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Capacity-Building Strategies Leaders of Nonprofit Organizations Use to Improve Performance

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Capacity-Building Strategies Leaders of Nonprofit Organizations Use to Improve

Performance

by

Ashley Williams

MCRP, Kansas State University, 2009

B. ARCH, Kansas State University, 2007

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

March 2022

Abstract

Capacity-building strategies to improve nonprofit organizational performance are essential, as 60% of nonprofit organizations are experiencing increased service demands while struggling to maintain adequate operational funds and fulfill their mission. Leaders of nonprofit organizations who fail to implement capacity-building strategies risk their organization's ability to adapt, maintain solvency and relevance. Grounded in the strategic agility framework, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies leaders of nonprofit organizations implemented to build capacity and positively impact organizational performance. The participants comprised four leaders of nonprofit organizations in Texas who successfully used strategies to improve growth, capacity, and funding performance. Data were collected from semistructured interviews, organizational websites, financial statements, strategic plans, annual reports, sustainability reports, by-laws, and organizational brochures. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings yielded themes of developing a culture focused on relationships, maintaining a strategic response based on the adopted vision, practicing open communication, and conducting industry-specific research and learning. A key recommendation is for leaders of nonprofit organizations to collaborate and work in partnership to share information, best practices, and learn from each other to grow capacity. The implications for positive social change include the potential to enable organizations to provide services not met by for-profit businesses or government agencies, ultimately benefiting communities.

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Dedication

      I dedicate this doctoral study to my family, who supported me throughout this process and were my greatest champions. I am grateful for my husband and sons, who encouraged me along this journey, sacrificing time and giving me space to work and pursue my dream. I am also thankful for my mother-in-law, who would always watch my sons so that I could work and continually urged me to keep moving forward. Finally, my parents, who always believe in me, are there to help and are the reason I continue to pursue learning opportunities. Without my family, this would not have been possible; thank you for pushing me and supporting me.

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I want to thank Dr. Mike Gottleib, my chair, for his guidance and support while completing my doctoral study. His constant encouragement, mentorship, and honesty are greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank my second committee member, Dr. Betsy Macht, for her time spent reviewing my study and providing feedback for improvement. Thank you to Dr. Robert Banasik for serving as the university research reviewer and providing guidance. I also want to acknowledge the peers you have helped along the way, providing perspective and input that has been helpful. Finally, thank you to the participants of my study for allowing me the opportunity to glean valuable insights and strategies and for your time to help me complete this process.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

Nonprofit organizations provide valuable services and employment opportunities in the United States, serving as an essential sector of society. Nonprofit organizations represent 10.2% of private-sector employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). Even though nonprofit organizations provide needed services and employment opportunities, many organizations struggle to maintain adequate operational funds and fulfill missions due to a lack of organizational capacity. Therefore, nonprofit organizations are under pressure to perform at high operating capacity while not having the proper skills to achieve outcomes (Carvalho et al., 2016; Walters, 2020).

Nonprofit organizations are required to address issues that are different from those encountered in the for-profit sector. Over the past 2 decades, the demand placed on nonprofit leadership positions has increased, even though nonprofit leaders report an inability to address the increases (Schatteman & Waymire, 2017). In many cases, nonprofit leaders require different capacity skills to address service needs and achieve strategic goals (Bish & Becker, 2016; Xiaodong et al., 2017). One option to address capacity is through the implementation of capacity-building programs. However, there is not a clear understanding of which capacity-building strategies positively impact performance (Andersson et al., 2016). By understanding capacity-building strategies, organizations can learn to adapt to change and expand their ability to innovate and improve practices for better performance (AbouAssi et al., 2019).

Problem Statement

Many leaders of nonprofit organizations lack effective capacity-building strategies to meet organizational mission and growth goals (Xiaodong et al., 2017), which can lead to organizational failure and insolvency (Mitchell & Calabrese, 2019). According to a 2016 survey of 229 registered U.S. nonprofits, 60% of nonprofit organizations are experiencing increased service demands, requiring nonprofit organizations to focus on expanding service capacity to meet the demand (Kim & Peng, 2018). The general business problem was that the lack of capacity-building strategies negatively affects the ability of nonprofit organizations to grow and remain solvent. The specific business problem was that some leaders of nonprofit organizations lack strategies to build capacity to improve growth and funding performance.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore capacity-building strategies used by leaders of nonprofit organizations to improve growth and funding performance. The target population consisted of four leaders of distinct nonprofit organizations in Texas, who have implemented successful capacity-building strategies to improve growth and funding stability. The implications for positive social change include the potential for nonprofit leaders to implement capacity-building strategies that lead to sustainable financial solvency. Solvent organizations are better positioned to serve their communities through improved operational efficiencies in the provision of goods and services.

Nature of the Study

Three methods of research are available for researchers: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. Qualitative studies focus on applied and theoretical findings identified from field study research, leading to a subjective understanding, meaning, and insights (Fusch et al., 2018). Therefore, the qualitative method was the best fit for this study because I could obtain rich data on participants' experience and evaluate the responses from interview questions and other types of data to subjectively understand successful strategies. The quantitative method is appropriate for studies that evaluate relationships among variables through the gathering and assessment of measurable data, leading to an objective understanding (Park & Park, 2016). The mixed method includes both quantitative and qualitative methods, and requires the collection of extensive data and analysis, making it very time-consuming. Neither quantitative nor the quantitative portions of mixed methods were appropriate for this study because I did not intend to examine the relationships among variables related to the capacity-building strategies of nonprofit leaders.

The qualitative designs I considered for the study were case study, ethnographic, and phenomenological. A qualitative case study design is applicable to explore experiences and scenarios bounded by time and place by gleaning information through interviews, written reports, and published sources (Runfola et al., 2017), and when focusing on "what," "how," and "why" questions (Yates & Leggett, 2016). Furthermore, a multiple case study offers a greater quality of data to assess information through contrast and comparison (Yin, 2014). The ethnographic design is conducted in situ and,

in business populations, is used to explore organizational culture, targeting a specific and delocalized phenomenon (Smets et al., 2014). An ethnographic study was not applicable, as I did not seek to explore organizational culture. Phenomenological researchers focus on identifying and exploring the personal meanings of lived experiences and perceptions of participants (van Manen & van Manen, 2021). A phenomenological design was not fitting as I did not focus on specific perceptions or the meanings of participants' lived experiences. Instead, the most appropriate method to obtain rich data on participants' experiences was to focus on "what," "how," and "why" questions through the use of a multiple case study.

Research Question

What capacity-building strategies do leaders of nonprofit organizations use to improve growth and funding performance?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you use to improve growth and funding performance within your organization?

2. How do you implement and communicate capacity-building strategies to support long-range plans?

3. How does your organization measure the effectiveness of each strategy?

4. What were the key barriers to implementing capacity-building strategies?

5. How did your organization address the key barriers to implementing capacity-building strategies?

6. How have capacity-building strategies benefitted your organization's ability to focus on growth and secure funding sources?

7. What other processes, knowledge, skills, or additional information do you use to support the success of your organization's strategies?

Conceptual Framework

Strategic agility (SA) is the conceptual framework for my study. SA was introduced by Doz and Kosonen (2008) based on the tenets of resource-based theory and dynamic-capabilities theory (Reed, 2021). SA represents a combination of management practices and the ability of organizations to address future needs in a flexible manner (Doz & Kosonen, 2008). In general, as a management theory, SA may be used to assess means or strategies to increase responsiveness and knowledge management within an organization (Arokodare et al., 2019).

SA consists of three metacapabilities: strategic sensitivity, leadership unity, and resource fluidity. Strategic sensitivity involves robust internal and external processes that facilitate sense-making and, in turn, enable awareness and attention. Leadership unity entails how an organization's leaders act swiftly and make concrete decisions without being hindered by politics or personal insecurities. Resource fluidity includes an organization's internal ability to change and redeploy systems and resources to address current and changing needs (Morton et al., 2018). To instill SA, an organization must ensure all metacapabilities are present and active within the organization and must be in balance for SA to improve organizational performance (Doz & Kosonen, 2008). I applied

the SA conceptual framework to facilitate my understanding of how leaders develop and implement capacity-building strategies to improve growth and funding performance.

Operational Definitions

Capacity-building: A strategy to build organizational capacity to improve performance, develop internal processes and structure, and efficiently and effectively provide services (Despard, 2017; Lee, 2020).

Nonprofit capacity: Includes the activities, processes, practices, and persons that nonprofit organizations use to achieve missions and goals, representing the organization's overall ability to perform (Bingle, 2019; Bryan, 2019; Shumate et al., 2017).

Organizational learning: A process of change at individual and collective levels of an organization regarding thought and action, linking cognition and behavior (Megheirkouni, 2017).

Strategic agility: The ability of an organization to source and react to internal and external threats and opportunities in an agile manner, while increasing organizational value (Doz & Kosonen, 2010; Lungu, 2018).

Third sector: Entails the vast number of charities, community groups, voluntary organizations, cooperatives, and social enterprises (Bach-Mortensen & Montgomery, 2018).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

In this section, I present the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations that impacted this study. Through an established research process, researchers can gain and apply perspective and boundaries to overall development and analysis (Reddy &

Bhadauria, 2019). It is also essential for the reader to understand the perspective of the researcher when reviewing the study.

Assumptions

Through the process of research, assumptions are necessary by the researcher to draw reasonable conclusions for an adequate study. Assumptions are beliefs and presumptions that a researcher considers as fact even though they may not be verified, (Leedy et al., 2019). I first assumed that the open-ended interview questions were designed in a manner to best garner the knowledge and experience of participants. Second, I assumed that the participants had the knowledge to answer all of the questions appropriately and honestly. Lastly, I assumed that the methods to gather, document, and analyze the interviews were adequate and would lead to data saturation to address the research question. Data saturation was achieved.

Limitations

Limitations are inherent weaknesses that are present within all studies. Limitations are constraints or influences beyond the control of the researcher (Swank & Lambie, 2016). Limitation issues may be related to underlying theories, study design, replication/generalizability potential, data collection issues and shortcomings in questionnaire design, study setting, population or sample issues, ethical parameters, result interpretations, and overall conclusions (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The first limitation of this study was the use of a qualitative research method, as the small sample size of qualitative studies may limit the transferability of the research findings. The interviews included five leaders of nonprofit organizations, limiting the information

available for this research study. If I interviewed additional leaders, I would have had access to more extensive information, and I would been able to present the findings with added perspectives. The second limitation was the focus on nonprofit trade associations as the population sample. Nonprofit trade associations may operate differently than other nonprofit organizations, limiting the transferability of the findings. The third limitation relates to the geographical area being limited to the state of Texas. The geographic area is a limitation because the results may not be transferable to nonprofit organizations in other areas, and the managerial styles, governance requirements, and operational and financial assistance may differ. Overall, the results of this study may not apply to all leaders of nonprofit organizations or those outside the state of Texas.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the bounds and limits of a study, based on how the researcher defines the scope (Locke et al., 2014). In addition, delimitation issues entail the challenges in addressing limitations, such as acknowledging research shortcomings (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The first delimitation of the study was that participants were constrained to distinct nonprofit leaders in the state of Texas. The second delimitation was that the study was limited to those serving in a director-level role. Based on these two delimitations, the research findings presented may further exclude information from others who may have organizational or industry knowledge on the topic.

Significance of the Study

Nonprofit organizations are a vital part of society and economic development (Mpanza & Mashau, 2019) and are essential in meeting the demands of public needs (Mitchell & Calabrese, 2019). Nearly 80% of nonprofit leaders struggle with basic leadership and management skills to guide nonprofit organizations to efficiency (Meehan & Jonker, 2017). Therefore, it is important to identify successful nonprofit leaders to implement capacity-building strategies that enable leaders of nonprofit organizations to improve growth and funding stability for meeting their stakeholders' needs.

Contribution to Business Practices

The potential findings of this study may highlight effective capacity-building strategies of nonprofit organizations to include improved growth and funding stability, which has a direct effect on the organization remaining solvent and relevant. Contributions from this study may facilitate developing information to benefit nonprofit leaders and other internal and external stakeholders related to structure, processes, and relationships. Overall, the findings may facilitate the effective practice of business by identifying examples of strategies for improving nonprofit management, thereby improving how nonprofit organizations could remain sustainable.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the potential for nonprofit leaders to implement capacity-building strategies that lead to sustainable growth and funding performance. Increased knowledge of management strategies can improve nonprofit organizations' performance and enable them to fulfill organizational missions

and goals that positively benefit society (Dobrai & Farkas, 2016). Nonprofit organizations' ability to meet their mission ultimately benefits communities by enabling the organization to provide services not met by for-profit businesses or government agencies. Therefore, this study may help leaders of nonprofit organizations benefit communities through improved operational efficiencies that can increase the capacity to provide services to meet the established mission and goals for benefiting communities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore capacity-building strategies used by leaders of nonprofit organizations to improve performance. In the review of literature, I focused on professional and academic literature, using peer-reviewed sources published within the past 5 years, with a smaller number of articles that were older than 5 years or scholarly but not peer-reviewed. I located literature using the following keyword search terms: *capacity-building*, *nonprofit organizations*, *nonprofit management/leadership*, *nonprofit financial management*, *nonprofit growth*, *nonprofit performance*, *nonprofit development*, *nonprofit diversification*, *nonprofit strategic planning*, *organizational capability*, *organizational change*, *organizational culture*, *engagement*, and *organizational learning*. The initial search started with the Walden University Library and Google Scholar and continued using academic databases, such as ProQuest, EBSCOhost, and Sage Journals. Through the review, I focused on a cross-section of existing literature relating to current trends, opinions, and findings on capacity-building strategies within nonprofit organizations to improve performance. The literature review consisted of 90 peer-reviewed articles published between 2018 and 2022 and 29

published in 2017 or earlier. The percentage of peer-reviewed articles included in the

literature review published within 5 years of my anticipated graduation in 2022 was 76%.

