of the study would be generalizable to other populations. The absence of generalizability is common for qualitative studies, however. Another limitation that might have affected the study was the researcher’s potential biases and presuppositions. Qualitative analysis software was used to assist in mitigating biased results.

### **Significance of the Study**

As previously noted, there is evidence that internal promotions are common, and the literature reflects many studies documenting a wide range of outcomes following a promotion; however, there is an apparent gap in understanding the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of employees who did not compete for a supervisory position to which a colleague was promoted. Moreover, this research may help demystify some aspects of employees’ post-promotion reactions and experiences, revealing underlying reasons for such reactions and outcome perceptions. Discovering and reporting such information may encourage researchers to begin to make efforts to examine the self-reported work-related experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of noncompetitive

employees after an internal promotion of their coworker to be their supervisor. This effort may further help researchers to identify generally unobservable post-internal promotion behaviors that influence organizational commitment and productivity. This better understanding may encourage human resources departments and executive-level leaders to investigate and reflect on their employees' reactions, perceptions, and influence following an internal promotion.

The implications for positive social change for this study consist in its contribution to the scholarly literature, its contribution to improving practice in the field, and its contribution toward improving policy (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). An internal promotion will often result in a chain effect such that when one position is filled within the organization another position is immediately opened. Additionally, an internal promotion has great potential to influence employee morale. Though internal promotions are common, little is known about noncompetitive employees' insightful perceptions, attitudes, roles, and experiences following such organizational change.

### **Summary**

Because internal promotions are common and have an impact on the culture within an organization, it is important to address that which is missing in the scholarly literature relative to an internal promotion. Though much research literature focuses on competitive employees' perceptions of fairness regarding promoted employees, the research literature does not address noncompetitive employees' adaptation following an internal promotion of a co-worker who becomes the employee's supervisor. Though the results of this study are not generalizable to other populations due to its qualitative

nature, the findings may be suggestive for various settings regarding the reactions of noncompetitive employees to an internal promotion of a colleague. The scholarly reporting of the results added to the existing literature and promoted positive social change by emphasizing the important “human element” that exists following an internal promotion of their colleague to be their supervisor.

The next chapter consists of an in-depth review of related literature that discusses the emergence of interest in social dynamics in the workplace, internal and external labor markets, the importance of perceived fairness related to internal promotions, and how at least competitive employees adapt to an internal promotion. Chapter 3 provides a discussion of the role of the researcher and the nature of the research methodology. Additionally, sample selection, interview questions, and the procedure for collecting and analyzing data are discussed. Chapter 4 includes the analysis of the data and the presentation of the results. In Chapter 5, the interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion are presented.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Promotions have been connected to, in part, employee organizational commitment, emotional reactions, perceptions of fairness, and employee turnover (Hadidjaja et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019; Gevrek et al., 2017). The problem that was investigated in the current study is the need to understand how employees (noncompetitive subordinates and supervisors) adapt to the promotion of a colleague who becomes the subordinate's supervisor. Subordinates have a strong influence on bosses to be successful or unsuccessful leaders (Manzoni & Barsoux, 2009) and, generally, internal promotions boost employee morale within organizations (Berger, 2020). However, challenges in transitioning to a new role emerge for the promoted individual, and subordinates providing support to the promoted becomes important (Terblanche et al., 2017). The conceptual framework, the eight-dimensional taxonomy of adaptive performance developed by Pulakos and colleagues (2000), and generic qualitative research methodology, was utilized to explore employee adaptation. The taxonomy outlines the characteristics of adaptive performance as: (1) handling emergencies or crisis situations, (2) handling work stress, (3) solving problems creatively, (4) dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations, (5) learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures, (6) demonstrating interpersonal adaptability, (7) demonstrating cultural adaptability, and (8) demonstrating physically oriented adaptability (Pulakos et al., 2000). Generic qualitative research is a method that allows the researcher to ask participants

questions not only about their experiences but also about their perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs (Percy et al., 2015).

Where promotions are concerned, many organizations are focused on maintaining an equal opportunity for existing employees to be considered for advancement within the business (Hideg & Ferris, 2017). Existing employees should have the education, capability, and experience that would be expected of any external candidate vying for an available position within the organization; the expectation is that all candidates, internal and external, apply and interview with an equal possibility of being hired (Hideg & Ferris, 2017). Consequently, human resource offices worldwide make concerted efforts to recruit candidates they assess to have the best potential to uphold the organizational integrity and improve productivity (Wang & Wanberg, 2017). Recruitment efforts may be passive including posting online job announcements internally on the company's website as the first step in an effort to fill positions with individuals who have direct experience with the service population, employees, and administrative staff (Acikgoz, 2019). The expectation is that the internal candidate may be more familiar and more comfortable with the organizational functions (Acikgoz, 2019). Also, existing employees exhibit a commitment to the organization when those employees have opportunities for advancement within the organization (Hadidjaja et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019). Providing the opportunity for advancement within an organization is a human resource tool that may prove to increase employee satisfaction as it implies that the organization believes in its employees' potential for growth to the extent that it offers an exclusive opportunity to demonstrate it with more responsibility, prestige, and monetary

compensation (Adekola, 2011; Kusluvan et al., 2010). Whether one is addressing personal goals or professional goals, people tend to follow a goal ladder of sorts where the accomplishment of one goal leads to aspiration for accomplishing a more complex goal (Koo & Fishbach, 2010).

The problem to be addressed for the current study is to understand how noncompetitive employees adapt to the promotion of a coworker who becomes their supervisor. The purpose is to investigate the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of noncompetitive employees toward the promotion of a coworker to be their supervisor to assess their described adaptation and that of their supervisor. The current literature does not appear to reflect research on how noncompetitive employees adapt and describe the adaptation to the internal promotion of a colleague who becomes their supervisor.

This is a review of the literature relative to internal and external promotions within organizations found in this chapter. After a section on the literature search strategy, the literature review begins with explaining the study's conceptual frameworks of adaptive performance and generic qualitative research. There is then a focus on a historical overview relative to the concerns of the study. This chapter continues with sections on issues in external labor markets, internal labor market issues, perceptions of fairness relative to internal promotions, and employee adaptation following a promotion. The chapter ends with a summary and conclusion. The preceding research on these topics grounded the current study and underscored its importance as the gaps in the literature were highlighted.

### Literature Search Strategy

Existing knowledge relating to the current topic was explored to guide and build the research (Snyder, 2019). To integrate perspectives and conclusions from existing academic literature and empirical studies, American Psychological Association PsycInfo (APA PsycInfo), Atlantis Press, American Psychological Association PsycArticles (APA PsycArticles), Emerald Insight, SocINDEX, Business Source Premier, ScienceDirect, ProQuest Central, Journal Storage (JSTOR), Google Scholar, Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCOhost), SAGE Journals, ResearchGate, Thoreau: Multi-Database, and American Psychological Association PsycNet (APA PsycNet) databases were searched utilizing the following concepts, keywords, and associated synonyms: *internal promotion, promotion, employee selection, boss-subordinate relationships, career success, adaptive performance, work engagement, promotion, business promotion, employee interaction, role expectations, employee attitudes, internal labor market, external labor market, workplace emotions, justice theory, equity theory, organizational climate, and occupational mobility.*

The theoretical framework keyword search included: *leader-member exchange, leader-member exchange theory, job satisfaction, career adaptability, and organizational behavior.* The conceptual framework keyword search included: *workplace adaptation, adaptive performance, taxonomy, person–job fit, and job performance.* These search terms were used to narrow the search and were accessed via the Walden University online library, Albany State University Pendergrast Library, GALILEO: Georgia’s Virtual Library, Wiley Online Library, and Bing, Google Books, and Google web search

engines. Some other articles and texts were in the personal possession of the author. Search terms were established as a consequence of the gaps in the literature regarding the experiences of internal promotion, particularly in regard to the lack of research on the perceptions and attitudes of noncompetitive employees regarding the internal promotion of a coworker. The located resources helped determine the structure of the literature review.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Leader-Member Exchange Theory**

The leader-member exchange theory originated from the seminal work of Dansereau et al. (1975); in this work, Dansereau et al. (1975) highlighted the vertical dyad linkage (VDL) approach which claims that each member of the dyad or pair of members (supervisor and subordinate) should have equal focus when exploring the interactions between an individual supervisor and individual subordinate. Equal focus was important because such a focus allowed researchers to recognize unique interactions with each pair rather than duplicated behavior from the leader toward each subordinate (Dansereau et al., 1975). The unique interactions aforementioned were marked social interactions that led to an exclusive social relationship (i.e., social interactions repeated overtime) which then led to valuable social exchanges (i.e., leader meeting the needs of the subordinate and the subordinate extending trust and respect to the leader) (Martin et al., 2018; Brimhall et al., 2016; Erdogan & Bauer, 2015). The research questions developed to target noncompetitive subordinate employee experiences and perceptions in the wake of an internal promotion and new interpersonal exchanges guide the current

study. In quantitative research, career adaptability has been identified as a predictive variable of job satisfaction and career adaptability has been positively correlated with concern (i.e., thinking about what one's professional future will be like); as one's concern rises, their career adaptability also rises (Rezapour & Sattari Ardabili, 2017) and Yang et al. (2020) argued that career adaptability should be considered to select job candidates with high potential to perform well within their organization. As practitioners, Yang et al. (2020) noted that employees with high levels of career adaptability are also more adept at developing high-quality relationships with their supervisors. Exploring interpersonal relationships and social exchanges in the workplace is important to gain a more complete picture of the noncompetitive subordinate and their comprehensive adaptive experience relative to an internal promotion. To further emphasize the aforementioned importance, with an additional review of Pulakos et al.'s (2000) eight-dimensional taxonomy of adaptive performance, dimension six "demonstrating interpersonal adaptability" highlights the need to explore interpersonal exchanges in the workplace.

The leader-member exchange (LMX) leadership theory recognizes that leaders typically treat different followers in different ways, resulting in different qualities of relationships between a leader and individual followers in an organizational group. In this way, LMX differs from leadership theories that focus on leaders' behaviors or styles on the assumption that the leader treats all subordinates in the same way. For LMX, the fundamental element of analysis is the leader–follower relationship (Martin et al., 2018). The LMX is relevant to the current study as leader-member exchanges are inherent within a new organizational relationship and such exchanges impact attributes of

workplace adaptability (i.e., the demonstration of interpersonal adaptability) and attributes of social exchanges (i.e., reciprocal relationship consisting of trust and relevant training) (Marstand et al., 2017; Sepdiningtyas & Santoso, 2017; Pulakos et al., 2000).

Additionally, the LMX theory contends that leadership effectiveness is determined by the quality of the relationship a leader has with each of his or her followers. The higher the quality of the relationships are between leader and followers, the more effective the leader will be (Erdogan & Bauer, 2015). Leader–follower relationships that are of high quality are distinguished by mutual respect and trust. The leader treats the follower as an important element of the group or team. Conversely, low-quality leader–follower relationships are ones in which mutual trust is low, and the followers tend to perceive that they are not considered to be important group members (Brimhall et al., 2016).

The concept of LMX differentiation refers to the quality of leader–follower relationships differing for different employees within an organizational group. LMX differentiation may lead to there being an in-group and an-out group, which are subsets of the overall organizational group (Khan & Malik, 2017). Research suggests that factors that positively affect the quality of the leader–follower relationship include several in the purview of the leader's behavior. Three such factors are the leader's use of contingent rewards, expectations of follower success, and practicing a transformational leadership style (Dulebohn et al., 2012).

Employees' positive perceptions of their relationship with their leader have been found to have benefits for organizations. For instance, one study found that favorable

perceptions of leader–member exchange resulted in employees feeling greater workplace inclusion after six and 12 months, with greater perceived workplace inclusion leading to increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee creativity (Brimhall et al., 2016). Another study found that higher quality LMX was positively correlated with performance and creativity among hospitality industry employees (Wang, 2016). In addition, having a high-quality relationship with their supervisor has been found to be a protective factor for employees' psychological health. The results of two studies indicated that high-quality LMX has a positive effect on feelings of empowerment, which reduces employees' emotional exhaustion and experience of depression (Schermyly & Meyer, 2016).

On the other hand, a leader's differential treatment of employees in a group can have negative consequences. One study found that the positive effects of higher-quality LMX on several employee outcomes, including increased organizational citizenship behavior, were weakened by perceptions of the leader's favoritism toward certain employees (Hsiung & Bolino, 2018). Research suggests that the basis of LMX differentiation is relevant to at least some potentially negative outcomes of differentiation. A leader's treating group members differently on the basis of task performance or organizational citizenship behavior tends to reduce any negative effects differentiation may have on intragroup relational quality (Chen, 2015).



## Conceptual Framework

### Adaptive Performance

This study concerned how well employees who did not compete for a particular internal promotion adapted to one of their colleagues' promotion to be their supervisor and how the employees described their supervisor's adaptation. A central concept for the study is employee adaptation to the organizational change constituted by internal promotion. The topic of workplace adaptation has received considerable research on specific types of adaptation, ways of promoting adaptation, and types of employees in relation to adaptation. For instance, there have been research studies on ergonomic considerations for workplace adaptation for people with disabilities (de Guimarães, 2015), use of simulation for workplace adaptation in healthcare settings (St-Pierre, 2019), the role of self-regulation in workplace adaptation and resiliency (Rothstein et al., 2016), and older workers' adaptation to changing workplaces (Bieńkowska & Tworek, 2020; Ng & Law, 2014).