The relative statistics for the entire study are 226 peer-reviewed articles (95% of total)

and 166 published between 2018 and 2022 (69% of total).

In this review, I provide an overview of the chosen conceptual framework, SA. I

also discuss other conceptual frameworks considered for application within this study,

including systems theory, dynamic capability, human capital theory, and contingency

theory. Following the exploration of theories, I present information on the characteristics

of nonprofit organizations, including organizational capacity, leadership characteristics to

build capacity, the impact of organizational culture on building capacity, and

organizational learning, as well as nonprofit organizational performance and

sustainability-related to growth and funding.

Conceptual Framework – SA

SA is a combination of strategic management practices and processes, focusing on

an organization's ability to address future needs. In general, SA represents an

organization's capacity to swiftly, rapidly, and systematically manage or handle strategic

core needs to create value and survive (Doz & Kosonen, 2008). A distinction of SA from

other strategic management theories is that SA involves an organization's capacity to

develop a flexible strategic process for redirecting or reinventing an organization, often in

a volatile environment, without impeding forward progress (Cunha et al., 2020).

Furthermore, SA is adopted to implement well-grounded changes as quickly as needed

within an organization (Khaddam, 2020). Therefore, even though SA is similar to other

strategic management practices, it differs as it relates to an organization's ability to change while maintaining its strategic core.

SA is critical to an organization's survival, as an agile organization can boost its innovation, increase its competitive advantage, and endure change. Organizations may identify key agility strengths specific to their organization that may assist them in developing SA to take action to improve performance (Lungu, 2018; Nejatian et al., 2019). Specifically, to enhance SA, organizations must focus on their ability to gain and use knowledge, mitigate negative influence, and proactively transform (Bigley, 2018; Kale et al., 2019). Additionally, SA may be used to assess an organization's means or strategies to increase responsiveness in times of distress, stagnation, and transition, as well as address knowledge management within an organization (Arokodare et al., 2019). The impact of an organization's ability to proactively respond to change is shown in Figure 1, indicating that an agile organization must be able to implement complex systems in reaction to change quickly. Overall, SA is a set of capacities used by organizations to navigate change due to internal and external factors.

Doz and Kosonen (2008) introduced the current interpretation of SA based on the tenets of resource-based theory and dynamic-capabilities theory (Reed, 2021). SA has been discussed for more than 20 years, addressing the vagueness of other strategic managerial practices, to include strategic planning, resource-based view, and sustainability competitive advantage. There is no single agreed-upon definition of SA (Morton et al., 2018); however, SA comprises flexible capacities, including an

Figure 1

Organization's Response to Change Through the Use of Strategic Agility
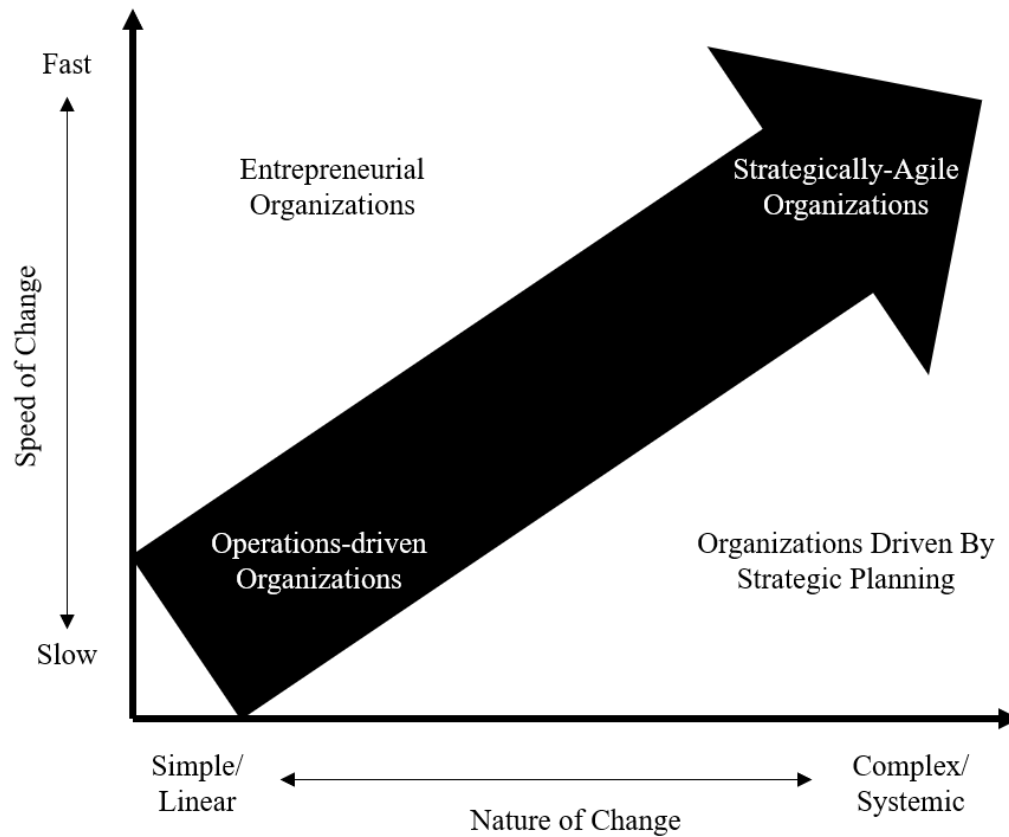
Note. Depiction of how an organization can alter traditional practices and capacities to achieve strategic agility. Adapted from "Impact of Personnel Creativity on Achieving Strategic Agility: The Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing," by A. A. Khaddam, 2020, *Management Science Letters, 10*(10), p. 2295 (https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2020.3.006). Copyright 2020 by the Growing Science. CC BY 4.0.

organization's processes, actions, structure, culture, characteristics, skills, and relationships (Ivory & Brooks, 2018). SA entails the theoretical domains of strategic change and renewal (Xing et al., 2020). As the concept of SA continues to develop, researchers continue to clarify and interpret SA based on established capacities.

The key to developing SA is to provide opportunities to evaluate and develop organizational capacity. However, it is an ongoing challenge for an organization to achieve SA. Organizations must continually focus on a particular set of capabilities, specific to their organization, that enables them always to be prepared and responsive (Morton et al., 2018). Six organizational factors can improve and foster improvisation and flexibility capacities, thereby positively affecting SA. These six key factors of SA are as follows:

- define a purpose that coordinates and liberates,
- develop structures that empower actors and spur accountability,
- nourish teams that protect and challenge team members through collaboration and integration,
- build self-confidence and humility,
- develop a focal and peripheral vision, and
- cultivate comfort with spontaneity and an organizational environment of good rules (Cunha et al., 2020; Doz, 2020).

Three fundamental principles comprise SA and encompass the above factors, known as metacapabilities. The metacapabilities of SA are strategic sensitivity, leadership unity, and resource fluidity, as shown in Figure 2 (Doz, 2020; Nejatian et al.,

2019). To instill SA, an organization must ensure all metacapabilities are present and active within the organization and must balance SA to improve organizational performance and survivability (Ghezzi & Cavallo, 2020; Halalmeh, 2021). If an organization does not develop all three metacapabilities in tandem, they risk constraining its ability to perform. The metacapabilities, shown in Figure 2 and addressed below, represent core competencies and operations of how an organization addresses internal weaknesses and external opportunities and threats to achieve SA.

Strategic Sensitivity

Strategic sensitivity is about organizational sense-making relating to strategic development. Specifically, it is the ability to gain knowledge and then apply that knowledge to make judgments, identify the direction, and proceed with a set of decisions (Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Ivory & Brooks, 2018). To achieve strategic sensitivity, leadership must have in-depth knowledge of the organizational infrastructure while staying apart from daily activities to reflect and sense knowledge (Arbussa et al., 2017; Ivory & Brooks, 2018). Moreover, to accelerate strategic sensitivity, an organization must sharpen foresight through anticipation, gain insight through experimentation, gain perspective through distancing, gain generality by abstracting, and see the need by reframing (Doz & Kosonen, 2010). Ultimately, strategic sensitivity entails an organization's ability to remove itself from a situation and openly assess options before proceeding. In many cases, the strategic sensitivity metacapability is limited. There is a limitation because organizations lack staff and specialists to address strategic development needs (Arbussa et al., 2017). Furthermore, access to a broad knowledge

Figure 2

Strategic Agility Metacapabilities
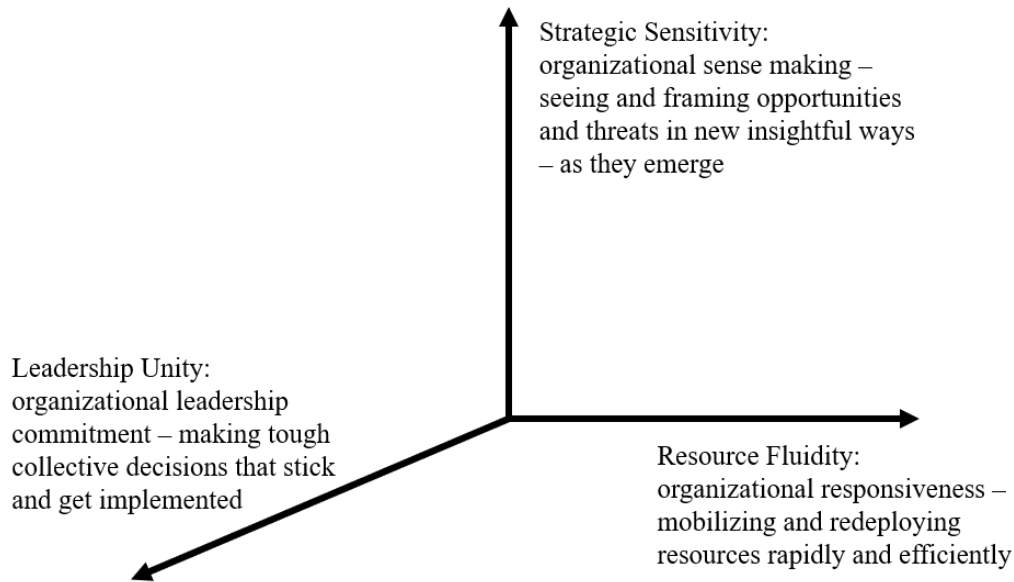
Note. The three metacapabilities of strategic agility. Reprinted from "Fostering Strategic Agility: How Individual Executives and Human Resource Practices Contribute," by Y. Doz, 2020, *Human Resource Management Review*, *30*(1), p. 2 (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2019.100693). Copyright 2019 by Elsevier. Reprinted with permission from Elsevier, license number 5043400997473 (see Appendix A).

base, due to limited personnel competencies, also leads to limited abilities to develop foresight related to strategic sensitivity (Liang et al., 2018). Therefore, nonprofit organizations must instill and encourage the development of processes, as well as a culture of resiliency and reflection that allows for sense-making. These actions increase innovative and adaptive capacities within organizations (Doz, 2020). To increase strategic sensitivity metacapability, nonprofit organizations must be aware of and address

any potential limitations related to building strategic sensitivity, such as communication strategies.

Communication is an essential factor in building an organization's strategic sensitivity. In particular, innovative actions' underlying capabilities can help ease change with more efficient communication channels, specifically in smaller organizations that tend to share mental models (Arbussa et al., 2017). However, many nonprofit organizations lack the skill to develop internal communication channels because their strengths involve developing external communications to provide services, not internal processes (Liang et al., 2018). Key steps to building strategic sensitivity through communication include

- allowing open conversations to encourage strategic discussions,

- increasing strategic alertness to foster business development, and

- ensuring internal connectivity and collaboration through quality dialog (Morton et al., 2018).

By applying the above key steps, organizations should develop intertwined processes of internal and external communication channels to enable the leader's ability to anticipate, abstract, experiment, and reframe appropriate knowledge (Arbussa et al., 2017). Through a developed communication channel, leaders can then share gained knowledge, increasing the overall organization's sharpness of perception and ability to make judgments (Ivory & Brooks, 2018; Morton et al., 2018). Ultimately, clear and transparent communication can enable strategic sensitivity if leaders can anticipate and

then do something with the gained knowledge while not losing sight of the organizational

goals and mission.

If not maintained, there are potential negative side effects of strategic sensitivity.

In particular, the negative side effects related to strategic sensitivity are (a) tunnel vision,

(b) strategic myopia, (c) dominance mindset, and (d) active inertia. These side effects are

due to the desire to control, short-term orientation, focus on the unit or self, and too much

emphasis on the strategic core (Morton et al., 2018). To avoid negative side effects,

organizations should be aware of them and proactively address any issues.

Leadership Unity

Leadership unity entails the influence of leaders to increase a shared engagement

or understanding within an organization for the purpose of acting swiftly and together in

times of change. Also known as collective commitment, leadership unity is accomplished

through the ability of leaders to create and harness common interests and trust amongst

members while downplaying personal insecurities (Doz, & Kosonen, 2008; Ivory &

Brooks, 2018; Morton et al., 2018; Nejatian et al., 2019). Another attribute of the

application of leadership unity is leadership that is willing to take risks with the

consideration of intuition and learned experiences (Lungu, 2018). It is a relevant

metacapability because through unity, a team-like culture is established that prepares and

motivates the organization while mitigating win-lose politics at the leadership level

(Arbussa et al., 2017; Morton et al., 2018). Furthermore, leaders can maintain a focus on

opportunities through leadership unity instead of being concerned with internal strife

(Ivory & Brooks, 2018). Leadership unity is critical to make quick and strategic decisions without distractions collectively.

The development of a team mindset is imperative for building leadership unity. Developing collective understanding and mindsets amongst leaders will lead to a more inclusive and collaborative work environment, easing the adoption of change (Morton et al., 2018). Not only should leadership develop a team mindset internally, but leaders also need to facilitate meaningful external partnerships and relationships (Arbussa et al., 2017). By increasing the leadership unity metacapability, leaders can quickly focus on issues at hand and collectively make decisions that positively impact the organization and align with the overall mission and goals.

However, unity within nonprofit organizations does not always enable effective or effortless change. Specifically, organizations led by a governing board tend to be hesitant to change because of associated risks related to innovation, such as fear of failure, reduced impact, or resistance to steer from established services, no matter the benefits or collective commitment (Liang et al., 2018; Miller, 2018). Therefore, critical steps to building leadership unity and avoiding risks of change include

- establishing a mutual dependency and responsibility to mitigate political or personal insecurities within leadership through integration;

- developing teams and enable collective, strategic, and efficient decision making through dialog and reveling motives and aspirations; and

- instilling an inclusive and collaborative leadership style to foster unity

  amongst leadership, focusing on shared interest and caring (Doz & Kosonen,

  2010; Morton et al., 2018).

By applying these key steps to building leadership unity and adopting change,

organizations can increase their innovative capacity, instill a team mindset, and positively

define the control and trust of leadership over others (Arbussa et al., 2017; Doz &

Kosonen, 2008). Overall, by developing a team mindset, leaders can build leadership

unity to engage in change collectively.

Potential adverse side effects exist if leadership unity is not maintained.

Specifically, the negative side effects related to leadership unity are (a) management

divergence, (b) self-importance of management, (c) rigidity of expertise, and (d)

emotional apathy. These side effects are due to the desire to address individual agendas

instead of a collective agenda, inflated egos, using leaders who are experts that limit

decision-makers, and using tenured leaders with the same ideas (Morton et al., 2018). To

achieve SA fully, organizations should maintain an appropriate level of leadership unity.

Resource Fluidity

Resource fluidity entails the ability of an organization to modify operations and

processes to meet needs rapidly. Specifically, it is an organization's internal ability to

reconfigure and redeploy resources rapidly, such as core business operations, to enable

the systems to perform faster and easier for the purpose of capitalizing on opportunities

(Arbussa et al., 2017; Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Ivory & Brooks, 2018; Nejatian et al.,

2019). Given varying sizes and types of organizations, the attributes of resource fluidity

must be scaled to be representative of the particular organization's available resources (Arbussa et al., 2017). In the case of board-driven organizations, budgeting rules may hinder an organization's ability to rapidly reconfigure resources (Liang et al., 2018). However, resource fluidity is not limited to financial resources, as it also applies to human resource management, operations and asset allocation, and innovative means for collaboration (Ivory & Brooks, 2018). Therefore, organizations should consider allowable processes in place to act rapidly, as well as resource availability.

Coordination and improvisation are essential factors in achieving resource fluidity, as leaders may be better suited to remain flexible. Coordination entails the use of fluid processes to support rapid change (Ivory & Brooks, 2018), while improvisation entails leadership competencies to build new operational processes in pressing situations (Cunha et al., 2020). An example of resource fluidity may include an organization's ability to reassign positions to effectively use resources (Lungu, 2018). Key steps to strengthening an organization's resource fluidity include

- dissociating strategy from the structure for available and rapid deployment of resources with a focus on decoupling and flexibility,

- relying on people to achieve goals,

- implementing modularizing processes that include incentives for collaboration,

- dissociating resource responsibility from ownership, and

- allowing multiple business models through switching or grafting (Doz & Kosonen, 2010; Morton et al., 2018).

Applying these key steps to building resource fluidity, organizations can avoid getting comfortable and not rely on predictable circumstances, as circumstances can always change (Doz & Kosonen, 2008). Therefore, by focusing on coordinative and reconfiguring capacities, leaders can improve their ability to achieve resource fluidity.

If not addressed, there are potential negative side effects of the inability to achieve resource fluidity. In particular, the negative side effects related to resource fluidity are (a) resource imprisonment, (b) business system stagnation, (c) restricted strategic freedom, and (d) management mediocrity and competence gaps. These side effects are due to leadership autonomy and knowledge retention, too many specialized activities, processes, inability to expand select relationship base, and the realization of shortcomings by increased learning (Morton et al., 2018). In order to avoid negative side effects, leaders should focus on appropriate capacities and be aware of potential effects.

To ensure success, the metacapabilities must balance. By balancing the importance and focus of each metacapability, organizations can ensure each is used to its fullest potential, as the lack of one metacapability can impact the others (Arbussa et al., 2017; Liang et al., 2018). Even though the metacapabilities are supposed to be balanced to achieve SA, they are not as equally important. When in balance, the three metacapabilities enable leaders to develop a certain level of resourcefulness, enabling them to apply innovative and solving mindsets, leverage strengths, and the ability to economize resources to address limitations, in line with the specific type and size of the organization (Arbussa et al., 2017). Therefore, leaders must implement SA as a comprehensive means to address key issues within an organization.

SA and Performance

SA directly impacts organizational performance, leading to successful

transformation and the development of competitive advantage. This impact is due to an

organization's capacity to address foresight towards change and act on strategic insight,

which can better position an organization to be responsive and adaptive (Arokodare et al.,

2019; Shin et al., 2015) and achieve appropriate transformation (Lungu, 2020b).

Furthermore, SA is a mediator between an organization's absorptive capacity and

performance (Lungu, 2020a). An organization can learn new information, realize the

value of learning new information, and apply the new information to the organization

(Chan & Muthuveloo, 2020; Kale et al., 2019; Widjajani & Nurjaman, 2020). Overall, an

organization must recognize the need to learn new information, be responsive, and apply

it to transform the organization, leading to performance improvement.

There are four influencing factors of SA related to performance: (a) technology

capability, (b) collaborative innovation, (c) organizational learning, and (d) internal

business alignments, as shown in Figure 3 (Lungu, 2018; Shin et al., 2015). By focusing

on these four factors, SA increases firm performance by positively impacting operations

and creating a competitive advantage (Kale et al., 2019). Specifically, technology is often

the platform for quick response to rapidly address needs, enabling operational

responsiveness. Collaborative innovation allows an organization to address performance

to meet stakeholders' diverse needs and improve internal and external processes,

addressing different organizational layers (Lungu, 2020a). Also, along with SA,

innovation can improve an organization's level of resilience (Olaleye et al., 2020).

Organizational learning is imperative to organizational performance because organizations create, adapt, and replicate knowledge within the organization over time. Finally, internal alignment refers to a collective mindset and effort, as well as congruent goals, objectives, needs, and structure (Shin et al., 2015). Each factor influences the three metacapabilities of SA, contributing to an idealistic state where unity exists between leaders and sub-ordinates so that overall implementation of operations and the need for responsiveness is fluid and strategic, positively impacting performance.

Figure 3

Strategic Agility Scheme
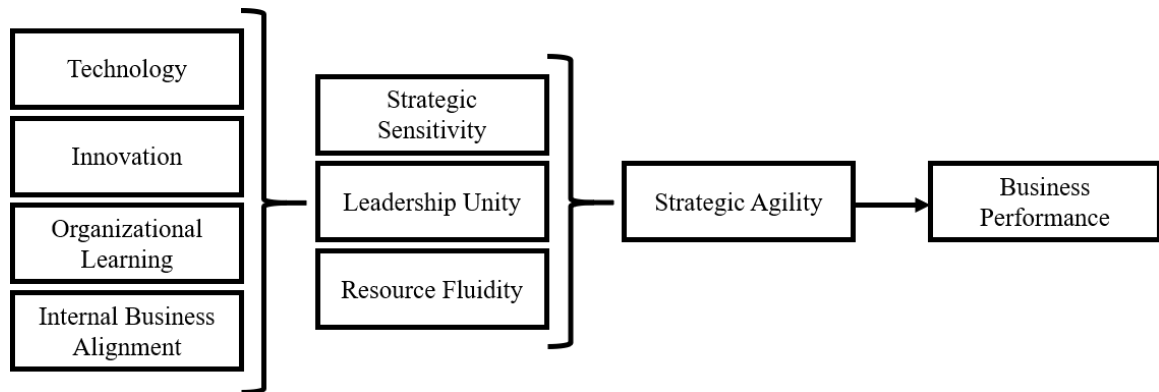
Note. This depiction is a derivative of the four influencing factors of strategic agility. Adapted from "Strategic Agility of Korean Small and Medium Enterprises and its Influence on Operational and Firm Performance," by H. Shin, J. N. Lee, D. Kim, and H. Rhim, 2015, *International Journal of Production Economics*, *168*(1), p. 185 (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpe.2015.06.015). Copyright 2015 by Elsevier. Adapted with permission from Elsevier, license number 5043410141022 (see Appendix B).

SA and Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations are frequently challenged to meet ever-changing service demands within their respective fields. SA is imperative for nonprofit organizations, as leaders can flexibly address operational needs while considering overall governance and relationships. Doz (2020) recommends that organizations foster SA by

- implementing thoughtful and purposive developmental mobility,

- carefully transitioning from operating managers to systemic adaptive managers,

- being collaborative and integrative, and using flexible negotiating skills,

- being flexible in job roles and project management methods, and

- being self-confident and forbearing.

Furthermore, SA is a versatile concept that may be applied to various business fields, including nonprofit organizations (Lungu, 2018). However, in many circumstances, nonprofit organizations act under board governance rigidity, which hampers innovation (Lungu, 2018). Through SA, an organization's dynamics change to encourage sharing knowledge, leading to improved, innovative capacity (Debellis et al., 2021). These actions enable nonprofits to address needs better.

Alternative Conceptual Frameworks

I considered various theories for use as the conceptual framework for this study. The alternative conceptual frameworks include systems theory, dynamic capability, human capital theory, and contingency theory.

Systems Theory

Systems theory was proposed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1951) on the premise that all systems share organizing principles (von Bertalanffy, 1972). The concept originally emerged in the 1930s (Baecker, 2019; Jung & Vakharia, 2019) with the goal of unifying science; however, the theory did not come to fruition until the late 1950s and early 1960s (Teece, 2018). Although systems theory was developed within the realm of natural sciences, it is used within management theory. Specifically, this theory represents a complex set of interdependent factors and interrelated with how leaders act and react internally and externally to the organization. Open systems involve the concept that all organizations are affected by the environment based on processes and structure. Systems theory is a respected management theory when examining performance management and organizational effectiveness, as it attempts to clarify the whole, its parts, and the relationships between members of the organization (Iwu et al., 2016). Systems theory is also explained as a holistic approach to understanding a system where an organization is seen as a social system of sub-units that interact to improve organizational effectiveness. The limitations of this theory for management applications include the theory's origin in the field of biology, the lack of design and inclusion of the human element, and the restriction to the internal stability or similar system control (Teece, 2018). Systems theory entails a holistic focus on the interaction of internal operational elements and the outcomes from the interactions.

The main elements of a system are inputs, processes, outputs, feedback, and organization subsystems. More specifically, systems theory outlines productive methods,

energizes processes, enables processes, and develops processes to help the researcher understand the overall structure and develop mapping to enhance comprehension (Schweiger et al., 2018). Systems theory entails mapping and linking practices to underlying inputs and outputs and processes in-between (Kumar et al., 2015). Overall, the elements of this theory help define struggling and impactful relationships and processes within an organization.

Dynamic Capability

Hamel originally introduced dynamic capability in 1989 (Čiutienė & Thattakath, 2014). However, dynamic capabilities have also been presented as an extension of systems theory to address the limitations of systems theory (Arokodare et al., 2019; Teece, 2018). Dynamic capability is a more integrated or holistic approach towards business systems, with a focus on adapting an organization's resource base (Arokodare et al., 2019; Chan & Muthuveloo, 2020). A business system is identified as a complex system with non-simple interactions, which are addressed as critical aspects in the dynamic capability theory (Teece, 2018). Specifically, dynamic capability is an organization's ability to rapidly reconfigure competencies in ever-changing environments (Arokodare et al., 2019). Dynamic capability is a holistic management theory of adaptive systems to improve organizational effectiveness.

The goal of dynamic capability is to address long-term efficiency through evolution and opportunities. The theory's components include skills, strategy, firm resources, and external firms and institutions (Teece, 2018). The theory categorizes operational capabilities from dynamic capabilities, where operational capabilities are

related to the efficient use of resources, while dynamic capabilities include those used to address change (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Dynamic capability involves strategically taking advantage of opportunities to address change through the appropriate use of resources.

Human Capital Theory

Shultz presented the human capital theory in 1961 to recognize the value of human knowledge, skills, education, and training on firm performance (Hickman, 2021; Marginson, 2019). Larger organizations can benefit and leverage internal human capital, whereas smaller organizations may need to rely on collaboration and consolidation efforts to garner human capital to improve performance. The level of required human capital within an organization depends on task complexity (Teodoro & Switzer, 2016). Essentially, human capital involves capitalizing on worker education to invest in knowledge-building skills to gain positive returns.