Pulakos et al. (2000) provided a more comprehensive treatment of workplace adaptation that served as a conceptual framework for this study. According to Pulakos and associates, today's dynamic and changing workplaces demonstrate the importance of employees being able to adapt to new challenges and circumstances. Accordingly, these researchers have developed a taxonomy of adaptive performance in the workplace that consists of eight primary dimensions. These are (1) handling emergencies or crisis situations [Reacting with appropriate and proper urgency in emergency situations]; (2) handling work stress [Remaining composed and cool when faced with difficult

circumstances]; (3) solving problems creatively [Employing unique types of analyses and generating new, innovative ideas in complex areas]; (4) dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations [Taking effective action when necessary without having to know the total picture]; (5) learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures [Demonstrating enthusiasm for learning new approaches and technologies for conduction work]; (6) demonstrating interpersonal adaptability [being flexible and open-minded when dealing with others; listening to and considering others' viewpoints]; (7) demonstrating cultural adaptability [taking action to learn about and understand the climate, orientation, needs, and values of other groups]; and (8) demonstrating physically oriented adaptability [Adjusting to challenging environmental states such as extreme heat, humidity, cold, or dirtiness, etc.] (p. 617). How well employees fulfill these dimensions is an indication of their workplace adaptive performance (Pulakos et al., 2000).

These eight dimensions of workplace adaptive performance are based on an initial review of the literature in which Pulakos et al. (2000) developed six of the dimensions: solving problems creatively, dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations, learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures, demonstrating interpersonal adaptability, demonstrating cultural adaptability; and demonstrating physically oriented adaptability. Pulakos et al. (2000) examined over 1,000 incidents that exposed demanding or challenging work-relevant adaptive behaviors. Such as maintaining self-control when under pressure, avoiding overreacting and remaining calm from 21 varieties of jobs such as law enforcement jobs, managerial and support jobs, technical jobs, and military jobs;

the job incumbents had held the respective positions for at least six months. This examination by Pulakos et al. (2000) revealed two further dimensions: handling emergencies or crises and handling work stress. The multidimensional taxonomy was supported by exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis of an instrument based on the taxonomy administered to 3,422 employees from three organizations. The researchers conclude that while the weights of the eight dimensions of adaptive performance may differ for different kinds of jobs, the eight dimensions appear to reflect the adaptive performance needs for many different job types (Pulakos et al., 2000).

An additional study by Pulakos et al., (2002) further examined the eight-dimensional model developed by Pulakos et al. (2000). This additional study sought to determine the value of experience, self-efficacy, and interest on the eight dimensions previously discussed. In this additional study, 739 military personnel completed cognitive tests and tests of adaptability, and the participants' adaptive job performance was evaluated by their supervisors. The results of the study supported the eight-dimension model of adaptive performance; also, personality, as well as experience and self-efficacy were found to predict participants' adaptive performance (Pulakos et al., 2002). In this study, the research questions established expanded the application of Pulakos et al.'s (2000) adaptive performance dimensions.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Concepts**

#### **Roots of Interpersonal Organizational Research**

**Subordinates and their Supervisors.** In the early 1900s, as early as World War I, employees' testing and selection were of great concern (Schultz & Schultz, 2015).

However, the significance of interpersonal interaction among employees, including between subordinates and their supervisors, was virtually ignored; during those times, the most important quality a potential employee could possess was thought to be intelligence (Schultz & Schultz, 2015). Army intelligence testing during World War I and subsequent placement of military defense forces emphasize this point. Later, it became important that employee selection include the incumbent's potential for technical productivity (Schultz & Schultz, 2015). During this time, other competencies or dispositions of the employee were minimally considered; for example, recruits were assigned, almost exclusively, to a unit according to levels of intellect and technical skills (Schultz & Schultz, 2015). Due to the growing complexity of defense machinery and weaponry, psychologists were employed to narrow the distinctive classifications for recruitment screening, and a need for more refined army leaders arose (Schultz & Schultz, 2015).

Walter Dill Scott, one of the most influential psychologists in advertising and business at the time, developed assessment tests that were contrary to the current-day individual testing practice (Wang & Wanberg, 2017). Walter Dill Scott's tests were administered to groups rather than to an individual (Wang & Wanberg, 2017). In conjunction with Scott's rating scale, test results were utilized to evaluate military personnel for competence (Wang & Wanberg, 2017). The era's innovative utilization of assessment tests and rating scales gave rise to a more sophisticated applied psychology; there was an interest in how to use the acquired information to help better identify and place the most skilled individual for the job (Wang & Wanberg, 2017; Schultz & Schultz,

2015). However, the significance of interpersonal interaction to job success would soon be revealed.

The employee's fundamental human elements ultimately became of great concern, and human relations in the workplace fell under the microscope. In the late 1920s and 1930s, the infamous Hawthorne studies, under Elton Mayo's direction, increased the interest of the human factor in employee behavior (Muldoon, 2017). The Hawthorne studies, a series of experiments at an American electric company from 1924 to 1933, are most known for an investigation of the connection between work productivity and the work environment (Mannevu, 2018). Mayo and his associates sought to determine the impact of the work environment on worker behavior in an industrial plant (Muldoon, 2017). Elton Mayo and his associates determined, quite unexpectedly, that the new, more attentive relationships between management and employees during the study were much more influential to worker behavior than work conditions, even when those conditions were at their worst. Thus, the studies demonstrated how a change in an organization's status quo could alter interpersonal relationships and employee experiences. Consequently, interpersonal relationships and employee attitudes within organizations became a point of interest to management, leadership professionals, and researchers (Muldoon, 2017).

Today, the concern for the quality of individuals' functioning in their daily work lives is paramount (Aamodt, 2016). Consequently, applied psychology plays an integral role within the organizational culture, and the nature of interpersonal exchange within organizations is a topic rather revered. Each organization's unique culture may reflect the

more historical perspectives on employee selection focusing on intellect and technical skills or manifest the more contemporary perspective that focuses on a balance of intelligence, technical skills, and interpersonal exchange (Tremblay & Tremblay, 2012). Researchers and theorists have been concerned about the impact of interpersonal exchange on employee behavior, general communications, job transfers, turnover, and promotions (Meyer et al., 2018). The interpersonal exchange has multiple influences, including personnel and group processes and individual behavior, and is related to employee job success and promotability (Wayne et al., 2017).

### **External Labor Markets**

#### **Ethics**

Both internal and external candidates offer varying benefits for an organization. External hiring may be utilized to avoid unethical hiring practices such as promotions due to nepotism or promotions based solely upon an employee's seniority within the organization (Trawalter et al., 2016). External candidate selection is also looked upon favorably by some organizations as selecting an external candidate may satisfy organizational goals to increase diversity (Nixon, 2019). However, workplace diversity may not be a goal within some organizations; consequently, sociopolitical factors such as affirmative action and demographic changes have influenced programs' development to address ineffective efforts to endorse workplace diversity (Hideg & Ferris, 2017).

One problem with external hiring is that it may be difficult for recruiting organizations to assess potential candidates' broad spectrum of skills, abilities, and interpersonal competence with colleagues. Furthermore, if an organization is partial to

hiring externally, its hiring practices may upset current employees' existing concerns of promotion discrimination and lead to low productivity and low performance among employees (Truxillo et al., 2017).

### **Long-term Assessment and Rewards**

Another problem with external hiring is that the long-term assessment of potential capabilities is seemingly much more possible with internal candidates. Consequently, to avoid the risk of collecting limited information on external candidates, many companies opt for internal promotion rather than external recruitment; having a more thorough assessment of external candidates' capabilities is indeed more advantageous (DeVaro, 2020; Shubeck et al., 2020; Keller, 2018). Early on, organizational theorists argued that internal labor markets—labor markets within organizations that give attention to promoting from within and rewarding pre-eminent employees—had an advantage over external labor markets because the organization could capitalize on creating a customized internal workforce (Fedorova et al., 2019). It has been suggested that promoting from within may be an ideal state of affairs. Effective management of talent is an ongoing process that, if properly utilized, can result in an organization being independent of external recruitment requirements (DeVaro, 2020; DeVaro et al., 2019). Thus, organizations may be motivated to establish an ILM focused on promoting employees from within the organization.

## **Internal Labor Markets**

### **ILM Direction and Incentives**

An ILM is a strategic management tool based on rules that provide direction for employees' movement within an organization (Yasar & Demir, 2019). Components of the ILM: promotion opportunities (employee availability to move up the organization hierarchy), job security (employee likely to maintain the job), and training (personal/employee development programs) have been tested to determine each component's effect on career planning and employee attitudes (Farrukh et al., 2021; Yasar & Demir, 2019; Kusluvan et al., 2010). Career planning is concerned with identifying and working toward career goals (Yasar & Demir, 2019). Employee attitudes are concerned with a commitment to the organization and job satisfaction (Adekola, 2011; Kusluvan et al., 2010). Promotion opportunities, job security, and training had a significant effect on career planning and promotion opportunities, which significantly affected job satisfaction (Farrukh et al., 2021; Yasar & Demir, 2019; Adekola, 2011). Because the promotional opportunities component showed the most significant correlations, to improve employee attitudinal outcomes and job satisfaction, management should focus on promotional opportunities as the promotional opportunities component that will yield the most profound results.

The direction, amount, or lack of movement in an ILM is determined by which school of thought is being applied in the ILM—the Neo-Fordist or the Post-Fordist (Chicchi, 2020). The Neo-Fordist school of thought addresses job quality in terms of material rewards and pace of work and emphasizes the decline in job quality following



economic changes in the 1980s and early 1990s (Shaw et al., 2018; Handel, 2005). The Post-Fordist school of thought addresses job quality in terms of intrinsic rewards and a move toward less physical work and emphasizes the improvement in job quality as a consequence of an improvement in the flow of information within the organization and improvement in employee participation in the coordinated actions of the organization (Chicchi, 2020). Job quality declined because of the Neo-Fordist economic changes; also, as downsizing, outsourcing, and the use of part-time employees grew, the ILM itself began to decline, ushering in the Post-Fordist movement (Chicchi, 2020). With the Post-Fordist approach deemphasizing physical work and emphasizing intrinsic rewards and employee participation in the actions of the organization, elements that make up the ILM: promotion opportunities, job security, and training, seem to regain some security (Chicchi, 2020).

Today, the key element of promotional opportunity seems partly reminiscent of the Neo-Fordist school of thought as it addressed job quality in terms of material rewards and partly reminiscent of the Post-Fordist school of thought as it seems to underscore the importance of organization-specific labor that highlights the emphasis on employee participation in organizational actions (Chicchi, 2020). A strong human resource management system can create an environment in which workers have uniform expectations about responses, clear expectations about rewards and incentives for the desired worker responses (i.e., those that are consistent with organizational strategic goals), and social influences that further induce workers to comply with and conform to the desired set of behaviors (Farrukh et al., 2021; Park & Conroy, 2020). Promotion as an

incentive induces workers to remain employed in the organization as employees with a record of past promotions are less likely to leave the organization (Waldman & Yin, 2020).

When organizations with an established ILM seek to hire an external candidate, employees tend to work against outsider selection as it suggests that their professional efforts have been less than impressive (Odeku, 2014). Therefore, keeping the ILM sturdy, firms may choose internal promotions over external hiring for several reasons, either purposefully to create incentives for internal employees, to avoid the time-inconsistency problem associated with using promotions to achieve both incentives and job assignment, or simply to economize on the informational advantages of hiring internal employees with firm-specific human capital over unknown outside candidates (Farrukh et al., 2021; Park & Conroy, 2020; Odeku, 2014).

Policies encouraging internal hiring recognize that one of the job-related conditions important to many employees is the opportunity for personal promotion and growth. The ILM has an impact on the attitudes and behavior of employees; it creates a unique climate in the workplace because promotion acting as an incentive typically follows a specific theory identified as the Tournament Theory (DeVaro & Gürtler, 2020). The basic idea of a tournament is that workers of a given rank in an organization compete for promotion to the next level of the job hierarchy, with the promotion (and associated wage increase or material reward) awarded to the worker with the highest performance (DeVaro & Gürtler, 2020). Within a strong human resource management system, expectations are clear about rewards and incentives (Farrukh et al., 2021; Park & Conroy,

2020), employees are then able to engage in specific behaviors that are favored for promotion. To the extent that promotions are associated with higher wages, more interesting work, better offices, or other non-pecuniary compensation, workers will compete to win internal promotion competitions. Because the elements of the ILM are in synchronization with the dimensions of Pulakos et al.'s (2000) taxonomy of adaptive performance, reliance on an ILM may contribute to more positive employee adaptive experiences post-promotion, in general. In addition, research suggests that opportunities for promotion are related to an employee's organizational attachment. Employees interpret promotion as an indication of support by the organization, including support during organizational change processes (Shah et al., 2017).

### **Perceived Fairness Relative to Internal Promotions**

#### **Justice and Fairness**

Much of the research concerning employee post-promotion attitudes has focused on the employees' perceptions of justice having been done in determining the promotion. Organizational science research regards justice as a social construct, often with a focus on preceding perceptions and subsequent perceptions of the fairness of outcomes and the fairness of methods utilized to determine those outcomes (Guchait et al., 2019; Pérez-Rodríguez et al., 2019). It seems that if hiring practices and decisions are viewed as fair and impartial, the organization's employees can better accept and adapt to the latest changes in the work environment (Rubel & Kee, 2015). Where internal promotions are concerned, the line between the act of personally rewarding someone who is favored and objectively making promotion decisions can easily blur. Objective decision making is

imperative in any occupational environment and, when exercised, can alter the subsequent impact for all of those affected by a decision (Hu & Chen, 2017). Therefore, to avoid personal favoritism, objective criteria (e.g., the use of a set of hiring standards) must be continually enforced where employee career advancement is concerned (Hu & Chen, 2017). The purpose of the use of a set of standards is to protect not only the decision maker, but also recruits, employees and organizations, from unfair selection practices (Hu & Chen, 2017).

Careful consideration to fairness in employee selection should be unbiased and reasonable. Accordingly, the organization may rely on psychometric predictors that can be used toward fairness and impartiality in both internal and external employee selection (Martinková et al., 2018). However, fairness determinants must be clear; tests and systems should have a clear connection to the job for which the candidate would be hired. Human resources personnel could foster positive applicant reactions by offering justification for the use of certain systems; for example, test variables such as ethnicity, gender, personality characteristics, cognitive ability, and job complexity (Nikolaou & Georgiou, 2018; Truxillo et al., 2018).