Within the framework of human capital theory, the main elements are represented by the forms of investment a firm partakes in to increase the knowledge and skills of its workforce. The elements include funding allocated for education, training, medical assistance, adequate revenues, and incomes earned through labor (Minica, 2011). The main principles of the theory center around the claims that (a) education and training are imperative to improve economic power, (b) education leads to an increase in production, and (c) investment in educating a firm's workforce correlates with the organization's production and earnings (Tan, 2014). The human capital theory focuses on the human element within an organization to improve performance and overall effectiveness.

Contingency Theory

Fiedler introduced contingency theory in the late 1960s as a theory that asserts leadership behavior in ever-changing situations influences organizational behavior, effectiveness, and success (Fiedler, 1971). Furthermore, the theory enables researchers to realize how leadership can impact an organization within set boundaries (Prasad & Junni, 2017). The theory is useful in organizational operations as it acknowledges that organizations are ever-changing, and to be effective, firms must be able to react under different circumstances (Chelliah et al., 2016). The theory also entails that organizations develop structures contingent on the operational environment (Eva et al., 2018), which are created by leadership. Contingency theory is contingent upon the type of leadership styles and how different situations are addressed.

The main elements of contingency theory are leadership styles in different situations. Leadership situation is defined by situational factors, such as relationships, and entails leader/employee relationship, the structure of employee's task, and leader's position of power. Overall, eight different leadership situations are presented through contingency theory based on whether or not the relationship situations are favorable (Popp & Hadwich, 2018). The leader/employee relationship can be applied to other associations within organizations, such as leader/stakeholder (Chelliah et al., 2016). The model contends that task-oriented leaders perform well in favorable and unfavorable situations, whereas relationship-oriented leaders are useful in intermediate favorableness areas (Fiedler, 1971). Ultimately, contingency theory is dependent upon how leaders lead and react to different situations.

Characteristics of Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations deliver essential services to the society-at-large, which for-profit organizations do not provide. Nonprofit organizations also serve as innovative organizations pursuing ideological transformation. However, the nonprofit sector has become turbulent due to an increased demand for services, changing funding availability, and an alteration in institutional structures (Langer & LeRoux, 2017). The combination of these issues has led to the need for nonprofit leaders to focus on improving effectiveness.

The management of nonprofit organizations is different from for-profit organizations. Nonprofit management is more qualitative and not monetary-based, unlike for-profit organizations (Moura et al., 2019; Park et al., 2018). Human resource management and accountability in nonprofit organizations are more complex than for-profit organizations (France & Tang, 2018; Reinhardt & Enke, 2020). Since profit is not the primary goal of nonprofits, it is also more difficult to measure organizational effectiveness. In addition, leaders of nonprofit organizations answer to various stakeholders, who each have their own concerns and demands. Furthermore, nonprofit stakeholders, including internal (professional staff and volunteers) and external (government, donors, and the public) persons or groups who have an interest in the organization hold the nonprofit organization accountable for their actions and expect some level of reporting on performance (France & Tang, 2018), and act with an organization-centered mindset, as opposed to a customer- or product- mindset (Perić et al., 2020). Due to these differences, leaders must understand the operational implications when managing a nonprofit organization.

When addressing a nonprofit organization's operational efficiencies, it is essential to note the general characteristics that impact effectiveness. According to do Adro and Leitão (2020), these characteristics include the following:

- nonprofits are made up of unique people with different characteristics,

- nonprofits are part of a community,

- internal and external factors impact nonprofits,

- nonprofits need the ability to adapt to social-economic changes, and

- nonprofits benefit from an adaptive capacity approach, which can be used to enable innovation and sustainability.

Leaders must consider these characteristics as the leader will need to modify how they address capacity development to address sustainable growth and funding.

Nonprofit Organizational Capacity

Researchers have attempted to define capacity as it relates to nonprofit organizations. However, in existing literature, capacity is not always addressed directly or clearly defined (Svensson et al., 2020; Vllasaj, 2021). The varying definitions' common theme focuses on how an organization effectively achieves its mission (Bryan, 2019; Sun & Asencio, 2019). Bingle (2019) compiled the varying definitions of nonprofit capacity-building as the programs, offerings, and efforts that strengthen an organization's ability to achieve its mission. Furthermore, nonprofit organizational capacity may be defined as the ability of an organization to use its resources (individual, organization, and systems) first to identify the mission, then meaningfully, tangibly, and intangibly realize the mission, efficiently deploy internal and external resources, and get the work completed

appropriately and sustainably (Nenobais et al., 2017; Svensson et al., 2017). As found in existing literature, the capacity of nonprofit organizations involves six different dimensions:

- human resources,

- leadership,

- financial management,

- internal structures and processes,

- external and board relationships, and

- organizational culture.

These capacity dimensions greatly vary but collectively and individually impact how well an organization serves the community (Andersson et al., 2016; Despard, 2017; Millar & Doherty, 2018; Nenobais et al., 2017; Svensson et al., 2018). Although there is no consensus amongst the literature on a specific definition of capacity, these dimensions represent the most frequently used dimensions of capacity within the existing literature.

Each dimension is a critical success factor for developing capacity within nonprofit organizations. First, the human resources dimension, or human capital, entails the skills, knowledge, and abilities of the paid staff, contractors, volunteers, and leaders (Brown et al., 2016). Additionally, the engagement and recruitment efforts of the organization are also crucial in developing organizational capacity. Regarding nonprofit capacity, human resources are related to an organization's ability to quickly and appropriately mobilize in times of need (Svensson et al., 2017). Human resources are critical when managing a nonprofit organization, as people are the primary resource.

The second dimension listed is leadership. Leadership is the influence a leader asserts in a situation of power between subordinates, superiors, colleagues, customers, and suppliers by using attributes such as charisma that establish the overall organizational emotions (Wang & Zeng, 2017). According to Andersson et al. (2016), all capacity development areas should be addressed in different life stages, except leadership. This assertion indicates that organizations may not need to invest in leadership development as long as the leaders are competent or gain capacity in the other areas (Andersson et al., 2016). In support, Svensson et al. (2017) noted that nonprofit organizations' leadership capacity is substantial, indicating that organizations should focus more on other capacities when seeking to improve operations and efficiencies.

The capacity dimension of financial management is imperative for nonprofit organizations. Financial management entails the monetary resources an organization uses to act on opportunities and address threats (Svensson et al., 2017). Nonprofits rely on external funding to meet financial needs, which makes the resource unreliable as it is under the control of external partnerships (Brown et al., 2016; Svensson et al., 2017). Furthermore, financial management impacts all aspects of an organization, including other capacity dimensions, making it critical to fulfilling the mission (Potluka & Svecova, 2019). Since financial management is unreliable, nonprofit managers must understand the volatile capacity and its impact on external partnerships.

Fourth, nonprofit organizations are subject to internal and external factors. The internal structures and processes developed by leaders, also known as organizational infrastructure, enable organizations to use resources effectively to meet goals and provide

value on a daily basis (Bae et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2016; Svensson et al., 2017). There is underinvestment in developing organizational infrastructure due to human resource and financial constraints, even though the capacity to plan and implement plans is critical for development (Svensson et al., 2017). A lack of capacity to develop strategic plans towards organizational development also exists, further hindering the ability of nonprofit organizations (Gratton, 2018). Furthermore, capacity-building initiatives require planning to ensure each dimension is developed to the maximum ability (Miller, 2018). Also, internal structures and processes can directly impact other capacity dimensions (Svensson et al., 2017). Therefore, nonprofit organization leaders need to implement and maintain effective systems to improve overall capacity and performance.

Additionally, external factors impact nonprofit organizations. External and board relationships entail how leaders engage with external stakeholders and the board to positively impact performance (Brown et al., 2016; Haber & Schryver, 2019). The purpose of developing relationships is to enhance cross-organizational services. The relationships should be developed over time and as personal connections (Svensson et al., 2017). Leaders may develop external and board relationships by focusing on balanced relationships, mission alignment, and partnership management, which may be difficult to establish (Svensson et al., 2017). These relationships also impact an organization's accountability, as external support and board involvement can help to legitimize the organization and define expectations (Langer & LeRoux, 2017). Furthermore, Park and Mosley (2017) indicated that the degree of investment in external and board relationships could determine an organization's success.

Finally, organizational culture is a significant facilitator of capacity. Organizational culture is the mindset or core business expectations leaders instill in an organization over time, developing a common assumption, a pattern of perceiving, thinking, feeling, and behaving that provides for meaning, stability, process, objective, and comfort throughout the organization (Nakov & Ivanovski, 2018; Wang & Zeng, 2017). An organizational culture may take on different forms; however, one of development that leads to adaptation of practices and innovation, which can lead to improved performance (Bach-Mortensen et al., 2018; Langer & LeRoux, 2017). Leaders can address capacity through a development or innovative culture.

Earlier research has indicated a correlation between capacity and success, precisely a cause-and-effect relationship. In particular, capacity-building strategies that focus on the listed dimensions can lead to success (Millar & Doherty, 2018; Wang & Zeng, 2017). However, focusing on all dimensions is problematic within nonprofit organizations because it is easier to invest in some more than others, and many nonprofit organizations underinvest in capacity-building activities (Andersson et al., 2016; Svensson et al., 2017). Ultimately, underinvestment poses a problem for organizations when trying to meet their mission, impacting performance.

Although the dimensions of capacity are all equally important, an organization may prioritize the above dimensions by addressing and expanding its breadth to make the most impact and not underinvest. Investment in capacity-building initiatives must be balanced across an organization to achieve desired performance levels (Millar & Doherty, 2018; Svensson et al., 2017). A balanced capacity-building strategy requires proper

development, understanding, and evaluation of the plan execution that enables adaption

to change and expands the ability to innovate (AbouAssi et al., 2019; Despard, 2017).

Therefore, organizations must consider the appropriate or most impactful dimensions to

invest in to achieve success while maintaining balance.

First, organizations should ensure human resource capacity. To address the human

resource capacity, nonprofit organizations may focus on (a) employing paid staff, (b)

increasing engagement, (c) talent recruitment, (d) revenue generation, and (e) controlling

expenses. These focus areas may be limited by financial resources (Svensson et al.,

2017). Furthermore, paid staff increases capacity but is limited by financial resources

(Potluka & Svecova, 2019). A focus on human resource capacity establishes a solid

foundation for an organization to develop the capacity of all listed dimensions.

Financial capacity is considered the second most crucial dimension of capacity. It

includes revenue generation, expenses, and financial management (Svensson et al.,

2017). Even though financial capacity is essential, most nonprofit organizations find it

challenging to establish financial systems for good financial health, which can negatively

impact other areas making it challenging to expand overall capacity (Andersson, 2019;

Walters, 2020). Therefore, no matter the life stage, all nonprofit organizations can benefit

from capacity development in establishing fund development, human resources, and

general financial processes (Andersson et al., 2016). However, organizations that need

the most assistance do not always have the capacity to manage the funding, leading to

continued reliance and dependence on external aid (Potluka & Svecova, 2019). Optimal

financial capacity entails the development of sound financial management enabling

nonprofit leaders to improve the capacity of all dimensions.

Finally, when discussing an organization's capacity, researchers also address

operational capacity as an essential dimension. Operational capacity entails internal

attributes, such as internal processes that direct employees (Shumate et al., 2017),

strategic building activities established for guidance (Strang, 2018), and methods to

overcome organizational challenges through collaboration (Fu et al., 2021). Addressing

operational capacity is imperative because an organization can outline the relationships

between all listed dimensions, establishing the structure for a collective capacity and

shared purpose (Hinck, 2017). Overall, an organization's operational capacity can enable

a nonprofit to garner needed funding and earn an acceptable public and donor reputation,

leading to greater organizational effectiveness (Kim et al., 2021). Consequently,

operational capacity is crucial to establishing the other dimensions and achieving success.

There are several ways to measure a nonprofit organization's capacity.

Measurements on capacity mainly pertain to an organization's efficiency or effectiveness

(AbouAssi et al., 2019). Historically, organizational effectiveness has been measured

based on an overhead ratio. However, this is not an appropriate measure for nonprofit

organizations, as there needs to be a consideration for more subjective criteria, such as

goal attainment, as well as inputs and outputs used to meet the mission (Coupet &

Berrett, 2019). As a result, nonprofit organizations cannot measure capacity solely on

financial performance but must include qualitative measurements to assess capacity.

According to nonprofit leaders, a select number of critical attributes measure a nonprofit organization's overall effective capacity. These attributes include instantiation of sound principles, grassroots approach, larger organizational size and resources, being collaborative, singleness of focus, campaigning abilities, funding and fundraising prowess, global scope, and quality people (Mitchell, 2015). Also, given the diversity of the nonprofit industry, it is difficult to define one set way to measure effectiveness objectively, but capacity remains a factor to show value creation (Moura et al., 2019). Although common attributes to measure effective capacity exist, nonprofit organizations must develop their own means to measure capacity, realizing the importance of establishing balanced dimensions relevant to their organization.

Nonprofit organizations that focus on developing their capacity tend to perform more diverse activities and achieve broader mission goals. Capacity development in human resources, financial resources, and strategic planning significantly impact performance. Ultimately, organizations that do not focus on capacity-building activities, but are focused on building performance, may not remain stable and find it difficult to function and fulfill their mission. Therefore, organizations should balance their capacity-building activities to enhance their scope of work while maintaining a generalist approach (AbouAssi et al., 2019). Finally, when capacity-building initiatives are implemented, an organization can increase accountability and trust (Bryan, 2019). Miller (2018) also found that development in organizational capacity leads to improved internal decision processes, organizational strategizing, strategic perspective building, and human resource

development. In conclusion, through the implementation of capacity-building strategies, nonprofit organizations can improve performance and their competitive advantage.

Nonprofit Organizational Leadership Characteristics to Build Capacity

There is a correlation between organization success, capacity, and leadership characteristics. Improving nonprofit capacity to seize the opportunity and adopt change can help organizations achieve their mission and are dependent on leadership styles (Shumate et al., 2017). According to existing literature, nonprofit leadership characteristics impact organizational capacity based on how leaders employ regulatory processes and structures to meet the mission and goals (Bryan, 2019). The characteristics of nonprofit leaders can directly impact the organization's effectiveness, explicitly acting as the voice of the organization and providing guidance (Tran, 2020). In addition, Megheirkouni (2017) asserted that transactional and transformational leaders who support employees tend to ensure the highest level of organizational capacity and achieve success. Leadership characteristics are an imperative consideration in a nonprofit organization's capacity, specifically transformational and transactional leadership styles.

Numerous attributes contribute to the characteristics of an effective transformational or transactional leader. Specifically, leaders with integrity and passion have a more significant impact on an organization's success, indicating that complementary leadership styles and associated characteristics are essential (Afsar et al., 2017). Leaders can impact an organization's ability to succeed through task- and relationship-oriented behaviors or styles (Henkel et al., 2019). Both styles' have similar leadership characteristics, including positivity, long-term outlook, mission-focused,

engaging, supportive of partnering organizations, strengthens and adheres to operational capacity, collaborative, and strategic (Mitchell, 2015). More specifically, transformational leadership entails developing meaningful relationships between leaders and followers, with a focus on organizational goals and visions (Bush, 2018). Transformational leadership has multiple factors: charisma, inspirational motivation or communication, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration or support, and vision (Hetland et al., 2018; Rupcic, 2019). Transformational leadership is important for nonprofit organizations during times of growth (Nenobais et al., 2017). Transactional leadership entails a beneficial give-and-take situation for the leader and followers. The three factors of transactional leadership are contingent reward, management by exception, and laissez-faire (Adeniji et al., 2020). Transformational and transactional leadership are ideal styles for nonprofit organizations because there is the flexibility to apply either style, as needed, depending on the organization or situation.

Many transformational and transactional leadership characteristics overlap with those related to SA. The important common characteristics of transformational and transactional leadership styles can enable a leader to encourage proactive and innovative capabilities (Afsar et al., 2017). These characteristics are also directly related to the perception of a nonprofit's effectiveness (Mitchell, 2015; Shumate et al., 2017). In most circumstances, leaders should use both leadership styles to have the most positive impact (Aboramadan & Dahleez, 2020). As a result, leaders should develop a means to execute both transformational and transactional leadership styles to best adapt to organizational needs.

Strategic leadership for organizational adaptability entails enabling innovative and adaptive processes through engagement. Strategic leaders must be aware of their disposition, managerial cognition, charisma, power and motivation tactics, managerial knowledge, skills, and abilities that impact an organization (Samimi et al., 2019). In particular, leadership involvement greatly impacts the type of learning and development opportunities implemented within an organization, including how organizations receive and adapt to change (Coban et al., 2019). Furthermore, Uhl-Bien and Arena (2018) asserted the need to identify organizational adaptability as a management framework, emphasizing the importance of enabling leadership. It is also important to understand and embrace the tension or conflict between innovation and the need to produce improved systems (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Organizational adaptability is contingent on the type of leadership style instilled within a nonprofit organization.

Nonprofit Organizational Culture's Impact on Capacity-Building

Within nonprofit organizations, culture is critical to address expectations, trust, and the organization's overall mindset. Organizational culture is a model of the assumptions and beliefs shared amongst an organization, impacting the overall workplace environment (Nugroho, 2018), and is a factor of capacity (Svensson et al., 2017). Organizational culture must be balanced with organizational systems. Furthermore, organizational culture is one of the most significant facilitators of implementing evidence-based practices to intervene in organizational operations. Some organizational culture factors include the ability to adapt practices to fit the organization's needs (Bach-

Mortensen et al., 2018). There are several factors to consider when discussing

organizational culture, which may further an organization's effectiveness.

First, leaders should establish a culture of trust and integrity. An organizational

culture of integrity is imperative because it can strengthen an organization's ethics and

professionalism while decreasing the opportunity for mismanagement, misuse of power,

and conflict of interests (Atan et al., 2017). Nonprofits encounter challenges when

addressing accountability due to varying levels of interests and objectives with

stakeholders (Slettli et al., 2018); however, there is a realization that a focus on ethics and

accountability can increase an organization's transparency (Ito & Slatten, 2020).

Therefore, it is essential to establish a culture of integrity that increases accountability

within an organization leading to a culture of commitment.

Second, organizations must focus on a culture of development and innovation.

Developmental culture is a mindset to encourage growth, enhance financial performance,

and establish a sense of organizational legitimacy (Langer & LeRoux., 2017). Innovation

occurs because of the use of new knowledge that leads to change. An organization's

ability to apply innovation can signify its effectiveness in improving management

practices and governance. With a culture of development and innovation, organizations

can also enhance their ability to solve problems (Glińska & Karwacki, 2018). It is

important to note that an organization's collective actions and individuals promote

efficiency and adaptability while also improving communication (Akhavan &

Philsoophian, 2018; Lee, 2020; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Thus, a culture of

development and innovation is critical to enabling adaptability collectively.

Finally, organizational culture is a learned endeavor where an individual must understand and embrace its mindset at large. In particular, leadership involvement greatly impacts the type of learning and development opportunities implemented within an organization, including how organizations receive and adapt to change (Coban et al., 2019). Therefore, organizational culture can positively impact organizational capacity, improving effectiveness and performance.

Organizational Learning

Organizational capacity represents the individual capacities of those within an organization. Those individuals' knowledge also impacts the individual capacities to achieve goals (Wang & Zeng, 2017), which is directly influenced by an organization's focus on organizational learning at the individual level. Organizational learning is an organization's ability to absorb and instill routines and guide behaviors in an interactive process to modify human actions (Umar & Hassan, 2019) by learning from internal and external opportunities and experiences (Nugroho, 2018). By applying organizational learning, nonprofit organizations can improve capacity.

Leaders of nonprofit organizations use different forms of learning to improve performance. Organizational learning enables leaders to enhance organizational innovation and heightens the use of knowledge management and responsiveness during times of change (Wang & Zeng, 2017). Furthermore, it is positively impacted by open, collaborative cultures, which can allow leaders to encourage knowledge sharing within nonprofit organizations (Nugroho, 2018), which can increase innovation within an organization (Fait & Sakka, 2020; Gil et al., 2018; Naqshbandi & Tabche, 2018). In

addition, through organizational learning, nonprofits can overcome early problems; by evaluating and establishing organizational structures that enable the resolution of challenges (Andersson, 2019), increase nonprofit governance, and improve overall organizational effectiveness (Mason & Kim, 2020). Nonprofit organizations use onboarding to allow for organizational learning. Onboarding can help ease anxiety, indoctrinating members into the organization's culture and defining performance and social expectations (Chillakuri, 2020). Organizations can create value and ensure survival through organizational learning, increasing capacity, and remaining competitive.

Nonprofit Organizational Performance and Sustainability

Historically, research has been conducted to define success within a nonprofit organization. For-profit organizations measure success by profit; however, nonprofits use more qualitative, subjective, and socially determined metrics when discussing levels of success. There are varying yet similar definitions of nonprofit organization success. The common theme in defining success centers around an organization's ability to achieve its mission (AbouAssi et al., 2019; Bryan, 2019) and affirms its overall effectiveness (Shumate et al., 2017). It is important to note that some literature asserts that the success of a nonprofit organization is based on the perspective of those doing the measuring and is directly tied to the organizational leadership, skills, and organizational procedures (Millesen & Carman, 2019; Shumate et al., 2017). Although success is generally measured by an organization's ability to meet its mission, a discrepancy amongst existing literature revolves around how to measure the means to meet the mission.

Nonprofit organizations must establish a justifiable means to measure success. Active nonprofit measurement programs can improve nonprofit performance (Munik et al., 2021). There are different methods to evaluate nonprofit success, including goal attainment, system resources, and multiple constituencies (Bryan, 2019; Strang, 2018). Goal attainment is the most popular means to measure nonprofit success, but if the goals are ill-defined, conflicting, or ambiguous, the ability to measure is complicated and skewed (Bryan, 2019; Strang, 2018). System resource focuses on inputs, deliverables, and outcomes, emphasizing an organization's ability to connect with the external environment and acquire resources. Concern for this form of measurement is the focus on financial effectiveness instead of mission achievement as the success indicator. Many nonprofit organizations do not focus on financial metrics, as there is a need for more transparency and a need to explain the opportunistic and economic activities of organizations more clearly (Perić et al., 2020). Harris and Neely (2021) found that organizations that are more transparent garner more future contributions; therefore, transparency adds value when considering financial growth. Finally, multiple contingencies measure success based on socially accepted norms, specifically organization reputation and legitimacy (Bryan, 2019). The need for effective best practices in the areas of being ethical, accountable, and transparent is imperative to achieving success (Harris & Neely, 2021). To measure nonprofits' success, organizations must consider the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the mission and goals.

Sustainable Growth

Nonprofit organization growth is imperative to remain relevant and functioning. Organizational growth is the result of value, expertise, and competence to acquire more resources to improve performance and specialization while developing a competitive advantage (Nenobais et al., 2017). The main differences between growing organizations and declining organizations are scope of services and the degree of investment in external affairs, and performance measurement. Organizations that invest in and focus on a flexible mission logic can respond and open the organization up to opportunities (Berlan, 2018). Furthermore, diversification of funds did not impact whether an organization grew or declined (Park & Mosley, 2017); however, it can positively impact performance (Mendoza-Abarca & Gras, 2019). Nonprofit organizations can sustain growth by addressing capacity issues that encourage growth.

To encourage growth, nonprofit organizations should apply transformational leadership, simple organizational structures, and improvement in the role the board plays during times of growth to ensure capacity. As addressed above in capacity dimensions, the development of better strategies to extend programs and processes, address human resources management, and ensure organizational financial sustainability positively impacts growth. During times of growth, nonprofit organizations must consider external components to include collaboration among other nonprofits, local government, the private sector, business activities, political participation, and public relations is important (Andersson et al., 2016; Nenobais et al., 2017). In addition, while addressing capacity-building strategies during growth, nonprofit organizations must also address internal

components, as depicted in Figure 4 (Nenobais et al., 2017). Therefore, nonprofit

organizations must consider internal and external components that impact growth.

Figure 4

Capacity Development of Nonprofit Organizations in the Growth Phase
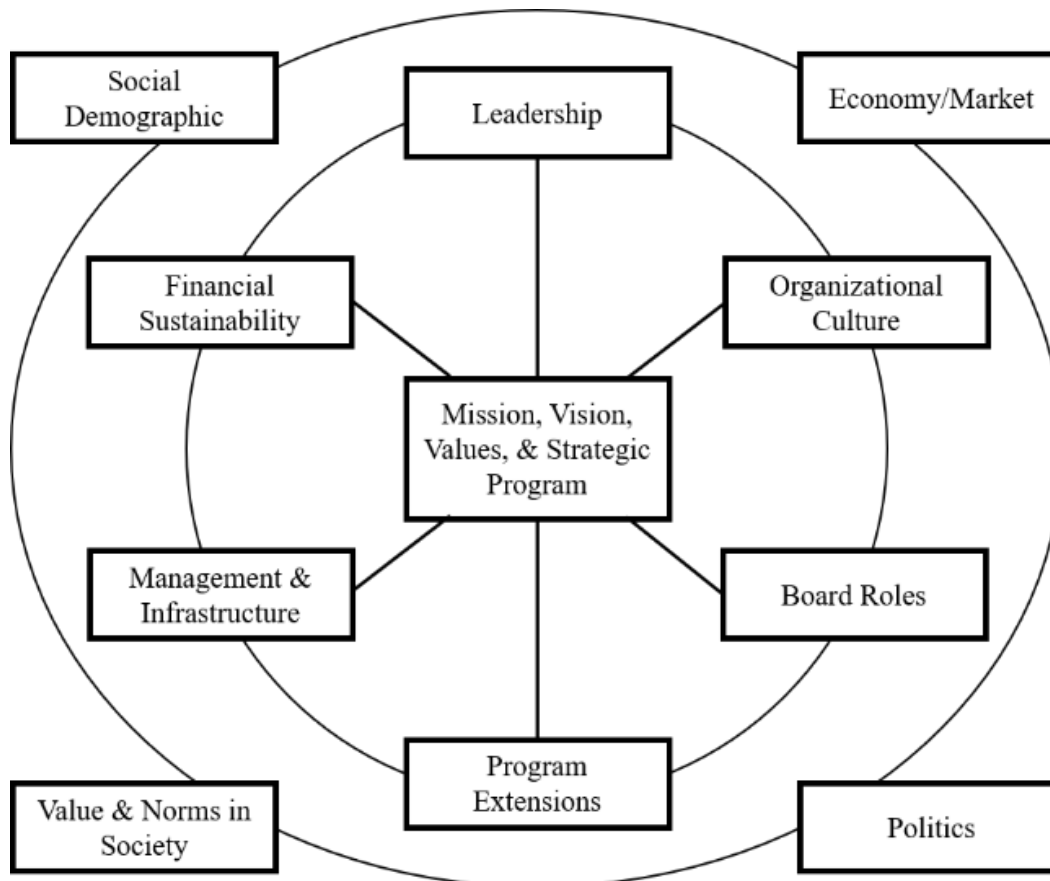
Note. Depiction of internal components to address capacity development. Adapted from

"The Capacity Building of Nonprofit Organizations in the Growth Stage at Papus Pesat

Foundation (An action research based on the SSM)," by H. Nenobais, A. Kasim, and I. R.