### **Psychometric Systems and Interviewing**

Organizations sometimes rely on psychometric properties as predictors in employee selection however, the selection determinants have led to adverse applicant reactions and rejected job offers (Nikolaou et al., 2019); the perception of unfairness has resulted in such concerns to be contested in legal proceedings and active boycotting of the organization in the marketplace. For federal agencies, Congress sanctioned the

Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (the No FEAR Act) which, requires federal agencies to (1) enhance their responsibility for managing whistleblower and antidiscrimination laws (2) pay settlements against them from their own agency budget (3) notify employees of their antidiscrimination and whistleblower protection rights (Rubin & Alteri, 2019). Organizations must be careful to make promotion decisions based on what is best to maintain the integrity of the organizational culture and an assessment of the ability and potential ability of an individual to fulfill the duties of an available position, rather than making such decisions for personal gain.

Internal mobility expectations of employees, when perceived to have been denied fairly, result in more favorable work-related attitudes (Wang et al., 2019). Conversely, the perception of unfair promotion selection practices can have dire consequences. Promotion opportunity strengthens employee motivation (Asaari et al., 2019) and perceptions of organizational obligation and discretionary work efforts (Frenkel & Bednall, 2016; Li, Powell, & Ke, 2018; Li et al., 2019). Given these relationships, it should be no surprise that a decrease in perceived fairness of performance appraisals and promotion opportunities has been found to predict lower organizational commitment and increased intention to leave the job (Rubel & Kee, 2015). Organizations are expected to present acceptable criteria to be met in the interview process, as well as provide nondiscriminatory reasons for selection (Nikolaou & Georgiou, 2018; Truxillo et al., 2018). Interview questions should be well structured, consider aspects of diversity, and not be based solely upon personal interactions, nepotism, internal seniority, or the like.

Whether interviewing an internal or external candidate, interview questions should be structured and synonymous, and interviewers should be prepared to document essential elements from the interviewee; otherwise, there may be an open door for claims of discrimination (Kell et al., 2017). The use of statistically-based methods, however, would eliminate or perhaps reduce the probability of vagueness in rejection (Meijer et al., 2020). Rejection is a part of being in the professional arena; however, the rationale for such rejection should be well thought out and unambiguous (Nikolaou et al., 2019). The impact of procedural justice (the perception that laws and policy are routinely enforced in a just and equitable manner) (Walters & Bolger, 2019), the perceived unfairness or fairness of employment decisions, and the type of instrument (i.e., robot, human, or computer) used in the employment decision matters. Considering the decision instrument, the moderating role between procedural justice and employee behavior and attitudes has been assessed (Ötting & Maier, 2018). As hypothesized, procedural justice did significantly moderate the relationship between employee behavior and attitudes. There was, however, no relationship between procedural justice and the decision instrument (Ötting & Maier, 2018). The lack of interaction effects between the decision instrument and procedural justice highlights the importance of procedural justice in employment decisions as procedural justice is unwavering toward human or electronic systems (Ötting & Maier, 2018).

### **Promotion Process and Post-promotion Decision Outcomes**

Tzafir and Hareli (2009) explained that typically, following an organizational decision, employees will pose the question, “Was that fair?” This includes decisions

regarding internal promotion. The authors suggested that the decision and promotion process can result in a multitude of discrete emotional states. Using Weiner's attribution theory of motivation and emotion as an analytic tool, Tzafir and Hareli (2009) analyzed the potentiality of positive and negative emotional and behavioral reactions of both promoted and non-promoted employees. As illustrated in the analysis, emotional reactions, both positive and negative, result from justice opinions about what brought on the promotion decision and the promotion process itself.

Bobocel and Gosse (2015) underscored a longitudinal approach to examining the consequences of justice within organizations. The authors explored the effects of procedural and disruptive justice over a two-year period. The participants were untenured professors of management. Faculty perceptions regarding organizational fairness were assessed at three separate times: during a pre-allocation phase, during a short-term post-allocation, and during a long-term post-allocation phase. The sample consisted of 93 survey respondents at the outset during the pre-allocation phase, 83 of the original 93 who responded during the short-term post-allocation phase, and 73 of the original 93 who responded during the long-term post-allocation phase. The quantitative data showed that though faculty perceptions of procedural justice influenced organizational attitudes before and shortly after hiring decisions, there was no elevated influence over time. However, in addition to influencing organizational attitudes before and shortly after hiring decisions, disruptive justice also continued to influence organizational attitudes long term.

Leading researchers on the issues of justice perceptions and promotion decisions, Beehr et al. (2004) historically discussed the importance of circumstances preceding one's perception of justice relative to promotion decisions for themselves and others. In this study, anonymous questionnaires were completed by 130 employed adults, with the majority (at 55 percent) holding professional titles and with nearly half holding a bachelor's degree (approximately 50 percent). Generally, as the authors hypothesized, the data revealed that if people believe that promotions are performance-based, they perceive such decisions as just; if they believe promotions have some other rationale, they perceive those decisions as unjust. However, the calculated betas and correlations suggest that non-performance rationales were perceived more negatively for others' promotion than for oneself. Despite the elevation in negative perception, the findings indicate that, within an organizational environment, employees are inclined to believe that their opportunity for promotion is based primarily on non-performance rationales.

In subsequent years, Webster & Beehr (2013) concluded that living in a more global community with demands for more highly skilled workers creates greater competition in the external labor market, yet difficulty filling these positions persists. Consequently, though ILMs had experienced some change, Webster & Beehr (2013) advised organizations to strongly consider their internal labor market to fill high-level positions. The advantages for both employee and organization include saving on cost for the organization and greater commitment for the employee (Brimhall et al., 2016; Rubel & Kee, 2015; Adekola, 2011). However, a disadvantage for both employee and organization is characterized by employees receiving little information about how



promotion decisions are determined, potentially leading to positive and negative emotional and behavioral reactions of both promoted and non-promoted employees (Truxillo et al., 2018; Konradt et al., 2017; Webster & Beehr, 2013).

The literature can undoubtedly offer a conceptual model to provide some insight into making sense of denied promotions. For example, empirical insight on behavioral outcomes and nuanced perceptions of post-promotion decision outcomes remains largely unseen (Vough & Caza, 2017). Additionally, there has been limited research on how the internal hiring process's fairness relates to the effective outcomes of job satisfaction, leader-member exchange, and organizational commitment (Webster & Beehr, 2013). However, Ford et al. (2009), in their influential work, deemed the outcomes as prominent variables in the promotion context. They presented three theoretical propositions to address each of the affective outcomes:

- Proposition 9: Internal employees who perceive selection processes and outcomes as fair will experience higher levels of job satisfaction in comparison to employees that perceive processes and outcomes as unfair.
- Proposition 10: Internal employees with higher quality leader–member social exchanges will have higher justice judgments regarding the promotional selection process.
- Proposition 11: Internal employees who perceive selection processes and outcomes as fair will experience higher levels of organizational commitment in comparison with those that feel processes and outcomes are unfair (p. 411-412).

Ford et al. (2009) concluded by reiterating the importance of understanding reactions to promotions. Ford et al. (2009) stated that due to the intense outcomes that are possible with promotions, organizations are less willing to allow researchers to delve into this sensitive organizational process. Secondly, because organizational promotions are generally represented by individual cases rather than multiple cases, as is typical with external recruitment, most researchers' statistical methods are consequently less viable. Lastly, many organizations opt not to use formal promotion procedures (e.g., tests, assessment centers, and structured interviews), making research opportunities less likely; nonetheless, Ford et al. (2009) stated that these explanations do not negate the necessity or the importance of the promotion process or related research.

Note that research indicates that perceived fairness and procedural fairness are also important variables regarding external hiring. A study by Konradt et al. (2017) investigated job applicants' perceptions of procedural justice in the hiring process right after taking part in the selection procedure and three weeks later but before they had received feedback. The researchers report that procedural justice perceptions at these two points in time were related to job offer acceptance and job performance at 18 months but not at 36 months. Thus, hired external applicants' procedural justice perceptions were related to mid-term but not long-term job performance.

In expansive global research, Anderson and Witvliet (2008), utilizing separate studies for each respective country, reported reactions to employee selection methods across six countries (the Netherlands, the United States, France, Spain, Portugal, and Singapore). In a sample of 167 participants who rated assessment techniques, there was

great similarity in applicant reactions across countries, including the two overall dimensions of process favorability and procedural justice. These similarities were apparent even among those countries with the most varied cultures, socio-economic conditions, and usages of selection methods. The review of the literature in this chapter highlights promotion practices and organizational outcomes which have implications for unexplored employee outcomes and experiences.

The next chapter focuses on the study's qualitative methodology. The chapter includes several sections. The first two sections after the introduction focus on the research design and rationale for the study and the role of the researcher. The methodology section includes subsections on participant selection, instrumentation, procedures, and the data analysis plan. The section on the trustworthiness of the study addresses the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. A discussion of ethical procedures relevant to the study is the last section of the chapter preceding the summary.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore noncompetitive employees' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes following an internal promotion of a colleague who then becomes the employee's supervisor to determine how the noncompetitive employees describe their adaptation to the promotion and their supervisor's adaptation to the promotion. Additionally, the study investigated the employees' accounts of how these experiences, perceptions, and attitudes may impact future organizational conditions. Internal promotions have unique ways of interrupting the status quo within organizations, and though the intensity and duration may vary depending on the organizational culture and perceptions of fairness, many appear to be affected (DeVaro, 2020; DeVaro et al. 2019; Subramanian, 2019; Ghouri, 2016). The objective of this study was to contribute to the understanding of the context of internal promotions and further new perspectives in organizational psychology; this was accomplished in this study by collecting interview responses from noncompetitive employees' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward the internal promotion of a colleague to be their supervisor.

Underwriting the above purpose statement, the focus of this methodology chapter is to detail the research methods and strategies that were used to collect relevant information from noncompetitive employees who were recruited to participate in this study. To begin with, the chapter presents the research design and rationale upon which the current study was anchored. Subsequent sections then discuss the role of the researcher and misconceptions that might have affected the outcomes of this study. The

specific methodology was also discussed focusing on participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, and the data analysis plan. Issues of trustworthiness are discussed focusing on transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings. Finally, potential ethical issues emerging from this study are discussed focusing on informed consent, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, participant privacy, data confidentiality, and data storage. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main research methods and strategies that were used in this study.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

Two research questions were formulated to explore how employees who do not compete for a promotion adapt to the promotion of one of their co-workers to be their supervisor and how the noncompetitive employees describe the co-worker's adaptation to the promotion. These research questions include:

1. How do noncompetitive employees adapt to an internal promotion of a co-worker to become their supervisor?
2. How do noncompetitive employees describe the new supervisor's adaptation to their promotion from co-worker to the noncompetitive employees' supervisor?

The central phenomenon of this study is that despite years of research on employee perceptions and attitudes towards internal promotions (Konradt et al., 2017; Li et al., 2019), there is a lack of research that explores the adaptative experience of noncompetitive employees regarding the promotion of a co-worker to become their supervisor. Undertaking this study, therefore, seeks to address the identified knowledge

gap by creating new knowledge on how employees perceive the internal promotion of their co-workers, thereby creating insights into the value of internal promotion to organizations. As earlier noted, the lack of research on noncompetitive employees' account of their work experiences and perceptions following an internal promotion informed the motivation to undertake this study. To understand this phenomenon, the research traditions used were the ontological constructivism and epistemological interpretivism positions within the generic qualitative research strategy.

According to Saunders et al. (2017), ontology and epistemology are the two most applied research positions in the field of social sciences research. On the one hand, ontology refers to the nature of being or reality. On the other hand, epistemology focuses on 'what is known about the world?' and 'how is a reality known?' (Saunders et al., 2017). Creswell and Creswell (2017) further elaborated that when examining the nature of existence, there is no right or wrong since individuals have varied perceptions about the topic under study based on their experience, background, values, or roles. As such, understanding the topic under study may only be explored and understood by assessing the views, perceptions, and opinions of those who have lived or experienced the topic under study. As applies to this study, ontological constructivism and epistemological interpretivism were the primary research positions within the generic qualitative research strategy used to understand how noncompetitive employees who do not compete in internal job promotion adapt to the promotion of one of their co-workers to be their supervisor.

Through interpretivism and social constructivism, the collected participant responses from semi-structured interviews were treated as a direct reflection of a concrete social reality of the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of noncompetitive employees towards the promotion of their co-workers to leadership positions. While positivist holds that there is only a single source of true and correct reality largely obtained using verified scientific methods such as surveys, constructivists hold that knowledge is socially constructed and dependent on the participants (Bryman, 2016). Thus, the social constructivist position enables the researcher to inquire, explore, and collect in-depth data from participants through dialogue regarding the problem under study (Bryman, 2016). The resulting collaborative, two-way communication motivates interviewees to detail their views about the phenomenon under study, thereby identifying new insights and views about their experience (Saunders et al., 2017).

In addition, and by contrast, however, the use of interpretivism helps a researcher collect insights about human elements such as individual opinions, feelings, and views about the topic that might not be reflected during quantitative studies (Saunders et al., 2017). In this study, the use of interpretivism research position enabled me to socially collaborate with noncompetitive employees to collect detailed data and individual perceptions about co-worker promotion to supervisor position to determine how such noncompetitive employees describe their adaptation to the promotion and their supervisor's adaptation to the promotion. The interpretivism research position aligns with the perceptions expressed by Saunders et al. (2017) in that to understand how knowledge is constructed and meaning is attached to world events, a researcher needs to be

perceptive and explore the phenomenon under study from the view of those who participate in the action.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I conducted all the required steps to complete this qualitative study. Based on prior experience in social sciences, with a strong foundation in organizational psychology and human resource management subject areas, I was capable to initiate and undertake this study in line with the social research science requirements. Specifically, before conducting the study, I was and am well-versed in organizational psychology and qualitative research frameworks. Furthermore, before the study, I had and currently have vast information and some experience on internal job promotions and potential employee dynamics that might occur to organizational performance upon the promotion of co-workers to supervisor positions. Also, with background insights on career development facilitation in organizations, I had a primary interest in undertaking this study to advance the existing literature on the interplay between noncompetitive subordinate employees and co-worker promotion to supervisor positions during internal job promotions. Underwriting these considerations, it may be noted that I had strong background knowledge and personal interest in conducting this qualitative research, which was key to the completion of this study.