Maksum, 2017, *Jurnal Kebijakan Dan Administrasi Publik, 20*(2), p. 40. Copyright 2016

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There is no single way to measure nonprofit growth, given the varying types of nonprofit organizations and the different ways in which organizations measure and tell different stories. Sustainable growth depends on collaborative governance among nonprofits, private donors, and government agencies, which means effective management is crucial (Kim & Kim, 2018) and that organizations will benefit from a variety of performance measures for growth (Pennerstorfer & Rutherford, 2019). However, organizations should use different measures to account for growth, as appropriate for their organization, including measurements indicative of nonprofit organization activity, such as employment, membership levels, volunteering, income/expenditures, number of organizations, and assets (Pennerstorfer & Rutherford, 2019). Therefore, the measurement of growth must be appropriate for the organization, and the reasoning for the measurement must be clear and justifiable.

Sustainable Funding

Funding is imperative for nonprofit organizations because, without adequate funding, organizations do not have the means to provide services and achieve the mission. Nonprofits' operating environment is increasingly challenging, complicating how organizations advance their missions due to funding (Lu et al., 2020; Munik et al., 2021), as most nonprofit organizations rely on external funding resources (Perić et al., 2020). The main topics related to nonprofit finance are funding levels, profit, giving, government, accounting, service, performance, and management (Schatteman & Waymire, 2017). Nonprofit financial performance and professionalization are associated with the types of revenue sources available. To develop a positive strategy, nonprofit

organizations should diversify funding sources to decrease financial vulnerability and rely on self-generated income (Denison et al., 2019; Lu et al., 2020; Shon et al., 2019). The implementation of strategic plans reduces an organization's financial vulnerability. Sustainable funding entails the ability to establish diversified and stable funding sources.

The effectiveness of nonprofit funding may be measured through various means. Standard accounting ratios are acceptable but do not adequately provide information on nonprofit organizations' funding sustainability (Amagtome & Alnajjar, 2020). It is also imperative to determine and understand how the leadership and the governing board's strategic interactions may impact the nature and mix of organizational resources (Denison et al., 2019). Nonprofit organizations that are more self-reliant, depending on program revenues or dues, experience less volatility. However, revenue growth tends to be slower within self-reliant organizations (Denison et al., 2019). As with other areas of performance measurement, nonprofit organizations should assess quantitative and qualitative measures to ensure sustainable funding.

Transition

In Section 1, I outlined an overall foundation for the research, highlighting the background of the problem and the business problem. I further provided the purpose statement, nature of the study, developed research questions, interview questions, conceptual framework, and significance of the study. I included operating definitions that may be unfamiliar to the reader and followed that by identifying assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. In the literature review, I explained SA as the conceptual framework and presented how this framework best aligns with the research question of

this study. In closing, I provided a review of how nonprofit organizations are managed and operate. I specifically addressed the general capacity of nonprofit organizations, success and performance implications, and the impact of organizational culture and leadership on an organization's capacity to adapt and improve growth and funding performance.

In Section 2, I discuss the study's overall methodology and present a robust and rigorous research plan. Section 2 includes an overview of my role as the researcher, the research method and design, the data collection and analysis, and provide the methods to ensure data reliability and validity. In Section 3, I present a study overview, findings, implications for social change, application for professional practice, recommendations for action, suggestions for further research, and an overall conclusion of the research study.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore capacity-building strategies used by leaders of nonprofit organizations to improve growth and funding performance. The target population consisted of four leaders of distinct nonprofit organizations in Texas, who have implemented successful capacity-building strategies to improve growth and funding stability. The implications for positive social change include the potential for nonprofit leaders to implement capacity-building strategies that lead to sustainable financial solvency. Solvent organizations are better positioned to serve their communities through improved operational efficiencies in the provision of goods and services.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher plays a role in the data collection process. Specifically, in a qualitative study, a researcher serves as the research instrument by observing participants and collecting data via interviews with individual participants (Yin, 2014). The researcher must develop a transparent relationship with participants built on trust (Thurairajah, 2019) while maintaining ethical boundaries (Anderson, 2017). To achieve an ethical relationship, researchers should pursue data objectively and practice reflexivity, accounting for how their worldview may impact the findings (Cumyn et al., 2019; Thurairajah, 2019). In a qualitative study, ethical research on the part of the researcher is vital.

To ensure ethical research, a researcher must understand the boundaries between research and practice and adhere to basic principles governing research ethics. Realizing this need, the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research published *The Belmont Report* in 1979, addressing the boundaries and principles of ethical research (Beauchamp, 2020). First, *practice* is defined as a known strategy implemented, with an expectation of a successful outcome. In contrast, *research* is defined as an activity implemented to test a hypothesis, seeking to expand general knowledge on the subject. *The Belmont Report* includes basic ethical principles that should be followed to ensure ethical research. The three core principles for ethical research are (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). As the researcher, I read and understood *The Belmont Report* in detail, applying the principles throughout the data collection process.

I have worked in the nonprofit sector for 10 years. I have observed that nonprofit organizations struggle with planning and capacity-building efforts, and I wanted to research these areas to influence nonprofit organizations to be more effective in their missions. I do not have a relationship with any nonprofit leaders who may have participated in this study to minimize bias. Bias can negatively impact a research study. As a researcher, it is essential to be cognizant of any bias they might possess to avoid unknowingly skewing findings (Yin, 2018). Researchers may include other researchers in the analysis process to mitigate bias, use multiple sources to corroborate findings, and use data to support findings, increasing reliability and validity (Yin, 2018). I mitigated bias

by adopting member-checking of interview analyses with the participants to corroborate findings.

A researcher should develop an interview protocol. The purpose of an interview protocol is to inform the participant of the interview process and to develop a level of trustworthiness by outlining expectations (Peterson, 2019). Also, the use of an interview protocol is for the researcher to ensure alignment with the study's overall intent (Roberts, 2020). An interview protocol may include how a researcher handles interview ethics, interviewing skills, constructing questions, and interviewing settings through different strategies (Yeong et al., 2018). A protocol is relevant in all types of studies; however, it is more important in multiple case studies (Yin, 2014). Some strategies include using language to prompt further discussion or answers, enable the interview to be conversational in nature, provide subtle direction to stay on the subject (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I used open-ended questions to encourage open dialogue during the interview process by using an interview protocol (see Appendix C).

Participants

The type of participants for this study included those who serve in executive-level roles for nonprofit organizations, specifically 501(c)6 organizations acting as associations. In a qualitative study, the participants provide the data through an interview process and must be knowledgeable about the topic (Sarma, 2015). For this study, the participants had experience implementing successful capacity-building strategies to improve growth and funding stability and substantive knowledge of nonprofit business operations. Yin (2018) proposed that a suitable sample size for a qualitative case study is

three to five participants. Therefore, the focus of the study included four leaders within the state of Texas.

Additionally, the selected participants had to meet specific eligibility criteria. According to Weng (2015), eligibility criteria should be established for the selection of participants. This study's specific eligibility criteria entail individuals serving in a director-level role at 501(c)6 nonprofit trade association organizations for at least 5 years. The participants must also have documented achievement in developing and implementing successful capacity-building strategies that positively impact growth and funding. Moreover, the participants had to be over the age of 21 and not have a working relationship with me.

The participants were located in different counties across Texas; therefore, I used a virtual means of communicating with participants. Virtual interviews were also conducted due to the social distancing constraints and concerns in place during the time of data collection. Given the use of virtual platforms during the consent and interview process, a relationship of trust was essential, as it is critical to develop trust between the researcher and participants (Guillemin et al., 2018). To do so, I identified potential participants via LinkedIn, the Texas Society of Association Executives (TSAE) membership listing, and other potential professional networks that I have established in my career. I sent invitations to potential participants and shared information about the intent of my research. In full transparency, I established an understanding of the mutual benefits between myself and the participants. I also made myself available to answer any

questions or concerns and provided clarification on study participation through regular interaction.

The attributes of the chosen participants aligned with the overarching research question. As the primary data source, the participants must be able to address the interview questions with applied experience (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Therefore, I selected nonprofit organization leaders with knowledge and experience related to capacity-building strategies aligned with the overarching research question.

<div align="center">**Research Method and Design**</div>

Research Method

There are three methods of research available for researchers: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. I used a qualitative research method to perform research and gather robust data. Qualitative studies focus on applied and theoretical findings identified from field study research of various data sources, leading to a subjective understanding, meaning, and insights (Fusch et al., 2018; Rashid et al., 2019). Through the use of a qualitative research methodology, researchers can understand a phenomenon in a richer and descriptive manner, specifically the values people place on actions, events, and relationships, according to the participant's viewpoint (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Furthermore, researchers can study specific programs, activities, or processes within different organizations to better understand operational strategies or responses (Grant et al., 2018). Reliable qualitative research includes sound and unbiased interview processes to ensure data saturation from various sources and collection methods (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Therefore, the qualitative method was the best fit for this study because I could

evaluate the responses from interview questions and other types of data to identify and explore capacity-building strategies.

I also considered two additional research methods. The quantitative method is appropriate for studies that evaluate relationships among variables by gathering and assessing measurable data, leading to an objective understanding (Park & Park, 2016). Researchers test hypotheses using the quantitative method and draw conclusions (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). I did not intend to test a hypothesis or examine analytical data to discover strategies or relationships; therefore, the quantitative method was not an appropriate research method for this study.

I also researched the mixed method approach. The mixed method includes both quantitative and qualitative methods and requires the collection of extensive data and analysis, making it very time-consuming (Yin, 2018). The overall purpose of a mixed method study is to expand the general understanding of the quantitative data and include qualitative findings to explain further the statistical data (Walker & Baxter, 2019). Researchers draw inferences from combined findings collected from the two different data sets (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). Since I did not intend to include quantitative analysis or numerical data collection to assess my research question, a mixed methods approach was not appropriate for my study related to nonprofit leaders' capacity-building strategies.

Research Design

Researchers may consider several types of research designs when conducting qualitative research. The qualitative designs I considered for the study were case study,

ethnographic, and phenomenological. Each of these designs entails the same general process but involves a different data collection level and evaluation. I chose to use a multiple case study for my research design.

A researcher can use a case study to explore a particular phenomenon. Specifically, a case study is applicable when exploring experiences and scenarios bounded by time and place and gleaning information through interviews, written reports, and published sources (Runfola et al., 2017). A case study may include the study of multiple or single cases. A single case study entails the study of one case. In contrast, a multiple case study entails investigating multiple cases, leading to greater quality of data to assess information through contrast and comparison (Yin, 2014). I also focused on the "what," "how," and "why" questions of a particular phenomenon, appropriate when conducting a multiple case study (Yates & Leggett, 2016). Researchers conduct repeated interviews to gather data to address the research question, to conduct a multiple case study (Yin, 2018). Therefore, to fully evaluate my research question, a multiple case study enabled me to gather quality information from different sources.

Another research design option is ethnographic. The ethnographic design is conducted in situ and, in business populations, is used to explore organizational culture, targeting a specific and delocalized phenomenon (Smets et al., 2014). Researchers evaluate human relationships within an ethnographic study over a long-term basis (Douglas, 2019). An ethnographic study was not applicable, as I did not seek to explore organizational culture or relationships over the long term.

Researchers may also use a phenomenological research design to conduct a qualitative study. Phenomenological researchers focus on identifying and exploring the personal meanings of participants' lived experiences and perceptions (van Manen & van Manen, 2021). The use of the phenomenological research design enables researchers to understand better the basis of a phenomenon (Alase, 2017). A phenomenological design was not fitting because I did not intend to focus on specific perceptions or the meanings of participants' lived experiences. Instead, the most appropriate method to obtain rich data on participants' experiences was to focus on "what," "how," and "why" questions through the use of a multiple case study.

Data saturation is used in qualitative research to ensure the validity of a study. Data saturation is achieved when enough information is gathered that the study can be replicated, when no new information or themes may be attained, and when more coding is no longer possible (Tran et al., 2017). To achieve data saturation, the data gathered should be rich and thick. *Rich data* refers to multi-layered and detailed data, and *thick data* entails a large amount of data; together, the two represent the data's depth (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Probing questions during interviews, document collection, and participant screens can ensure data saturation (Yin, 2018). Data saturation is contingent upon the sample size of a study (Boddy, 2016). I interviewed four leaders of distinct nonprofit organizations in Texas who had implemented successful capacity-building strategies to improve growth and funding stability. I reached data saturation as data collected in the latter stages did not reveal any new information or themes on the phenomenon.

Population and Sampling

The target population for this study consisted of leaders of distinct nonprofit organizations in Texas who have implemented successful capacity-building strategies to improve growth and funding stability. Therefore, the study population was selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling where the researcher uses judgment to select participants that make up the sample and is commonly used in qualitative research to select who to interview, what to observe, and what to analyze (Rivera, 2019). In addition, researchers use purposive sampling in qualitative research to ensure participants have experience related to the research question (Vazquez, 2019). Using purposive sampling, I chose leaders of successful nonprofit organizations with experience.