Despite the above considerations, however, I had personal preconceptions about the topic that might have affected the findings. In elaboration, I held that there was a lack of interest in the extant organizational literature regarding noncompetitive subordinate employee perceptions and attitudes towards co-worker promotion into a supervisor



position. Also, I held that there is paucity in research regarding how noncompetitive employees adapt to an internal promotion of a co-worker to become their supervisor. Thus, my attachment to the research topic might have inadvertently impacted the study findings based on my personal approach and interpretation of the current knowledge on the topic.

To control and manage this potential bias, I used the bracketing technique and personal reflexivity to help attain impartiality and mitigate subjective data interpretation during data collection, data analysis, and results presentation (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Flick, 2018 Gregory, 2019). The use of bracketing ensured I embraced objective data collection, interpretation, analysis, and evaluation to avoid structural bias (Bourke, 2014). Further, I focused on collecting data from the Walden University Participant Pool, “Research And Me”, and MTurk. Since there were no hierarchical relationships between me and the participants, there was no power interplay and participants were free to express their views regarding the topic based on their experiences in their respective organizations.

To limit possible researcher bias, objectivity was also ensured through elaborate coding and the thematic analysis process with the aid of the qualitative data analysis computer software, Dedoose (Bergin, 2011). Before the data collection and analysis processes, I set aside any preconceived knowledge about the topic to ensure objectivity when guiding interviewees, while encouraging them to share full and rich responses to the semi-structured interview questions (Gregory, 2019). Also, to ensure bracketing practice, I avoided external knowledge about the participants before engaging them in the

interview process. Undertaking such an approach minimized any preconceived notions about the participants and prevented researcher biases from influencing the interview (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). Besides these considerations, there were no additional ethical issues that might have impacted the study outcomes in terms of conflict of interest or power differentials.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

The population that was invited to participate in the current study was initially drawn only from the Walden University Participant Pool and from “Research And Me”. The Walden University Participant Pool is a virtual bulletin board through which members of the Walden community can learn about, and participate in, studies conducted by Walden students and faculty. The Participant Pool is a very suitable resource not only for researchers, since it provides access to a very diverse community, but also participants as they have the opportunity to learn about research in general, in addition to witnessing the research being done within the university. “Research And Me” is a virtual research participant recruitment bulletin board that targets a general-population database of potential participants from across the United States. However, participants drawn from the Walden Participant Pool and “Research And Me” were not adequate.

Therefore, additional participants were recruited from MTurk, a virtual crowdsourcing platform that also targeted the general population from across the United States. Participants were also successfully recruited by way of virtual and physical

recruitment flyer distribution to online groups, GroupMe and WhatsApp, and at religious institutions.

The purposive sampling strategy, criterion sampling, was used to select participants for this study. According to Patton (2014), criterion sampling involves selecting relevant participants who meet some predetermined criterion of importance. Using criterion sampling for this study was useful for identifying and understanding relevant noncompetitive employees for the study who are information-rich as applies to internal job promotion of their co-workers. As such, using criterion sampling was a key qualitative component to relevant semi-structured interview responses (Patton, 2014). The selection of the participants who possessed relevant information and knowledge of the current topic was based on a predetermined selection criterion.

The selection criteria for participants was that they should be aged 18 years or above; work full time in an environment in which, during the past 24 months, one of their co-workers was promoted to a position to be their supervisor; and the participants drawn into the current study did not compete for that position. The first 10 participants who meet this criterion and expressed interest in participating in this study were selected and invited to participate in this study. Low (2019) recommended that in a qualitative study, a sample size of 8-20 participants is enough to reach data saturation and methodological rigor. In this study, the choice of the first 10 participants was considered enough in attaining saturation when collecting in-depth and thick data to a point where no new themes would emerge even with the addition of more participants (Rowlands et al., 2016).

Participant selection and identification were achieved using online adverts targeting the Walden University Participant Pool, “Research and Me”, and MTurk. I detailed and advertised the aims and objectives of the study on the Participant Pool website, researchandme.com, and the MTurk platform. Specific details on the targeted population in terms of the predetermined criteria were provided. Participants who meet the selection and inclusion criteria were encouraged to contact me through the provided contact details (email or telephone).

### **Instrumentation**

Researcher-developed semi-structured interview questions (Appendix A) was the primary instrument that was used in this study in collecting primary data from participants. A total of 10 interview questions was used in the study. The interview questions were developed based on the literature insights and the conceptual and theoretical framework for this study. The questions were developed to request information from the participants that is directly relevant to answering the two research questions. In this way, the assurance of content validity was the guiding principle for developing the interview questions. The formulated interview questions sought to explore: (a) how noncompetitive employees adapt to an internal promotion of a co-worker to be their supervisor and (b) how noncompetitive employees describe the new supervisor’s adaptation to their promotion.

The basis for the development of the interview questions was on the Eight-dimensional Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance developed by (Pulakos et al., 2000) and the leader–member exchange (LMX) leadership theory (López-Ibort et al., 2020). On the

one hand, the eight-dimensional taxonomy of adaptive performance developed by Pulakos et al. (2000) emphasizes that employee adaptation to changes within an organization may be examined and understood through eight constructs. These constructs focus on how employees (a) handle crisis situations, (b) handle work stress, (c) creatively solve problems, (d) deal with unpredictable work situations, (e) learn new work tasks, procedures, and technologies, (f) demonstrate interpersonal adaptability, (g) demonstrate cultural adaptability, and (h) demonstrate physically oriented adaptability (p. 617). These eight constructs formed the basis of the Interview Questions 1-8.

On the other hand, the LMX theory advocates the dyadic relationship between a leader and their followers (López-Ibort et al., 2020), asserting that when the nature of the relationship between a leader and an employee is productive the employee tends to experience a positive self-concept, have self-efficacy, and self-respect (Paik, 2016). The leader-member exchange relationship is reciprocal between subordinates and leaders (Sepdiningtyas & Santoso, 2017). Thus, subordinates are more likely to support their leaders when they are supported by their leaders and subordinates are more likely to provide their leaders with access to information and training when they have been provided with access to information and training (Marstand et al., 2017; Sepdiningtyas & Santoso, 2017). The LMX theory was key to the formulation of Interview Questions 9 and 10.

Interview question 1 sought to understand how subordinate employees define and approach new changes emerging from new methods, practices, and procedures. Further, participants were asked to share how their former co-worker who is now their supervisor

facilitated their learning and training efforts in terms of encouragement, motivation, and material investment in their career or skills advancement. Interview question 2 further asked noncompetitive employees how their adaptability in professional relationships had been impacted after the internal promotion of their co-worker. For instance, participants were asked to elaborate specific behavior changes since the promotion of their co-worker to a supervisor position such as attitude towards feedback from others, helping their colleagues, and listening or seeking to understand the viewpoints of their supervisor or colleagues to improve their interaction with them.

Interview question 3 asked participants to share how the promotion of their colleague has impacted their cross-cultural adaptability including working with other people, teams, or groups from other organizations, and different nationalities. Also, participants were asked to discuss their and their new supervisor's new approaches to learning, collaboration with others, and whether the new supervisor helped them in creating stronger intercultural relations with other workers. Interview question 4 examined how employees adapted to handling work stress in terms of the ease in task change and how they maintained pressure while working to make multiple decisions or while looking for solutions. Interview question 5 helped examine how employees handled emergencies or crisis situations after the promotion of their co-worker to a supervisor position.

Interview question 6 asked participants to share the impact of co-worker promotion on their ability to solve problems creatively. Interview Question 7 asked participants to share how they had been assisted by their new supervisor and had also

assisted their supervisor to manage unpredictable work situations in terms of resource access and needed support to handle emerging uncertain situations. Interview question 8 focused on examining how employees and the promoted coworker had physically adapted to any new working conditions in terms of the nature of the working environment, physical limits to achieve new limits, and working conditions and their efficiency in facilitating job performance. Questions 9 and 10 sought additional information from participants with a specific focus on how noncompetitive employees would describe their adaptation in the workplace after their former co-worker became their supervisor following internal promotion, and also describe their supervisor's adaptation to the supervisory role after their internal promotion.

### **Procedures for Recruitment and Participation**

As previously noted, to select an appropriate participant sample for this study, I posted an advertisement about the aim and objectives of the study at the Walden University Participant Pool website, the "Research and Me" website, on the MTurk platform, and on the recruitment flyer. The advert had details about the study including the topic and aim. Detailed information about the study was incorporated in the informed consent form. The approval from Walden University's IRB was included on the informed consent form received by those who were interested in participating in the study.

Participants who expressed interest in the study registered to participate via the "Research and Me" website or used the provided email or telephone number to contact me. Participants who meet the compliance or inclusion criteria received a reply from me via email or telephone to discuss the interview session and details of the study.

Noncompetitive participants who agreed to the study, met the criteria, and decided to continue, provided electronic consent, and were scheduled for an interview. The first 10 participants to submit consent forms were considered for the study.

As previously mentioned, a follow-up plan was implemented as the initial participant recruitment resulted in too few participants (i.e. below the estimated 10 participants). Under the follow-up plan, I took various measures to recruit enough participants. These measures included maintaining the recruitment information on the Walden University Participant Pool virtual bulletin board and publishing my study information on “Research And Me” virtual research participant recruitment bulletin board. Also, the recruitment flyer was posted to online groups that included: WhatsApp groups and GroupMe groups. Additionally, the flyer was physically distributed at religious institutions.

Participants who participated in the interview sessions were assured of their privacy as further discussed under the *Ethical Procedures*. Further, the process that was used in the data collection process has been detailed under the *Data Collection Procedure*. After collecting interviews and completing participant debriefing, all the interviewees were thanked for participating, and anyone who desired to learn about the outcome of the study was served with a copy summarizing study findings.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

After I obtained electronic informed consent from the 10 participants, I initiated the data collection process. Considering the current COVID-19 pandemic, the data collection process was conducted using the following options: the Zoom online



audiovisual platform, a data collection tool powered by SurveyMonkey, and telephone. Participants selected their preferred option and their interview was conducted according to the participant's selection. Miller et al. (2020) asserted that the online data collection process allows participants to share their experiences and express their in-depth feelings while ensuring multiple channels of data collection such as observations and field notes. In this study, the use of semi-structured interviews was key to enabling me to build rapport with every participant while ensuring flexibility to encourage participants to share richer responses to personal experiences related to the phenomenon under study (Miller et al., 2020).

Each interview was scheduled at a convenient time for every interviewee to ensure sufficient time for data collection. Each of the interview sessions lasted between 45 minutes and 60 minutes. To ensure the privacy of the participants, the interview sessions were conducted in a private room to allow for audiotaping of the responses and minimize interruptions (Bryman, 2016). The interviews were audio-recorded after informing the participants and asking for their consent as the entire interview session was recorded. Video recording was not implemented for participant interviews. Each of the participants was asked the same set of questions, except that, in some instances, the questions were rephrased so that the respondent had a better understanding of the question. Through the use of open-ended questions, prompts, and probes, I used insights to encourage further, richer answers to questions when needed.

Once each interview session has been completed, I respectfully thanked the participants for their participation. Once each interview session was closed, I

immediately completed “scratch notes” or field notes to ensure optimal accuracy and recall of the participants’ responses (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Accuracy was achieved by reviewing collected interview information and comparing it to the scratch notes and subsequently contacting the participants for follow-up if there was a need for clarity. All the interviews were then transcribed verbatim and coded using anonymous names to ensure data confidentiality and participant privacy. The transcribed data was stored in a password-protected computer and backed up into Google Drive using a secure email address.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

With the aid of Dedoose, all the recorded data from the 10 participants were transcribed and then analyzed by coding and determination of themes. The six-step thematic analysis process described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyze the transcribed data. Step 1 focused on familiarizing with the collected data by reading and re-reading all the transcribed texts from the ten interviews and listening to the audio recordings. Initial ideas were compared to field notes to ensure I had a comprehensive understanding of the content of the interview responses and was acquainted with all aspects of the raw data. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasized that data familiarization provides the primary foundation for success in subsequent analysis.

Step 2 entailed generating initial codes from the transcribed data. After being familiar with the collected data and its major components, Braun and Clarke (2006) noted that research must commence on identifying preliminary codes that serve as the features of the raw data based on meaningful trends that align with the research questions or

phenomenon under study. The identified codes are more specific and numerous than themes but provide insights on potential indications about the conversation.

Step 3 entailed searching for themes where the focus was on the interpretive analysis of the identified and collated themes. Specific data extracts were sorted by splitting, combining, or deleting them in line with the overarching themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) observed that in this step, the thought process presented by the researchers should allude to the relationship between codes, subthemes, and themes. Step 4 focused on reviewing created themes by questioning whether to separate, refine, combine, or discard the initial themes. In this step, Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend that data within themes need to adhere together to create meaning through checking themes concerning coded extracts and then for the entire data set.

Step 5 focused on naming and defining themes and possible subthemes emerging from data. Continuous analysis is needed to further improve on the identified themes. Clear working definitions are formulated in addition to assessing clear working definitions to capture the essence of every theme concisely. Further, the step focuses on creating the unified story of the data that emerges to elaborate more on the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, Step 6 focused on producing the report using compelling and vivid extract examples from the interviews in support of the themes, research questions, and past literature on the topic. The focus is to ensure results are discussed in a manner that convinces the reader of the validity and merit of the qualitative data analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In research, there are potential discrepant cases that might emerge from the data. Discrepant cases and rival explanations would be used to identify examples that do not fit a pattern that is emerging (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). There were no discrepant cases in the current study.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

The current section discusses four key elements that were used to produce confidence in the research procedures and results of the current qualitative study. These four elements present the overarching concept of trustworthiness. Specifically, the four elements are derived from Lincoln and Guba's (1986) criteria of establishing trustworthiness and they include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. According to Ghauri et al. (2020), transferability and credibility represent the qualitative version of validity, while dependability and confirmability align with the qualitative version of reliability. Subsequent sections define and elaborate on the four concepts and how they were used to establish trustworthiness in the current research.

#### **Credibility**

As applies to this study, credibility denotes how well the results of a study accurately represent the examined experience of the participants who participate in a study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Percy et al., 2015). In elaboration, Lincoln and Guba (1986) stated that credibility describes the internal validity of a study and various approaches may be undertaken to achieve the credibility of qualitative studies. As applies to this study, I ensured the adoption and use of well-established data collection and analysis procedures as discussed in previous sections. Furthermore, I ensured strong

engagement and prolonged contact with participants, thereby creating sufficient time to listen, document, and achieve saturation of data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

An additional approach that was used to ensure credibility was researcher reflexivity. Researcher reflexivity was used thereby allowing me to maintain awareness about how results unfold, documenting emerging patterns (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). According to Reid et al. (2018), the researcher's positionality or "reflective commentary" ensures there is a clear statement of the lens through which the social world is interpreted in addition to explaining how the researcher's background might influence data collection and analysis procedures.

### **Dependability**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1986), dependability is used to mean the degree to which the research procedures used in this study are reliable and documented. To ensure dependability, I embraced different techniques during the study. Specifically, I conducted an audit trail where there was clear documentation of the entire inquiry process for other researchers to replicate. In terms of the collected results, I presented evidence that entailed full transcripts, documentation of data gathering, using overlapping methods, and media such as documents, and the use of recorded audio files to collect interview responses to maintain participant authenticity (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Further, an in-depth methodological description ensured dependability by providing a comprehensible record of how data was collected and analyzed.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), meticulous description increases the soundness of the study that can be useful for future studies. By ensuring there is a clear

alignment of what needs to be researched and understood through the research questions, problem statement, research design, and methodology, I also ensured the dependability of the entire research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Finally, dependability of the study was achieved through peer debriefing, where there was constant consulting with academic advisors to discuss and receive feedback on the study before, during, and after completing the research process.

### **Transferability**

Transferability denotes the degree to which the results obtained from the research process are applicable to future research, practice, and policy (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Ghauri et al. (2020) also shared that transferability is the extent to which findings from a qualitative study might be applied to different contexts and people. Importantly, transferability serves to meet similar outcomes of external validity in terms of the generalizability of the results from research. To ensure transferability of the findings, I focused on attaining a thick description where the primary focus was to ensure background data used in the study established the context of the research in detail to allow comparisons of the context to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Padgett (2016) shared that ensuring a greater and detailed description of the phenomenon under study contributes to the attainment of meaningful findings that will inform other contexts. Moreover, I ensured the transferability of results through sampling sufficiency (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). That is, the selected sample size and the suitability of the sample selected contributed towards the realization of study findings providing elaborate insights into the phenomena under study.

## **Confirmability**

Lincoln and Guba (1986) defined confirmability as the ability of other researchers to corroborate the findings of a study. To achieve confirmability in this study, I focused on various processes. Data coding was employed allowing well-defined and clear patterns to emerge from the interview responses, ideas, stories, phrases, and terms specific to the research topic. Providing ample evidence through interview excerpts further ensured identified themes and claims were supported by evidence.

Researcher reflexivity ensured awareness was maintained about how results unfolded and patterns were documented (Reid et al., 2018). The in-depth methodological discussion further ensured the integrity of the results, while the statement of researchers' assumptions and beliefs helped highlight possible biases that might have resulted from the research process. Finally, recognition of shortcomings or limitations of the study helped clarify their potential effects on final findings and how they contributed to answering the research questions.

## **Ethical Procedures**

The involvement of human participants in this study resulted in some ethical issues that needed to be taken into consideration. Key ethical issues that were associated with this study included obtaining IRB approval, informed consent, participant privacy, information confidentiality, and data storage. Before commencing with the data collection process, I obtained relevant IRB approval from Walden University. According to DiGiacinto (2019), IRB approval is key to the research process since it outlines measures and outcomes used to protect human participants from the risk of harm; some

of the potential risks may be physical, psychological, or emotional in nature. However, in this study, participants were not exposed to any harm either emotionally, physically, or psychologically.

Before participating in this study, participants were asked to provide electronic consent through informed consent forms. I outlined the research aim and objectives of the study in a clear and concise language that everyone would understand (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Importantly, participants were informed that participating in this study was voluntary and that they may withdraw from the study at any stage of the research without any negative consequences. No element of coercion, inducement, or deception was used in the data collection process.

Participant privacy was a key priority in this study and participants were assured that their information was secure and coded to prevent their identification. I did not report personal information such as names, places of work, email addresses, telephone numbers, or places of residence. Instead, all participant information was coded and synonyms were used to conceal their identities (Bryman, 2016). Also, participants were assured that insights shared through the interview sessions were used for academic purposes only. There were no power plays associated with this study and all participants remained anonymous and objective when responding to formulated interview questions, independent of any influence from me.

To ensure data confidentiality, all the interviews were conducted in a private room to minimize interruptions and conceal participant identities. Collected data were coded and stored in a password-protected computer to prevent unauthorized access. The



coded data were assigned specific synonyms to represent the participants and to maintain the privacy of their data. Subsequently, the collected data was also backed up to Google Drive using a secure email. Creswell and Creswell (2017) recommend long-term data storage of up to five years before permanent deletion or destruction. The use of Google Drive cloud storage ensures that the raw data is secure and accessible in the event my personal computer is lost or damaged, and also ensures secure and safe storage for a period of up to five years before it is permanently deleted.

### **Summary**

The current methodology chapter has discussed the main strategies and approaches that were used to collect relevant data to explore formulated research questions. Research design and rationale have been discussed focusing on constructivism and interpretivism research positions within the generic qualitative research strategy. The use of these research traditions was key to understanding the experiences of participants regarding noncompetitive employee experiences, perceptions, and attitudes following an internal promotion of a colleague who then becomes the employee's supervisor. The rationale of using these research traditions has been discussed focusing on the nature of socially constructing knowledge with participants to determine how the noncompetitive employees describe their adaptation to the promotion and their supervisor's adaptation to the promotion. The chapter further explored the role of the researcher in ensuring data collection, analysis, and reporting of findings. Potential researcher misconceptions that might affect the results have been detailed. Subsequent sections then discussed the research methodology with a specific focus on participant selection, instrumentation,

development of instruments, the procedure for recruitment and participant selection, data collection, and data analysis procedures. Issues of trustworthiness have also been explored including confirmability, transferability, dependability, and credibility. Potential ethical issues such as privacy, informed consent, data confidentiality, and data storage have also been discussed. The next chapter presents the results obtained from the semi-structured interview sessions with noncompetitive subordinate employees.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

Researchers have examined the influence of internal promotions by focusing primarily on the reactions (such as fairness of the promotion) of competitive non-promoted internal candidates and those of the promoted individuals (Dlugos & Keller, 2021; Wang et al., 2019; Truxillo et al., 2018; Truxillo et al., 2017; Harold et al., 2016). However, understanding the non-competing employee response on notions such as fairness of the promotion and other attitudinal and emotional reactions and adaptation is important as subordinates have an influence on bosses to be successful or unsuccessful leaders (Shah et al., 2017; Johnson & Salmon, 2016; Manzoni & Barsoux, 2009). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore noncompetitive employees' experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs following an internal promotion of a colleague who then becomes the employee's supervisor to determine how the noncompetitive employees describe their adaptation to the promotion and their supervisor's adaptation to the promotion. The objective of the study was to contribute to the understanding of the context of internal promotions and further new perspectives in organizational psychology research and education. The study had the following research questions: (1) How do noncompetitive employees adapt to an internal promotion of a co-worker to become their supervisor? (2) How do noncompetitive employees describe the new supervisor's adaptation to their promotion from co-worker to the noncompetitive employees' supervisor?

This chapter consists of seven sections following this introduction. The first section describes the setting; that is, organizational conditions that influenced participants and participants' experiences at the time of the study that influenced the interpretation of the study results. Participant characteristics or demographics relevant to the study are described in the second section, and data collection details are provided in the third section. The fourth and fifth sections' content consists of the data analysis processes and descriptions and the evidence of trustworthiness. The study results are presented and discussed in the next section. Finally, the last section summarizes answers to the research questions.

### **Research Setting**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face interviews with participants were not admissible. Participants completed the interview process in safe and confidential environments, which allowed for open and honest responses. The interview platforms that were used included Zoom, an online teleconferencing platform, SurveyMonkey, an online tool used to capture the voices and opinions of people, and telephone. Ten participants were interviewed, three completed audio-recorded interviews via Zoom, three completed written interviews via SurveyMonkey, and four completed telephone interviews. I requested and received clarification responses from one participant of the 10 via email. There were no conditions (personal or organizational) that influenced the participants or the results of the study.

### Demographics

Seven of the 10 participants were national, and three were international. Each participant was a full-time employee and had worked at least two years within their respective organizations.

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographics*

Participant #	Global Status
01	National
02	National
03	International
04	National
05	International
06	National
07	International
08	National
09	National
10	National

### Data Collection

A total of 10 participants were interviewed using an interview guide designed for a 60-minute interview. The interview guide was developed to collect, from participants, self-reported perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes concerning how the internal promotion of their coworker to their supervisor affected them and their new supervisor. I began data collection following approval from the IRB on June 8, 2021. Walden University's approval number for this study is 06-08-21-0035453.

To recruit participants, my study was posted to the Walden University Participant Pool, and "Research And Me" virtual research participant recruitment bulletin board. Thereafter, two eligible participants contacted me from the Participant Pool via email to

participate in my study. These two contacts did not submit consent; therefore, their contact did not result in an interview. Due to challenges recruiting participants, I submitted a request to change recruitment procedures. The requested changes included: adding my photo to the recruitment flyer, revising some simple wording and the heading on my recruitment flyer, drawing participants from the crowdsourcing platform, MTurk, providing a separate informed consent form for MTurk participants, and revising the consent forms to offer a \$15.00 payment to participants upon completion of the study. The Walden IRB approved all requested changes on June 29, 2021. Thereafter, the following eligible and willing participants submitted consent and completed interviews: one participant from the Walden Participant Pool initiated interest via email, three from Research and Me initiated interest via researchandme.com registration, two from MTurk initiated interest by advancing to the written interview opportunity, and four from virtual and physical flyer distribution initiated interest via email (two of the four were recruited using the snowball method).

Irrespective of the recruitment tool, all potential participants were given the option to participate in an audio-recorded interview or a written interview. Audio data were recorded via Zoom, locally, to my password-protected computer and as an audio file to my secure email account via Google Voice. Written data were recorded for download within the data collection tool powered by SurveyMonkey. Clarification responses were recorded via email in my secure email account.

In the following order, interview questions were posed to attain participants' descriptions of workplace experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs on (a) their own

and their supervisor's approach in learning new work tasks, procedures, or technologies (b) their own and their supervisor's flexibility to understand viewpoints and opinions of others, ability to demonstrate interpersonal adaptability (c) their own and their supervisor's cross-cultural adaptability including working with other people, teams, or groups from other organizations, and different nationalities (d) how they and their supervisor manage high demand or high stress situations (e) how they and their supervisor handle emergencies or crisis work situations (f) their own and their supervisor's ability to solve problems creatively (g) how they and their supervisor deal with uncertain and unpredictable work situations (h) how they and their supervisor responded to challenging environmental conditions or physical challenges at work (i) additional information not previously mentioned for them (j) additional information not previously mentioned for their supervisor. Each interview question was used to probe the participants on their descriptions before their supervisor's promotion and after the promotion.

A total of 10 participants completed interviews. The interviews took approximately 45-75 minutes. Seven interviews were audio-recorded, and three interviews were written. Rev (<https://www.rev.com/>), a speech-to-text transcription service, was used to transcribe the interviews. Following receipt of transcripts from Rev, I verified the accuracy of each transcript. As a variation to the plan presented in the previous chapter, member checking was not completed. The IRB highly discouraged member checking as this task places an undue burden on research participants' time

following their interview participation. Unusual circumstances did not arise during the data collection process.

### **Data Analysis**

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis process was utilized for data analysis. This thematic analysis technique allows for rich familiarization of the data collected, producing initial codes, thinking on the relationship between codes, subthemes, and themes or developing categories and then an identification of themes, reviewing and refining themes, naming and defining themes and possible subthemes, and reporting a thick description of the findings. An alphanumeric schema of P01-P10 was used to identify each participant to maintain confidentiality. Rather than implementing member checking, line-by-line coding was exercised by hand to familiarize me with the data and ensure accuracy. Initial codes were then developed from the major components of the data. Dedoose, qualitative data analysis software that helps researchers manage and analyze data, was used primarily as a tool to organize and hand-code interview transcripts.

For first cycle coding, within Dedoose, I manually identified excerpts and subsequently simplified each excerpt with a code. Each excerpt and corresponding code were stored and organized, clearly identified in separate clusters as "Excerpts" and "Codes" on the user interface for further analysis and review. First cycle coding through all 10 interview transcripts produced 308 codes. Inductively derived from the 308 codes, in the second cycle coding, I analyzed 25 codes. The 25 codes were collapsed and expanded to yield eight categories. A repetitive code emerging throughout the interview



data was “understanding” (various tenses and parts of speech) which preceded an important theme: noncompetitive employees have mixed views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker, and subtheme: most have mostly positive views about the leadership of the promoted coworker. In step three of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step thematic analysis process, I searched for and identified initial themes, then I reviewed, refined, and organized the themes. In step five, I named and defined three themes with no discrepant cases identified in the data analysis.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

Credibility designates the internal validity of research studies; that is, how accurate the study results represent the participant experience being examined (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Percy et al., 2015; Lincoln and Guba, 1986). Participants requiring additional information or clarification on the details of the purpose of the study were immediately provided with that information. As a variation to the plan presented in the previous chapter, member checking was not employed. The IRB discouraged member checking as this task places an undue burden on research participants. Consequently, line-by-line coding was completed in lieu of member checking to ensure further accuracy of the study results (Williams & Moser, 2019). Clarification of responses was sought from participants following interviews where needed. To further establish credibility, I created robust interaction and extended contact with the participants, establishing rapport prior to the interview session and fostering an environment that created a considerable amount of

time for reflexivity or reflective commentary to listen, document, and achieve saturation of data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Reid et al., 2018).