I selected leaders of four nonprofit organizations in Texas. The appropriate number of participants depends on the balance between representativeness and quality of responses in obtaining data saturation to answer the research question (Saunders & Townsend, 2016). When conducting a qualitative case study, a small number of participants are required to achieve analytic generalizability and understand the complexity, depth, variation, and context of the particular phenomenon. Within a multiple case study, four to 10 samples are sufficient to achieve data saturation (Gentles et al., 2015) but must still represent the homogeneous population (Boddy, 2016). The number of participants for this study was sufficient to garner adequate data to address the research question and ensure data saturation. I achieved data saturation and did not need

to recruit additional participants. Furthermore, the participants were selected from a homogeneous representation of nonprofit trade associations in the state of Texas.

The criteria I used to select participants included individuals who had served in a director-level role at 501(c)6 nonprofit organizations for at least 5 years and had documented developing and implementing successful capacity-building strategies that positively impact growth funding. The criteria by which a researcher selects participants to satisfy a sample size is vital in justifying the smaller sample sizes of qualitative research (Boddy, 2016; Saunders & Townsend, 2016). This study's selection criteria aligned with the overarching research question, which was vital when selecting a population sample to ensure reliability and validity. For this study, the selected participants had adequate experience related to capacity-building strategies and education and demographic standards to address the research question following the selection criteria.

The interview setting was virtual. I conducted the interviews via a personal account on the Zoom videoconferencing platform (https://zoom.us), with the privacy tools enabled to ensure confidentiality. Zoom was an appropriate option due to Covid-19 concerns and safety protocols, limiting in-person meetings or comfort levels. Furthermore, virtual interviews facilitated convenient access to participants across the state of Texas.

Ethical Research

I conducted this study in alignment with the ethical research standards of the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), the approval number was *06-29-*

_21-0984545_. I understood that it is the researcher's responsibility to adhere to ethical

research standards. Ethical research entails the practice of respect, integrity, justice, and

beneficence (Paul et al., 2017), as outlined in _The Belmont Report_, to achieve a successful

research outcome (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of

Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). To ensure ethical research, I sought

informed consent from participants, provided procedures to withdraw from the study, did

not provide incentives for participation, and provided measures to ensure participants'

ethical protection.

All participants were required to provide meaningful and knowledgeable,

informed consent to participate. Select nonprofit organization leaders received an initial

email requesting participation in the research study. Informed consent is critical during

research and must be meaningful and knowledgeable. Participants must be sufficiently

informed about the study's purpose, including anticipated benefits and potential risks

(Kaewkungwal & Adams, 2019). Participants need to understand that consent is

voluntary and that privacy practices entail anonymity and their right to give, withhold, or

withdraw consent at any time (Paul et al., 2017). Although anonymity was not possible,

as I knew the identities of the participants, I ensured confidentiality by not sharing their

identity information. In the initial email, all potential participants were informed of their

right to withdraw, the process to withdraw, and received an informed consent form.

Participants could withdraw at any time from the study by sending me an email.

Participants were also informed that there was no promise of any financial incentive for

any participant as part of this study.

Ethical research includes protecting participants. Researchers are responsible for ensuring the participants' confidentiality and privacy, as outlined in the Declaration of Helinski (Kaewkungwal & Adams, 2019). To ensure participants' protection, researchers must withhold personal information (Paul et al., 2017) and convey the potential risk of participating in the study by certifying adequacy in documents provided to participants, and certifying that the data collected is protected, to include storage, use, and review (Scherzinger & Bobbert, 2017). Due to virtual means of communicating and collecting data, such as virtual interviews, researchers must consider secure communication protocols and means of legal compliance to protect participants' privacy (Hunter et al., 2018; Paul et al., 2017). To protect the participants' identity, I did not disclose organizations' or leaders' names within the study. Instead, I used O1 and L1, and so on, to refer to the participants so that there was no linkage between the data and the participant. The interviews were conducted via a personal account on the Zoom platform, with the privacy tools enabled to ensure confidentiality. All recordings were password protected and stored by using personal hard drives. I will save the data for 5 years and then destroy the data by using professional means.

Data Collection Instruments

Researchers need to identify the data collection instrument when conducting a study. Data collection instruments entail the tools used to collect research data, including the methods to identify and gather information during the research. The researcher is the primary data collection instrument in qualitative research (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018; Clark & Vealé, 2018). As the primary data collection instrument, researchers make

observations, conduct semistructured interviews, review secondary source materials, and assess all sources' relevance and connection (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I acted as the data collection instrument by conducting in-depth, semistructured interviews and gathering data from secondary sources. At a minimum, secondary sources included organizational documents, plans, annual performance reports, websites, and social media posts.

By using semistructured interviews, I was able to garner insightful qualitative information from participants. The interview process is the most used data collection method in qualitative research (Brinkmann, 2016). Researchers use semistructured interviews to gather data by asking open-ended questions to explore the participants' experiences and glean insights to address the study's topic (Roberts, 2020). Each question should be easily understood and crafted in a way that encourages participants to speak freely. A researcher must avoid leading questions that are lengthy and closed-ended and avoid questions that confirm their personal suspicions (Roberts, 2020). I used seven planned questions and informally conducted each interview. To best address the research question, I conducted semistructured interviews with four leaders of distinct nonprofit organizations in Texas who have implemented successful capacity-building strategies to improve growth and funding stability. I also reviewed organizational data and documents, including general website information, before each interview and requested permission to view other archival materials during or after each interview. Data and documents included financial statements, strategic plans, annual reports, sustainability reports, and general website information.

Researchers use interview protocols when conducting research. The purpose of interview protocols is to ensure alignment with the study's overall intent (Roberts, 2020). Developing an interview protocol also enables a researcher to understand all aspects of the study further and guide an inquiry-based conversation about the research topic (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Roberts, 2020). Furthermore, a well-planned protocol increases the reliability of the research (Yin, 2018). I used an interview protocol (see Appendix C) to outline the interview process to guide the conversation and ensure that I consistently shared the same information with all participants; it also included the list of the open-ended questions.

Upon completion of data collection, it is appropriate for researchers to validate the data through member checking. Member checking is where participants are given the option to verify, comment on, or approve the researcher's data interpretations; this action increases the research's validity (FitzPatrick, 2019; Iivari, 2018). Researchers use member checking for various reasons, including increasing collaboration and engagement with participants and checking and correcting information (Iivari, 2018). Post interview, member checking may also lead to subsequent discussions, assuming the participants' willingness (Hamilton, 2020). To enhance the study's reliability and validity, I conducted member checking with the participants.

Data Collection Technique

There are several data collection processes a researcher may use in qualitative research. Three types of qualitative data collection techniques include individual interviews, focus groups, and observations (Lewis, 2015). For the purpose of this study, I

used a semistructured interview process. Interviews were conducted virtually, face-to-face, via the Zoom conferencing platform with distinct nonprofit leaders with experience on the research topic. I detailed the data collection process and expectations in the interview protocol (see Appendix C) and consent form provided in the initial email. I then set a time for a follow-up phone call to ensure that the participant was comfortable with the interview process. An interview protocol prepared each participant for a productive interview and alleviated any participant's potential concerns.

To adhere to the interview protocol, I began each formal interview with brief introductions, provided information on the purpose of the study and the methods by which the study was conducted, addressed the participant's role in the study, discussed any concerns or questions the participant may have had and sought permission to continue with the interview. The interviews lasted 45 to 90 minutes. I asked the participants the seven planned questions, notified the participant that they did not have to answer any question they were not comfortable discussing, and followed up with any additional questions that came up in conversation. Once the interview was completed, I discussed postinterview processes listed within the consent form, including member checking.

The use of semistructured interviews is one of the most widely used data collection techniques. There are advantages and disadvantages to using the technique. Advantages include (a) the ability to establish an open dialogue between the participant and the researcher, (b) the flexibility to immediately ask follow-up questions, and (c) the ability to develop a relationship that puts the participant at ease (Marshall & Rossman,

2016). Disadvantages include that (a) some participants may be uncomfortable throughout the interview process, (b) some participants might share their biases, and (c) the unfamiliarity with the participant may lead to a lack of openness from the participant (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I used the interview protocol to combat the disadvantages and focus on the advantages by developing rapport with the participant.

In addition to semistructured interviews, researchers collect additional data by reviewing organizational documents for more information. Additional documents allow a researcher to develop rich data and a thick description of the study to establish further triangulation (FitzPatrick, 2019; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Supplemental documents may be written, oral, visual, or cultural data (Merriam & Grenier, 2019) and include information from the company website, press releases, plans, and reports from an organization (Turner et al., 2017). An advantage of additional documents is that many of the documents already exist and allow the researcher to explore historical information (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). However, the disadvantage of reviewing additional documents is that the information may be biased, documents may be outdated or incomplete, and some documents may be created for the purpose of the study or at the request of the researcher. I attained supplemental information from the organization of each participant. As appropriate, I requested specific information to ensure that I attain a broad amount of documentation to address the study's topic. Relevant documents included financial statements, strategic plans, annual reports, sustainability reports, by-laws, and organizational brochures or marketing materials. I used the supplemental data

and documents to cross-check interview and literature data to understand different

perspectives.

Finally, I used member checking to verify the accuracy of the data collection. By

implementing member checking, I continued to collaborate with the participants by

encouraging engagement after the formal interview. It is important to develop a

relationship throughout the data collection process that encourages the participant to be

willing to participate in the member checking phase of the process (Hamilton, 2020).

Member checking may lead to additional discussions and clarification to validate the

study further.

Data Organization Technique

Researchers must establish a system to keep track of data and emerging

understandings. The nature of qualitative data lends researchers to use notetaking,

journaling, and other documentation techniques to identify themes from the data,

typically gathered from certain words (Clark & Vealé, 2018). There are several systems a

researcher may use, such as research logs, reflective journals, and cataloging/labeling

systems. Research logs are essential to document and maintain notes on the process and

findings to fully address the research question (Osborne, 2016). A reflective journal is a

tool the researcher uses to examine assumptions and other factors when answering a

question, ultimately requiring a researcher to be aware of the research's perspective as

they gather data (Bruno & Dell'Aversana, 2017). A researcher may also use

cataloging/labeling systems to organize the study and keep track of data. Researchers

may use different software programs, such as Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel, to

organize the data (Watkins, 2017). All of these techniques are valuable for a researcher and may be used collectively.

I used a cataloging/labeling technique to code and record data, looking for themes and outliers. All of the documents related to the research, participant interviews, and analysis will be kept on a password-protected computer in a password protected file for 5 years. I will permanently delete all of the information after 5 years from the completion of this study.

Data Analysis

There are several different data analysis strategies researchers may use when conducting qualitative research. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), the data analysis part of qualitative research is central to the findings' credibility. A general analytic strategy is imperative when conducting a case study. It may include relying on theoretical propositions, working with data from the ground up, developing case descriptions, or examining rival explanations, all to examine themes and achieve saturation (Yin, 2018). Burmeister and Aitken (2012) stated that even though data saturation is essential, researchers need to be more concerned about the depth of sources than the number of sources. Furthermore, data must be obtained from appropriate and adequate resources to reach data saturation (Gibson, 2017). As the main data instrument, I conducted and analyzed the interviews for the purpose of achieving data saturation to ensure reliability and credibility.

One way to achieve data saturation is through triangulation with multiple sources of evidence. Through triangulation, researchers can achieve reliability and credibility

(Abdalla et al., 2018). There are four types of triangulation (a) data triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) methodological triangulation (Noble & Heale, 2019; Yin, 2018). I used methodological triangulation in this study. Methodological triangulation is the method of using multiple sources to arrive at a conclusion instead of a single source (Heesen et al., 2019; Turner et al., 2017; Watts et al., 2017). Using methodological triangulation, researchers can discover themes in data (Chong et al., 2018) and ensure that the data interpretations are deep and insightful (Maher et al., 2018). In addition, researchers use methodological triangulation to improve reliability and validity by including different techniques within the study, increasing the ability to use different sources of information (Gerner, 2019). I ensured methodological triangulation by conducting semistructured interviews with leaders of nonprofit organizations, reviewing the studied nonprofit organizations' documentation, and a review of the literature associated with capacity-building topics for nonprofit organizations.

Upon collecting and organizing the data, qualitative researchers review the information to identify themes to address the research question. To establish themes, I conducted a thematic analysis. Researchers use thematic analysis to process data by classifying, analyzing, and reporting themes by coding the information (Ranjbarian et al., 2018). The use of thematic analysis enables researchers to search for themes or patterns in the data/interviews, which is the foundational method for qualitative research (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I reviewed the interview responses and supplemental documents to identify common themes related to each research question.

Researchers may also identify codes manually or through the use of software. Codes help researchers quickly analyze data or data chunks to find and cluster information into common themes, applying meaning to the study (Geisler, 2018). The use of software to identify codes can help ensure that a researcher does not encounter manual errors. Data from interviews and other documentation are not always in a standard form (Watkins, 2017). Data analysis software allows researchers to streamline data use by enabling the researcher to organize, systemize, categorize, visualize, store, and analyze the information (Oswald, 2019). I used qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) to identify codes within the study.

Several different QDAS applications were available for use. NVivo is one of the most commonly used applications and can be used to generate codes, patterns, and themes (Paulus et al., 2017). QDAS applications do not preclude involvement from the researcher. Still, they can increase analytic efficiency by enabling the researcher to create and review matrix queries to understand relationships (Bergeron & Gaboury, 2020) and generate meaning from the data (Jamil & Muhammad, 2019). After transcribing the interviews and completing the member checking process, I used NVivo to review the information and identify themes.