### **Transferability**

Transferability relates to the extent to which the study and research results can be reproduced or applied to future research studies, practices, policies, different contexts, and different people (Ghauri et al., 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Transferability was met by providing a rich and detailed description of the phenomenon being studied. A suitable sample size was selected to support deep and adequate insights into the phenomenon being studied. Transferability was met further by outlining demographic information such as geographical location, employment status, and a minimum number of years of employment, allowing future researchers the opportunity for study replication or application to contrasting groups.

### **Dependability**

Dependability ensures reliable and appropriate research procedures are selected, utilized, and, documented (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). I ensured details were provided on what needed to be researched confirming alignment in the problem statement, purpose, research questions, design, and methodology. I established dependability by using overlapping methods and presenting evidence of the media generated from these methods such as documentation of data gathering, recorded interview audio files, scratch notes, full interview transcripts, and data analysis procedures (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Additionally, I cross-referenced the media produced from the use of the overlapping methods. Dependability was further established as continuous consulting or debriefing

with my research advisors (i.e., my research committee chairperson and other two research committee members) was conducted throughout the research process.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability allows other researchers to substantiate research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Confirmability was achieved by multiple methods. Throughout data collection, I exercised researcher reflexivity for continued self-awareness of any of my own situational dynamics, being systematic in ensuring confidentiality and reducing researcher bias (Reid et al., 2018). Clarification was sought from participants during the interview process if I held uncertainty about their response and further clarification was sought from participants after the close of the interview where needed. Confirmability was further achieved as I conducted data coding, including line-by-line data coding, to identify and report clear patterns relevant to the research topic that emerged from the data set. Interview excerpts were presented to support identified themes further.

Confirmability was also met by providing in-depth discussions of the research methodology to bolster the integrity of the results. The presentation of the limitations of the study also provided clarification on the research findings contributing to the confirmability of the study.

### **Results**

Three themes and five subthemes came from the research data in addressing the two guiding research questions for the current study. Ten participants responded to 10 interview questions inquiring of their and their supervisor's approach to managing new learning, workplace flexibility, cross-cultural adaptability, demands and stress,

emergencies, creative problem solving, unpredictability, environmental challenges, and other workplace matters they deemed important.

**Table 2**

*Emergent Themes*

Themes	Subthemes
Noncompetitive employees variously adapted to coworker promotion to supervisor	<p>Most had good adaptation to the promotion</p> <p>Some had poor adaptation to the promotion or were not fully adapted</p>
Noncompetitive employees had mixed views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker	<p>Most had mostly positive views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker</p> <p>Some had some positive views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker but also had distinctly negative views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker</p> <p>Some had mostly negative views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker</p>
Causes of and responses to stress for coworker and supervisor (including crisis, complex, unexpected situations, COVID)	

Theme one “noncompetitive employees variously adapted to coworker promotion to supervisor” and subthemes “most had good adaptation to the promotion” and “some had poor adaptation to the promotion or were not fully adapted” address research question one.

### **Research Question 1**

How do noncompetitive employees adapt to an internal promotion of a co-worker to become their supervisor?

#### ***Theme 1: Noncompetitive employees variously adapted to coworker promotion to supervisor***

During the interview process, participants shared experiences including challenging, rewarding, new, and routine experiences that resulted in a variety of favorable and unfavorable self-described perceptions and outcomes after their coworker's promotion to supervisor. Theme one emerged from the various positive and negative responses from the noncompetitive employees. Positive accounts varied; for example, respectively, P06 and P10 shared that they are more engaged at work, and have enough autonomy to experiment to improve or problem solve.

P01 stated,

Before the promotion of my coworker, I would get these calls like you are on leave, but you will be called to the office like four, four to five times at your leave. When you're on leave, this gets very annoying to some people, but you know, you have to be also flexible but now because my coworker, she understood the plight that we used to face. For her, I remember that time she had a baby very young baby, like around two months when the baby was four months, she got a call from work that she should go and attend to some plans because some other employee had like submitted, terminated her contract, so there was no one to like cover her. So, she kind of got like mixed up because when you're having a

newborn around and you, your mind completely switches from work to now the newborn, but now she's been called the office every now and then she's on her leave. So, it gets pretty annoying. But now later on, when she got promoted, she's now working on a schedule whereby there's enough employees at work. And there's a way of like the, what do we call them the schedule of work. Like one to four are going to work in shifts. Who are going to be on leave. Who are going to be on. So, she's coming up with a very good rollout program for that, so that there's not that confusion.

Negative accounts varied; for example, P04 reported on issues with micromanaging and dealing with elevated stress, P07 reported on a lack of camaraderie, P08 gave an account of uncomfortable team building activities. P04 stated,

Before the promotion, I would say that my stress level would have been less because of the fact that I had a lot more autonomy before the promotion in the way in which my department was run. I had a lot more respect and regard for the person that I reported into. So, I felt that it was less stressful for me because I felt more engaged in the organization and felt I was making more of a difference. I felt more appreciated and I felt more valued before the promotion. I was able to manage my stress level and deal with it because it's almost like this is what it is but you know what? It's for the greater good.

### **Subtheme 1A: Most had good adaptation to the promotion**

Participants were eager to share their positive experiences in the workplace notwithstanding any negative experiences they might have also contended with. The

positive aspects of a myriad of participants' workplace experiences gave rise to this subtheme. Although the contribution of good communication at work presented differently for certain participants, P01 and P09 shared that the openness in communication with their coworkers and new supervisor largely contributed to favorable work experiences including completing their individual work tasks as well as working on teams and in groups. P06 stated,

What was different was more "come alongside and learn to close the gaps" instead of "going ahead and outing the fire". And so, you felt at times when he puts out the fire on their own, the person who had done the work would have felt that they wasn't good enough, but now it's, come alongside me, this is the "why" behind this.

P10 stated,

Our team has a meeting every two weeks where people present ideas and show how they might work and we get feedback from the larger group. And there's about 15 of us that work together in the same division. So, I think that's where it kind of helps, because then, if you think something might work, then you can share it with the larger group and everyone will be able to offer their feedback on it. And sometimes it's helpful because someone might say, "Oh, I did something like that, but I did this." And so, it's like an opportunity to share that information.

**Subtheme 1B: Some had poor adaptation to the promotion or were not fully adapted**

Following their coworker's promotion to supervisor P03, P04, P07, and P08 all mentioned disengagement with their new supervisor. P03 shared that, after the promotion, the new supervisor avoided the opinions of themselves and coworkers, P04 stated that they disengaged as they felt they were no longer being recognized and was underappreciated. P07 explained that camaraderie had diminished, and P08 shared that the new supervisor was interacting more with upper level employees than other employees. P03 mentioned that, after the promotion, the new supervisor passed the responsibility of managing high demand situations on to themselves and coworkers. P04 expressed elements of a wait-and-see approach to responding to facets of the promotion. P04 stated,

Before the promotion, I would say that I would have found individuals to be very much aloof for lack of a better term or disengaged from things beyond his portfolio. I found him to be very...lacking a strong foundation. I did not see any remarkable results of him in his substantive position in terms of increasing the market share, increasing the patient flow, change in the way in which things were a given in the process. I did not see that type of innovation from him. I guess he has a supervisor as well and he would have been given a budget. So, I'm not privy to everything but I did not see that before the promotion.

Additionally, P07 mentioned the new supervisor's lack of understanding of others' point of view. P07 stated,



And that's one of the disadvantages of a scientist, most have been narrowly trained in a specific discipline. So, their viewpoint is somewhat limited. And it's hard for them to reach out and to understand that there's another way that this can be done and can be just as effective. And so, they have difficulty perceiving another way of doing things or another person's capabilities of doing things, or qualifications for doing things.

Theme two "Noncompetitive employees had mixed views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker" and subthemes "most had mostly positive views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker" and "Some had some positive views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker but also had distinctly negative views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker" address research question two.

## **Research Question 2**

How do noncompetitive employees describe the new supervisor's adaptation to their promotion from co-worker to the noncompetitive employees' supervisor?

### ***Theme 2: Noncompetitive employees had mixed views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker***

This theme emerged from participants' positive, negative, and a combination of positive and negative views on their perception of the character and actions of their promoted coworker. Some participants expressed that even though their supervisors had many responsibilities to content with, they discovered ways to manage those responsibilities and related stress successfully and independently. P01 shared,

I feel like even if she has a lot on the table to deal with as a person she's called to respond to an emergency she'll give her all she's the kind of person who will always be available when called to do so. And she rarely like complains, like, you know, something will happen. Like, let's say it's Monday. Some of the employees, like others who are in the thing, like we are working with will be complaining even during the weekend, but for us, she doesn't even complain. She's like, okay and she's like the person who, who lived one, uh, one day at a time, you know, you don't have to carry baggage from yesterday. She's that kind of a person actually.

Negative views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker also emerged repeatedly. P03 stated, "since the promotion to supervisor he started avoiding all other coworkers and works with a same race person." P08 stated, "she talks to all of us the same she did before, does the typical, 'Oh, just because I'm the supervisor doesn't mean anything's changed,' but it's like, 'Well, it kind of did.'"

Participants shared a combination of positive and negative views on the supervisor. P04, and P10 mentioned that their new supervisor was more understanding and responsive in certain situations after the promotion primarily because the supervisor themselves had personally experienced the same circumstances as an employee prior to their promotion. P10 stated,

I think he gets that because he was also in my capacity. So, it's kind of a different situation than I think other people were on. You're kind of envious and you wish that they, that you got the position and promotion instead of them. But I kind of

like what I do and he's not doing a lot of that anymore because he's doing project management.

**Subtheme 2A: Most had mostly positive views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker**

This subtheme emerged from participants' responses that largely reflected positive views about the leadership of the promoted coworker. P01, P02, P06, P09, and P10 all mentioned the new supervisor making improvements to work schedules or the scheduling process and succeeding in their efforts to be a team player following the promotion. Additionally, P02 and P06 shared that they felt they had freedom to pose questions and express their ideas and receive sound feedback from their new supervisor. P02 stated, "it feels that there is a lot more freedom to share ideas and express if something is not working."

**Subtheme 2B: Some had some positive views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker but also had distinctly negative views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker**

Some participants expressed that the new supervisor was largely disinterested and ill-prepared for the work however, demonstrated improvement or some effort to improve. P04 stated,

So, I would say to some extent we became a little bit more understanding of the whole problem there and understanding that things will be beyond our relationship issue and it really had to do with the skillset issue of the ultimate person in charge of the organization. So that was my stress level and I became

more stressful. The micromanagement, the fact that I had to report into a person who did not know what I actually did nor could they have understood...was not taking the time. After the promotion the person did take a little bit more understanding but also too they got more exposed to the management leadership style of the CEO and then themselves felt a little lesser in charge there.

P05 stated,

After the promotion, well, he has to try and understand why I do what I do, so I need to bridge that gap. So, I need to explain to him that this is how certain things are done. This is why certain decisions are made. So now, he has to try and engage a bit more in what I do, because he has to make decisions for my department, which is clinical, and it's not something that, I think, he's ever had any interest in, but to be fair to him, I think he did try to understand. It's not that he didn't try to understand, and so the only way to really move things forward is if somebody can understand your perspective and why you want to do something, because of course, when anybody wants to do something, the person wants to know why. And if you can explain to them, I would imagine in a sufficient manner, then they are likely to approve whatever. So, it was a learning point for him, I think, because as I say, I don't think he really ever had any interest in what I did.

Each participant was asked, directly, to express any insights not already discussed that they would like to share on how they would describe their former co-worker's emotions, attitudes, experiences, and perceptions or adjustment in the workplace before

or after the promotion. Participant responses to this query contributed to the emergence of this theme. Participant responses included distaste for their company promoting someone to leadership primarily due to educational credentials without an active succession plan, and a concern for independent and rapid maturation of the promoted coworker to effectively lead in a new industry.

**Subtheme 2C: Some had mostly negative views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker**

Participant's negative views on their perception of the character and actions of their promoted coworker gave rise to this subtheme. Some witnessed their new supervisor under stress and managing that stress in various ways. P03 shared that their new supervisors shifted the responsibility of managing high stress situations onto them and coworkers creating a work overload for them and coworkers. P04 shared that their new supervisor was under stress when responding to complex problems that arose in the workplace however, in many instances, refused their assistance in managing those problems. Relative to stress management, P08 outlined an account they witnessed prior to the promotion of their coworker to their supervisor. P08 stated,

I've seen her cry at her desk. But people handle stress differently than others. I mean, I rarely cry, and I guess for her, maybe that's a release and that helps her. I mean, I don't know. I mean, I, judge crying as weakness, but other people might see it differently. But, I mean, I guess she gets her job done because they promoted her.

One participant mentioned that, before the promotion, they and their coworkers would work together to manage new and complex problems at work. However, after the promotion, their new supervisor expected them to report to them for new and complex problems yet, refused to get involved with addressing any challenging environmental conditions or physical challenges at work that they also all faced before the promotion. Another participant expressed a suspicion of sexism in decision making with their new supervisor. P07 shared,

They received some money and you can do good research about without having money... Read the journals to find that. And so, space was given in another...

Space was allocated from another resource for this particular individual to utilize for research purposes. In fact, I think it's a sexist issue behind that allocation of space. I can't prove it, but it seems like it's an underlying sexist issue. Sometimes in allocation of storage or storage space and possibly research space also.

P08 expressed distrust of their new supervisor, citing the new supervisor “plays the office politics” and is untrustworthy. P08 shared,

I noticed she plays the office politics more than I do, and I can tell that she's one of those people that'll smile to your face, but you can tell that it's a fake smile. So, I mean, those were my observations. And she hasn't changed that personality. I mean, that's just who she is since becoming a supervisor. Some people could say that she's just fake, but I don't know. She obviously did something right to get promoted.

P08 further stated,

Actually, I have a coworker who left, and she showed me some texts that the supervisor sent her about me, and it's like she'll say something to my face, but then to the coworker, she was saying something else. I had already had a gut feeling that I couldn't trust her as a person. She might do her job well, but I mean, it's not someone I would want as a friend. And once I saw those texts, I'm like, "Oh, okay. So, she talks crap about me behind my back." So that left a bad taste in my mouth. But I mean, I'll still work with her and do my job, but it just reinforced my gut instinct that it wasn't someone I could trust.

Theme three “causes of and responses to stress for coworker and supervisor (including crisis, complex, unexpected situations, COVID)” addresses research questions one and two.

### **Research Question 1**

How do noncompetitive employees adapt to an internal promotion of a co-worker to become their supervisor?

### **Research Question 2**

How do noncompetitive employees describe the new supervisor's adaptation to their promotion from co-worker to the noncompetitive employees' supervisor?

***Theme 3: Causes of and responses to stress for coworker and supervisor (including crisis, complex, unexpected situations, and COVID)***

Theme three emerged from what participants shared about their own and their supervisors' responses, primarily to stress. In particular, stress in response to crisis situations, complex problems, unexpected circumstances, and COVID-19. All but one

participant shared their own or their promoted coworker's cause of or response to stress at work. Many stress related issues for participants and the new supervisor were centered on employee scheduling. Most participants cited improvements with scheduling concerns following the promotion. Although one participant shared that their new supervisor passed stressful tasks to them and coworkers to manage, most participants expressed that they or their supervisor managed their stress independently even, at times, when offered assistance to manage the stress (i.e., aid offered to the supervisor by the subordinate). P07 shared,

I could just tell that they were under some stress. And here again, I just made a comment, "If there's anything I can do to help, let me know." And most times, sometimes it was taken advantage of, but most times it was not.

P07 shared that their supervisor was stressed before and after the promotion in handling emergency situations and complex problems. P09 outlined the high stress circumstances that are constant and continuous in their own and their new supervisor's work tasks. P09 stated,

Being in the human resources profession, I work with very demanding leaders, associates and vendors. I constantly and consistently work in stressful situations from firing employees, massive layoffs, pay reductions, employee deaths, aggressive and hostile customer situations are a part of my experiences. [My supervisor is] now dealing with similar situations, on a regional level, just not local.



All participant responses were reflective of accounts of experiences within the last 24 months. During this time frame, a pandemic has been active. This global disease outbreak of COVID-19 affected participant and supervisor workplace experiences. Half of the participants, five of the 10 participants, mentioned the impact of COVID-19 on their own or their promoted coworker's work life, particularly their work stress. P05 explained that they made concerted efforts to foster good communication and a successful relationship with their new supervisor "for the survival of the company" particularly during the pandemic. P04 stated,

After the promotion, everything became stressful. Everything became stressful because you now had COVID coming in. So, it became stressful for every manager, every employee, everything on the whole. What I have to keep bringing to the front over here is that post-promotion, COVID stepped in for everyone.

P10 shared,

So, we have a process where we do work on communications for COVID related information. And last year, as this started to hit, we worked with our development team to say, "Hey, some of this stuff is very time sensitive. People are scared.

COVID is a pandemic. We want to make sure that we're giving people the information that they need, right away. Can we work together on some sort of prioritization, that anything that's like COVID related gets priority, and it's something that we can put up on the site right away.

So, that was something that we worked with our development team. To put in place for urgent requests, and those urgent requests or critical requests really have

to be COVID related. They have to be legal related. So, if there's something on the site that is not correct, that we're misrepresenting? Well, that's something that's considered critical. So, it has a 24-hour turnaround. Yeah, I mean, that's pretty much all the COVID stuff that we worked on. So, we had to put up information around coverage and communications. Yeah, so I mean, I don't know, it's all a blur from last year. It was like every other day was an urgent thing. So, I would say, probably out of my workflow of working on regular content versus COVID stuff, I would say, because my boss actually even asked me in the height of it, when it was March, April, May, June, July, even August. Probably 30% of my job was COVID updates. Because it was just moving so quickly.

P05 shared,

What has happened with COVID and I think job security, and depending on a person's age, this would not be a very good time to be out of work. A lot of people are out of work, and it comes down to those who are just willing to say nothing but praise the individuals at the top. It's almost like sucking up. It's not a nice way, but that is what it is, because they will do anything to keep their job. So, whether they disagree or not, they're not saying. There are those members of the team. They are not saying whatever. They say, "Great idea. Great job. Way to go."

### **Summary**

Regarding research question one that addresses how noncompetitive employees adapted to the internal promotion of a coworker who then became their supervisor, the findings revealed that the noncompetitive employees' adaptation varied. Most

participants adapted well to the promotion, six of the 10. Some of these participants shared that the promotion afforded them new training opportunities, a more accommodating supervisor, a more relaxed work schedule, and more opportunities to experiment and express ideas. The remaining four participants adapted poorly or were not fully adapted to the promotion. Some shared that the promotion resulted in elevated stress at work, heavier workloads, being faced with sexism and ageism, and having less autonomy.

Regarding research two that addresses how noncompetitive employees described their new supervisor's adaptation to their promotion from co-worker to their supervisor, the findings revealed that the noncompetitive employees had mixed views about the adaptation of their promoted coworker. Participants discussed the character and actions of their promoted coworker revealing their perception of the adaptation of their promoted coworker. The following three emerging subthemes illuminated the divide in the participants' views about the adaptation of their promoted coworker. Most had mostly positive views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker, some had some positive views but also had distinctly negative views, while others had mostly negative views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker.

Lastly, findings revealed that, for research question one and research question two, many of the participants needed to make or were required to make hurried and stressful adjustments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Half of the participants, five of the 10, cited aspects of addressing this need, including prioritizing the COVID-19 pandemic response over other crises, complex and unexpected situations. Although

participants, in their responses, were able to separate the quality of the urgency and stress of the COVID-19 pandemic response from other crises, complex and unexpected situations, the COVID-19 pandemic response helped to define how they adapted to their promoted coworker and their perception of how their promoted coworker adapted. In the next chapter I have discussed the interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, and implications.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore noncompetitive employees' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes following an internal promotion of a colleague who then became the employee's supervisor to determine how the noncompetitive employees describe their adaptation to the promotion and their supervisor's adaptation to the promotion. Research literature examines the influence of internal promotions by focusing on competitive non-promoted internal candidates' reactions and the reactions of the promoted individual (Dlugos & Keller, 2021; Wang et al., 2019; Truxillo et al., 2018; Truxillo et al., 2017; Harold et al., 2016). However, lacking in the research literature is an understanding of the experiences of the noncompetitive employee following an internal promotion. I applied the generic qualitative research strategy in this study to inductively determine themes in the research data. Research data were collected through written and audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with 10 noncompetitive employees. Through open-ended interview questions, I examined the self-reported descriptions and perceptions of employees who could divulge direct information on what was experienced in a full-time work environment where their co-worker became their supervisor.

The results of this study indicated that most noncompetitive employees believed that they adapted well to their coworker's promotion and most also believed that their new supervisor adapted well to the promotion. The following themes illuminated these findings: (a) Theme 1: Noncompetitive employees variously adapted to coworker promotion to supervisor; Subtheme 1A: Most had good adaptation to the promotion,

Subtheme 1B: Some had poor adaptation to the promotion or were not fully adapted, (b) Theme 2: Noncompetitive employees had mixed views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker, Subtheme 2A: Most had mostly positive views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker, Subtheme 2B: Some had some positive views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker but also had distinctly negative views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker, Subtheme 2C: Some had mostly negative views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker, (c) Theme 3: Causes of and responses to stress for coworker and supervisor (including crisis, complex, unexpected situations, COVID).

In this chapter, I have discussed the concluding details of the study. This chapter consists of six sections including, the current introduction. In the next section, I discussed the interpretation of the findings. In the third and fourth sections, I described the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research. In the fifth section, I addressed implications for social change. Lastly, I provided the conclusion of the study.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

Delineated in the research are behavioral and experiential outcomes related to promotions. Researchers have detailed the potential promotions have to, in part, affect employee organizational commitment, emotional reactions, work-related attitudes, and perceptions including perceptions of fairness, and employee turnover as the promoted individual and the subordinates who support them adapt to this organizational change (Hadidjaja et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019; Sirola & Pitesa, 2018; Gevrek et al., 2017; Terblanche et al., 2017). This study provided insight into noncompetitive employees'

workplace adaptive performance and that of their promoted coworker. In this section, I have discussed the themes that emerged from the research data and how these themes support, confirm, and extend existing scholarly knowledge highlighted in Chapter 2.

### **Noncompetitive employees variously adapted to coworker promotion to supervisor**

Within the findings represented by this first theme, participants cited myriad individual favorable and unfavorable workplace outcomes along with positive and negative perspectives following the promotion of their coworker. Some participants' outcomes were heightened following the promotion of their coworker while other outcomes appeared to be a direct consequence of the promotion. The features of the participants' adjustment to the promotion resulted in a divide of good adaptation, and poor and partial adaptation among them.

Most had good adaptation to the promotion which is the first subtheme. Participants emphasized improvement in communication with their new supervisor. One participant detailed how their new supervisor listened and communicated better after the promotion as they established a "buddy system" where they would hold each other accountable when there appeared to be gaps in communication and processes. The participant also believed that this exchange helped the promoted coworker better understand their role and function within the organization. This exchange confirms revelation from the historical Hawthorne studies which, revealed the importance of such interpersonal exchanges between supervisor and employee (Muldoon, 2017), and likewise this approach confirms an aspect of the Post-Fordist school of thought which

states that social influences can incite employees to conform to desired behaviors in the workplace (Farrukh et al., 2021; Park & Conroy, 2020).

Two participants described enhanced learning experiences that allowed them to train within the same learning group as their supervisor. One of the two expressed that the shared exposure so this training helped them trust their supervisor more as they can better believe their supervisor's accounts of what is taking place in the organization. P01 believed that fewer unexpected scheduling conflicts were a direct consequence of the promotion of their coworker to their supervisor. This change, they believed, resulted in a balanced schedule of employees being staffed which, prevented calls to work and reduced annoyances while on leave from work.

Some participants did not adapt well or did not fully adapt to their coworker's promotion which, is the second subtheme. Participants expressed that they either experienced disassociation from their supervisor or they disassociated from their supervisor. One participant repeatedly shared that their supervisor avoided them and their coworkers leaving them to manage a significant amount of the work tasks and responsibilities. This participant shared that they were overloaded with work as a consequence. The participant appeared to have had less interest in satisfying work tasks which, confirms Wayne et al.'s (2017) position that interpersonal exchange has influences on, not only, group processes but on job success and individual behavior as well.

Another participant questioned the fairness of the promotion decision. Although the participant expressed that their new supervisor appeared to be getting better over



time, the participant felt they were not being recognized for their contributions by their supervisor, who they did not perceive as being among the “star players” and, therefore, detached in their workplace engagement and activity. This confirms Rubel and Kee’s (2015) position that hiring decisions that are viewed as fair allow employees to better accept and adapt to the organizational change.

### **Noncompetitive employees had mixed views about the adaptation of the promoted coworker**

The participants’ perceptions of their new supervisor’s adaptation varied. One participant had essentially no unfavorable expressions of their view of their new supervisor, others held both favorable and unfavorable views along with notably negative views, while others’ expressions were dominated by negative views. The first subtheme revealed that most participants had mostly positive views about the adaptation of their promoted coworker. One participant overwhelmingly expressed positive views of their supervisor and their work experience. The participant experienced positive engagement and positive observations of their supervisor’s character and actions before and after the promotion. The participant described their new supervisor as “very warm”, “kind”, “accommodative”, and “committed to her job”. This participant’s experience is consistent with Erdogan and Bauer’s (2015) contention that the higher the quality of the relationship between leaders and followers, the more effective the leader will be. Other participants’ influence upon the promoted coworker appeared to also influence the participants’ positive outlook on the promoted coworker’s character and actions. These participants noted that their new supervisor improved their department overall while simultaneously

inviting them to share their ideas. The other participant shared that their new supervisor worked alongside them to generate new ideas and to solve problems. Another participant reflected on how they taught their promoted coworker aspects of the business as the promoted was new to their particular industry. Accordingly, these participants perceived their new boss to be successful in these areas which is consistent with Manzoni and Barsoux's (2009) position that subordinates have an influence on supervisors to be successful leaders.

Some participants had some positive views about the adaptation of their promoted coworker but also had distinctly negative views about the adaptation of their promoted coworker which is the second subtheme. One participant believed their new supervisor to be competent in their former industry but uninformed and rather incompetent and ill-prepared in the new industry in which they were promoted. This participant perceived the new supervisor as one who devalued them and was a micromanager. Another participant perceived their new supervisor to be "immature", "spoiled", and "self-centered" however, they did not believe this disposition impacted their new supervisor's job performance. The participant perceived the promoted coworker's job performance to be passable at times but believed that their new supervisor's experience might have been different, better if they had been promoted under the organization's previous leadership. These participants' expressions disconfirm Berger's (2020) position that promotions boost employee morale but their expressions are consistent with Terblanche et al.'s (2017) declaration that complex outcomes are incited

as the promoted individual, and those who support them, face the promoted individual's transition into their new role.

Some participants also had mostly negative views about the adaptation of their promoted coworker which is the third subtheme. Participants cited that their supervisor did not appear to learn new tasks following the promotion, avoided important responsibilities, was influenced by sexism in their decision-making, was "fake" and played office politics, could not be trusted, and made concerted efforts to interact more with executives than with former coworkers. Khan and Malik (2017) noted that when relationships differ among employees within an organizational group, in-groups and out-groups can ensue. In these cases, Brimhall et al.'s (2016) position is confirmed as they contested that low-quality relationships between leaders and followers where mutual trust is low, followers are inclined to perceive themselves to be unimportant or in the out-group.

**Causes of and responses to stress for coworker and supervisor (including crisis, complex, unexpected situations, and COVID)**

Some of the participants mentioned the stressful burden of scheduling conflicts that erupted with disturbances in their time off of work due to being called into work unexpectedly. However, one participant stated that bonding with their new supervisor can take place under these circumstances as they have had "shared strife". Most of these participants cited that their promoted coworker resolved scheduling conflicts after the promotion. Confirmed in the literature, repeated and marked social interactions on scheduling conflicts, for example, before and after the promotion appears to have led to

the needs of the subordinates being met by the new supervisor (Martin et al., 2018; Brimhall et al., 2016; Erdogan & Bauer, 2015).

Because all participants' accounts took place during the current COVID-19 pandemic, many responses related to crisis situations, complex problems, and unexpected situations were related to the pandemic or taking place because of the pandemic. One participant reflected on the incidents of a change of the CEO within their organization, acquiring a new supervisor who was previously a coworker, and the global outbreak of COVID-19 occurring with weeks of each other. Though some circumstances participants noted surrounding the pandemic were stressful in their complexity, some participants expressed how they were encouraged or encouraged each other, including their supervisor, to work together to complete the unanticipated tasks required. Some participants reflected on the success of many of these tasks despite some of the same participants having expressed perceived ill-preparedness in their promoted coworker. One participant expressed that they did, indeed, make efforts to improve communication to better manage the demands of the pandemic.

Five of the 10 participants reflected on the influence of the pandemic. Most of these participants reflected on their personal responses with little notable discussion on specific responses from their supervisors. These responses suggest that the new supervisors had certain strengths under which they operated in these situations. These responses from participants confirm Tremblay and Tremblay's (2012) position that each organization has a culture that reflects the historical perspective on employee selection that focuses on intellect and technical skills or a contemporary perspective that focuses

on the balance of intellect, technical skills, and interpersonal exchanges. It appears that the latter focus might have been at play on the selection of these five participants' supervisors as the supervisors appeared to allot the participants the freedom to perform in a manner necessary to address the unexpected circumstances.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The LMX served as the theoretical framework for this study. The theory recognizes that: leaders typically treat different followers in different ways and subordinates are more likely to support their leaders when they are supported by their leaders and subordinates are more likely to provide their leaders with access to information and training when they have been provided with access to information and training (Marstand et al., 2017; Sepdiningtyas & Santoso, 2017; Manzoni & Barsoux, 2009). The theoretical framework supports participants accounts of teaching their promoted coworker about the new work industry that they were entering when they recognized the new supervisor's willingness to learn about their particular department and participants accounts of working as a team when their supervisor provided adequate staff, time, and resources to complete the tasks.

Additionally, Khan and Malik (2017) mentioned a concept where employees within a particular organizational group can experience a different quality of the leader-follower relationship than other employees; this concept is referred to as LMX differentiation where in-groups and out-groups might be formed. Participants' claims were supported by the concept of LMX differentiation in that some participants detached or developed distrust to varying degrees when they believed their relationship with their

new supervisor was being influenced by sexism or separation due to the supervisor playing office politics with executive employees while neglecting subordinates. Hsiung and Bolino (2018) also contended that the LMX can have negative effects in that the leader-member exchange can be weakened by perceived leader favoritism toward other employees. Participants in the study supported this LMX claim as one participant felt they were being devalued and not recognized while others, who were not giving as much effort, were being acknowledged.

Erdogan and Bauer (2015) also noted that the quality of the relationship between leaders and followers determines leadership effectiveness. This study confirms Erdogan's and Bauer's (2015) claim as most participants described their engagement with their new supervisor positively while also citing positive supervisor leadership styles and characteristics. Additionally, participants expressed many of the same descriptive words in addressing their engagement with their supervisor as they did in expressing their perception of their supervisor's performance whether positive or negative. Consequently, the participants of this study also support Manzoni's and Barsoux's (2009) claim that subordinates have an influence on bosses to be unsuccessful or successful.

The findings also provide support for Yang et al.'s (2020) claim that employees with high levels of career adaptability are also more adept at developing high-quality relationships with their supervisors as most participants in this study believed they adapted well to their coworker's promotion and some credited that positive adjustment and subsequent good relationship to their initiation of improved communication, acting as a peacemaker for employee conflicts, and assistance to and providing training for their

new supervisor. These findings further assert the LMX as having meaningful attributes that underscore demonstrations of interpersonal adaptability and reciprocal relationships consisting of trust and relevant training (Marstand et al., 2017; Sepdiningtyas & Santoso, 2017; Pulakos et al., 2000).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Pulakos et al.'s (2000) eight-dimensional taxonomy of adaptive performance served as the conceptual framework for this study. The eight dimensions are handling emergencies or crisis situations, handling work stress, solving problems creatively, dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations, learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures, demonstrating interpersonal adaptability, demonstrating cultural adaptability and, demonstrating physically oriented adaptability. The eight dimensions or constructs appear to reflect the adaptive performance needs for many different job types (Pulakos et al., 2000). In the development of the eight-dimensional taxonomy of adaptive performance, Pulakos et al. (2000) examined 21 varieties of jobs where individuals had been employed for at least six months. According to Pulakos et al. (2000), how well employees realize the dimensions is an indication of their workplace adaptive performance. This current study supports Pulakos et al.'s (2000) claim as the participants in this study, in response to their coworker being promoted to be their supervisor, adapted well and adapted poorly.

Most of the participants adapted well to the promotion as these participants realized most of the dimensions as defined by Pulakos et al. (2000). All participants who adapted well to the promotion provided mostly positive responses on each of the eight

dimensions and overwhelmingly expressed positive experiences on many of the characteristics in the dimension definitions. The remaining participants adapted poorly or were not fully adapted. These remaining participants also realized most of the dimensions however, they often provided a combination of negative and positive responses on each of the eight dimensions and expressed mostly negative experiences on many of the characteristics in the dimension definitions.

Most participants believed their new supervisor adapted well to the promotion. Participants who believed their new supervisor adapted well to the promotion provided mostly positive responses on each of the eight dimensions and expressed some positive perceptions on many of the characteristics in the dimension definitions. Other participants also believed their new supervisor adapted well to the promotion citing positive perceptions on each of the eight dimensions and expressed some positive perceptions but also some distinctly negative perceptions on some of the characteristics in the dimension definitions. The remaining participants believed their new supervisor adapted poorly to the promotion noting mostly negative responses on each of the eight dimensions and expressed some negative perceptions on many of the characteristics in the dimension definitions. The application of the eight-dimensional taxonomy of adaptive performance was expanded in this study as the research questions and interview questions were established on the premise of this taxonomy.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The first limitation of the current study was the limited demographic information collected on participants. Knowledge such as gender and industry may have been useful



in having a better understanding of the participants' background toward transferability of the findings. The second limitation was the assumption that participant responses would be accurate and forthright. I established a rapport with participants by initiating small talk and answering any of their questions prior to the interview to motivate each participant to share rich, open, and honest responses. Two of the participants were known to me which, yielded another limitation. However, I was unaware of the participants' workplace dynamics or experiences on this topic therefore, the participants were free to express their views regarding the topic based on their experiences in their respective organizations. Another limitation was related to the recording methods used. Utilizing different recording methods may have influenced data collection or participant responses as the data for this study were captured in written form and via audio-recording. Although the different methods of collecting data gave participants interview options from which to choose, data collected from audio-recorded interviews were more extensive whereas data collected from written interviews contained greater brevity as participant responses were more directly targeted to the particular question due to limited digression. Lastly, I have a connection to the phenomenon that was under study which, may have impacted my interpretation of the data as I have been aware of a few instances within my organization where a coworker was promoted to become a noncompetitive employee's supervisor however, I was not privy to any subsequent interplay among them. Researcher reflexivity, bracketing, and data analysis software were used to help me mitigate any biased views about how results unfolded.

## **Recommendations**

The results of this study underscored a primary focus on noncompetitive employees from various industries, self-reported adaptation, and perceived adaptation of their promoted coworker. Although knowledge was gained from the noncompetitive employees about their industry, their specific industry was unknown. Expanding the research to distinguish industries could streamline the noncompetitive employees' accounts to highlight diversity or similarity across industries. Likewise, knowledge of the noncompetitive employees' gender or gender identity could offer explanations on how adaptation experiences might compare among genders and gender identities. A recurring incident emerged from the data as some participants expressed that they had experienced having a coworker promoted to be their supervisor on more than one occasion. Research could be conducted to determine if the noncompetitive employees' experiences and perceptions are similar or different when comparing one promotion to another.

Most research surrounding this topic focuses on the reactions of the competitive employees who were not promoted and the reactions of the promoted individual. The community of researchers might also be interested in comparing the results of this study to the self-reported adaptation of the competitive employee and their perceived adaptation of their promoted coworker. Researchers might also compare the self-reported adaptation of the promoted individual and their perceived adaptation of their subordinates as the current research findings confirm that, within the phenomenon under study, the noncompetitive subordinate-supervisor relationship is reciprocal in nature.

### **Implications**

The results of this study can promote positive social change by drawing attention to the role, experience, and contribution of the subordinate within an organization. Numerous studies focus on the experience and contribution of the internally promoted individual in a supervisory role; however, the roles and experiences of subordinates within organizations where internal promotions are occurring have not been equally present in the research literature. In the current study, organizational subordinates in a non-competing role toward a promotion opportunity to supervisor had the opportunity to share their experiences, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes regarding their adaptation to an internal promotion of their coworker to become their supervisor. The results of this study provided an in-depth understanding of how noncompetitive subordinates adapt and perceive workplace adaptation after an internal promotion.

Principally, this study can bring needed awareness to human resources departments, executive leaders, and policymakers on the phenomenon that was under study. The results, for example, showed that the noncompetitive subordinates provided unstructured training to their new supervisors and had thoughts around why they made that choice. At the employee level, this study could incite the promoted coworker to consider not only what training they can provide their subordinates but what training they can gain from the subordinates. Evident in the results was that many noncompetitive subordinates filled in the gaps on workplace responsibilities for their supervisor or perceived that they were expected to fill in the gaps. Toward another step for positive social change, at the organizational level, the results of this study could encourage leaders

and policymakers to consider flaws that might exist in the internal labor market and promotion procedures, and how the role and influence of noncompetitive subordinates might inform supervisor success.

### **Conclusion**

Noncompetitive subordinate employees are essential to the success of any organization. This qualitative study explored the descriptive and perceptive accounts of noncompetitive subordinate employees' adaptive performance and that of their promoted coworker who becomes their supervisor. Using the generic qualitative research strategy, insightful participant responses revealed that though noncompetitive subordinate employees' experiences and perceptions on adaptive performance were diverse and wide-ranging, the noncompetitive subordinate employees were overwhelmingly inclined to make attempts to bring matters to the desired end. The core of Pulakos et. al.'s (2000) characterization of adaptive performance is encapsulated by the previous statement.

A reciprocal relationship is inherent when new organizational relationships arise (Marstand et al., 2017; Sepdiningtyas & Santoso, 2017); however, the voice and experience of the subordinate employee are generally absent in response to these relationships. Therefore, the narrative of the noncompetitive subordinate employee is confirmed to be essential in gaining new knowledge on promotion reactions within organizations. The essence of the adaptive performance for subordinates and supervisors, in this study, was captured in P05's statement, "You try and do the best for the company and move forward. You have to find a way forward. So, you share your thoughts and you make your explanations, but you're able to move forward." The current study revealed

that when most participants, noncompetitive subordinate employees, encountered a promoted coworker who then became their supervisor they adapted well and believed their new supervisor adapted well. To qualify how this conclusion transpired is important to strengthen the awareness of the role of the noncompetitive subordinate employee.

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## Appendix A: Interview Questions

1A. Can you tell me if you learned new work tasks, technologies, and procedures at work before and/or after the promotion of your co-worker to your supervisor? Please explain how.

1B. Can you tell me if your new supervisor learned new work tasks, technologies, and procedures at work before and/or after they were promoted to become your supervisor? Please explain how.

2A. Can you tell me if you showed flexibility to understand your former co-worker's and your other co-workers' viewpoints and opinions at work before and/or after the promotion of your co-worker to your supervisor? Please explain how.

2B. Can you tell me if your new supervisor showed flexibility to understand your and your other co-workers' viewpoints and opinions at work before and/or after they were promoted to become your supervisor? Please explain how.

3A. Can you tell me if you worked with people or teams from other cultures, nationalities, or organizations before and/or after the promotion of your co-worker to your supervisor? Please explain how.

3B. Can you tell me if your new supervisor worked with people or teams from other cultures, nationalities, or organizations before and/or after they were promoted to become your supervisor? Please explain how.

4A. Can you tell me if you managed highly demanding or highly stressful situations at work before and/or after the promotion of your co-worker to your supervisor? Please explain how.

4B. Can you tell me if your new supervisor managed highly demanding or highly stressful situations at work before and/or after they were promoted to become your supervisor? Please explain how.

5A. Can you tell me if you handled emergency or crisis situations at work before and/or after the promotion of your co-worker to your supervisor? Please explain how.

5B. Can you tell me if your new supervisor handled emergency or crisis situations at work before and/or after they were promoted to become your supervisor? Please explain how.

6A. Can you tell me if you responded to new or very complex problems at work before and/or after the promotion of your co-worker to your supervisor? Please explain how.

6B. Can you tell me if your new supervisor responded to new or very complex problems at work before and/or after they were promoted to become your supervisor? Please explain how.

7A. Can you tell me if you managed uncertain or unexpected circumstances at work before and/or after the promotion of your co-worker to your supervisor? Please explain how.

7B. Can you tell me if your new supervisor managed uncertain or unexpected circumstances at work before and/or after they were promoted to become your supervisor? Please explain how.

8A. Can you tell me if you responded to challenging environmental conditions or physical challenges at work before and/or after the promotion of your co-worker to your supervisor? Please explain how.

8B. Can you tell me if your new supervisor responded to challenging environmental conditions or physical challenges at work before and/or after they were promoted to become your supervisor? Please explain how.

9. Are there any additional insights you would like to share on how you would describe your emotions, attitudes, experiences, and perceptions or adjustment in the workplace before or after your former co-worker became your supervisor within your organization?

10. Are there any additional insights you would like to share on how you would describe your former co-worker's emotions, attitudes, experiences, and perceptions or adjustment in the workplace before or after they became your supervisor within your organization?