To analyze the data and identify themes, I first coded the answers to each interview question from the first interview into main and subthemes by finding common or frequent words. I then looked for commonalities in the remaining interviews, continuing to assign coding according to relevant themes. I also considered information from supplemental documents to ensure triangulation. This step entailed comparing the

themes found within the interviews to the supplemental organization data and documents to confirm the data's correct interpretation. I also identified how the themes linked to SA, the chosen conceptual framework, and additional published literature. These steps of cross-checking allowed me also to discover new material not found in the existing literature.

Reliability and Validity

When conducting a qualitative study, researchers must ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. Reliability and validity relates to the rigor of a study (Bradshaw et al., 2017), accuracy and quality of the data sources (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), and decreases the chance of researcher bias (Mohajan, 2017). In a qualitative case study, reliability and validity are dependent upon the four principles of data collection; (a) use multiple sources of evidence, (b) create a case study database, (c) maintain a chain of evidence, and (d) exercise care when using data from social media sources (Yin, 2018). Using multiple precise sources, a researcher can develop triangulation that increases the contextual understanding of a business problem and increases reliability and validity (Smith, 2018). In general, case study findings are more credible if the researcher can support them with several different sources (Yin, 2018) because findings are more sound, replicable, and accurate (Mohajan, 2017). I review reliability and validity in the following subsections, including dependability, credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation.

Reliability

Reliability is critical in case study research because researchers use it to ensure rigor and dependability. Reliability of research entails that the study is transparent, with truth in the findings, and that the study is replicable, eliciting the same results when using the same data collection technique (Constantinou et al., 2017; Cypress, 2017). Specifically, researchers address reliability through dependability, meaning that the research produces consistent findings that are stable over time and conditions (Ellis, 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Mohajan, 2017). Reliability relates to the level of rigor within a study, such as an interview protocol, data collection technique, data analysis, and data validation method (Chandra & Shang, 2017). Within a qualitative case study, researchers can increase reliability by reviewing transcripts against coding and thematic analysis (Belotto, 2018) and by using member checking (Smith & McGannon, 2018). To ensure reliability and dependability, I asked each participant to review my interpretations of the interview, verify, comment on, or approve the summaries of collected and analyzed data. I also maintained a database of all documentation related to the study, such as handwritten notes, email messages, and interview recordings.

Validity

In qualitative research, researchers show validity to prove the accuracy of the findings. Validity is the extent to which the findings are truthful and can be generalized (Constantinou et al., 2017; Mohajan, 2017); validity also represents the logical consistency of relationships of the research (Gill & Gill, 2020). There are two parts of validity, internal and external. Internal validity entails whether the study measures what it

claims to measure and if the finds are legitimate and replicable (Constantinou et al., 2017; Mohajan, 2017). To achieve internal validity, researchers may focus on triangulation, conduct member checks, ensure data saturation, and implement a peer review process (Mohajan, 2017). External validity pertains to whether the findings are transferable and generalizable (Gill & Gill, 2020). A study should elicit reliability over time and confirm the study's objectivity, demonstrating that the study was not influenced by the researchers' bias (Constantinou et al., 2017). To attain external validity, researchers should (a) include participants that represent the entire study population, (b) use heterogeneous groups, (c) use non-reactive measures, and (d) use precise descriptions to outline the study (Mohajan, 2017). In qualitative research, researchers address internal and external validity to ensure a truthful and generalizable study.

Credibility, transferability, and confirmability are the main strategies to achieve validity in qualitative research. Credibility, like internal validity, pertains to the trustworthiness of the study. Specifically, credibility refers to the level of confidence that the findings are plausible and that the data was correctly interpreted (Ellis, 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Stahl & King, 2020). Through the use of multiple data sources, methodological triangulation can lead to credibility and validity (Jentoft & Olsen, 2019). I achieved credibility through member checking, which allowed the participant to review the transcript summary and verify my interpretation of the data.

Transferability is vital due to its impact on future research. Transferability, like external validity, relates to the ability of the findings to be transferred within other similar contexts without modifying the study's purpose (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Transferability depends on the researcher's ability to obtain thick data related to the documentation of descriptions of the context and background (Høyland et al., 2017). Furthermore, transferability not only relates to the replicability of a study in different contexts, it also relates to other researchers' decisions to adapt, compare, and use the study to develop a greater understanding (Stahl & King, 2020). I provided adequate and thick documentation for review and detailed descriptions within the study to ensure transferability for future research.

Confirmability is another aspect of determining validity in qualitative research. Like objectivity in quantitative research, confirmability entails the extent to which other researchers can confirm the findings, indicating that the interpretations and findings are free from the researcher's bias (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Maher et al., 2018). To achieve confirmability, researchers should provide a data trail indicating the collection technique and data analysis method (Ellis, 2019). I ensured confirmability through member checking and methodological triangulation.

Data saturation is essential to certify the validity of a study. Researchers achieve data saturation when no new information or themes are forthcoming and additional coding is no longer possible. When research achieves data saturation, the study is replicable (Tran et al., 2017). To achieve data saturation, researchers should provide rich and thick data that is multi-layered, detailed, and has depth (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To achieve data saturation, I interviewed four leaders of distinct nonprofit organizations in Texas who have implemented successful capacity-building strategies to improve growth and funding stability. I assumed the methods to gather, document, and analyze the data

would lead to data saturation and address the research question. In addition, probing questions, document collection, and adequate participant screening can ensure data saturation (Yin, 2018). The formal interview process included probing questions, and the analysis considered all other information gathered. After collecting all data from the organizations' websites, organization documents, and interviews, I continued recruiting participants as needed until I reached data saturation to the point that I could not find any new information or themes on the phenomenon I was studying to address the research question.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I discussed the study's overall methodology and presented a robust and rigorous research plan. I expounded on my role as the researcher to include the relationship I have with the research topic. I also discussed the participants' information, the specific research method, and the research design for a qualitative study. I then reviewed the population and sampling technique, the ethical standards and data collection instruments, data collection and organizing techniques, and the process of data analysis. Finally, I explained the strategies I employed to verify the study's reliability and validity through dependable, credible, transferable, and confirmable findings. In Section 3, I present a study overview, findings, implications for social change, application for professional practice, recommendations for action, suggestions for further research, and an overall conclusion of the research study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore capacity-building strategies used by leaders of nonprofit organizations to improve growth and funding performance. I gathered information from interviews with four nonprofit leaders, as well as general organizational documents including financial statements, strategic plans, annual reports, sustainability reports, and other general website information, as available.

Through thematic analysis, I identified four themes that participants implemented at their nonprofit trade association to develop and implement successful capacity-building strategies that positively impacted growth and funding stability. The themes were (a) developing a culture focused on relationships, (b) maintaining a strategic response based on the adopted vision, (c) practicing open communication, and (d) conducting industry-specific research and learning. I describe how the identified strategies connect to the conceptual framework of SA and demonstrate how the themes support the peer-reviewed findings of the literature review.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this qualitative multiple case study was, what capacity-building strategies do leaders of nonprofit organizations use to improve growth and funding performance? I conducted semistructured interviews via Zoom to garner insightful qualitative information on successful strategies used by four leaders of nonprofit organizations in the state of Texas. I used designations L1, L2, L3, and L4 to

signify the participants and maintain confidentially. In addition to the semistructured interviews, I reviewed organizational data and documents and conducted a review of the current literature on nonprofit capacity-building strategies. In the following sections, I discuss the four themes that emerged from the analysis of the semistructured interviews and organizational documents: (a) developing a culture focused on relationships, (b) maintaining a strategic response based on the adopted vision, (c) practicing open communication, and (d) conducting industry-specific research and learning.

Theme 1: Developing a Culture Focused on Relationships

The first theme that emerged was the importance of developing a culture focused on relationships. Through a review of each participant's organizational core values, each nonprofit trade association seeks to help members develop relationships by establishing personal connections, which is a significant facilitator of capacity-building. L2 stated, "one of our long-term strategies is to develop a robust onboarding and mentorship experience that deepens personal connection to the association." The relevance of developing a culture focused on relationships aligns with Jensen (2018), who concluded that nonprofits garner and sustain support through personal connections.

With an organizational mindset focused on relationships, leaders can instill a common dedication towards an organization, providing a collective meaning and objective, and an overall sense of stability (Nakov & Ivanovski, 2018; Wang & Zeng, 2017), which, according to Bach-Mortensen et al. (2018), can lead to improved performance. The relationships should be developed over time and as personal

connections (Svensson et al., 2017). Furthermore, nonprofit organizations may enhance cross-organizational services by focusing on a culture based on relationships.

In response to recent shutdowns and restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, L3 discussed how the organization openly shared information with members, even when they had no answers, to build a relationship based on trust and transparency. L3 also discussed how the organization focused on improving its relationship with sponsors by "constantly staying engaged with our vendors and community about what we are trying to get them exposure in at a time that we are not allowed to come together." To address the challenges of developing relationships with stakeholders built on accountability, as discussed by Slettli et al. (2018), nonprofits can focus on transparency (Ito & Slatten, 2020).

Three subthemes were identified that can impact organizational capacity: (a) relationship development helps to diversify funding, (b) active board and staff engagement garners increased leadership involvement and interest from other members, and (c) enabling relationships between members and partners leads to an overall increase in intrinsic motivation across an association. First, relationship development helps nonprofit organizations diversify funding sources and opportunities with existing and potential sponsors. Drollinger (2018) discussed the importance of developing connections with sponsors in a manner that is not overly persistent on the fundraiser's part but takes on a softer and personal aim to secure funding. Furthermore, revenue diversification can enable nonprofit organizations to overcome limitations by increasing spending flexibility

(Shon et al., 2019) and positively impacts organizational survival (Lu et al., 2020;

Mendoza-Abarca & Gras, 2019).

L3 discussed how their strategy to diversify funding in 2020 was good foresight

to develop more sustainable funding sources throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, stating

the following:

> Our strategy was to not only rely on [one type of vendor] who we love and adore
>
> but try to get new people in the door to make sure we diversify our revenue in
>
> case of something like the pandemic happened, where the [primary type of
>
> vendor] community was decimated and unable to support us. … So, not only [are
>
> we] hand holding our current sponsors, making sure they are happy, but trying to
>
> penetrate those doors and opportunities of people who don't know who we are or
>
> care who we are.

In addition, L2 discussed their corporate partner program through which they harness

relationships between public entity members and corporate members who serve the

public entities. In doing so, the nonprofit organization benefits financially by providing

targeted opportunities for personal connections. L2 provided the following description of

the corporate partner program:

> We have a corporate partner program that has various levels of corporate
>
> partnership, and then depending on the level that those companies join us or
>
> partner with us, they have access to our members through various offerings. …
>
> We are providing a curated list of providers to our members to help meet their
>
> needs and, in return, those corporate partners.

Second, active board engagement garners increased leadership involvement and interest from other members. McAuley (2019) discussed how leadership deficits for nonprofit organizations stem from the level of board involvement or lack thereof. To address board leadership deficits, leaders of nonprofit organizations focus on developing relationships based on trust and positively impact organizational performance (McAuley, 2019). A board built on relationships allows for trust between members, which increases an organization's agility to succeed (Henkel et al., 2019). Moreover, to establish active board engagement, leaders implement board orientation meetings to improve board knowledge and understanding of the organization (Mason & Kim, 2020). L1, L2, L3, and L4 focused on supporting a culture of involvement, allowing board members to explore, engage, develop, and act on the annual and long-term goals of the organization that enable capacity-building and improve performance.

To identify goals, L1 listens to members to better understand their needs. L1 stated, "we get member's voice, we listen to our members, and based on their needs, we will go to the industry and look for products, programs, or services that help their needs." In turn, L1 develops annual priorities and programs based on these findings.

L2 discussed how the executive board develops annual priorities related to the three long-term goals of the organization, which three separate committees execute. To encourage involvement, input, and feedback, the organization invites executive leaders, chairpersons, and other upper-level organizational leaders to share the progress on all priorities at an annual summit. This action enables a culture of inclusion and leads to open communication for direction on future goals. L2 stated,

Every year we work with each of our major committees. We have a major

committee for each of our three strategic areas, advocacy, professional learning,

member engagement. We work with them throughout the year to get feedback and

input on not only carrying out the strategic priorities of that year but also getting

feedback and input on what a focus might be during that year and or the following

year … and also get feedback and input from them on the next steps and what's

needed.

Furthermore, L3 discussed how many of the organization's initiatives could be

replicated at member organizations because of the type of members the organization

serves. The opportunity for replication helps to garner interest as board members can

connect personal and organizational goals. This finding is supported by Nakov and

Ivanovski (2018), who discussed that a culture that is open to involvement could help to

align members' personal goals and the goals of the organization. Furthermore, Berlan

(2018) found that personal and organizational missions can help motivate individuals and

the organization as a whole if aligned and allowed to operate collectively.

In addition, L3 and L4 discussed the importance of onboarding the nonprofit

board members. According to Chillakuri (2020), onboarding helps ease the anxiety of

new members, as they are indoctrinated into the organization's culture and can

understand performance and social expectations. Specifically, L4 focused on the

importance of orienting the nonprofit board, stating, "I'm all about the board, you know,

orientation, teaching them how to do their jobs. You have to because they're all

volunteers. They have their regular eight to five jobs during the day." Mason and Kim

(2020) discussed how coaching of board volunteers increases nonprofit governance, improving overall effectiveness.

Third, enabling relationships between members and partners leads to an overall increase in intrinsic motivation across an organization due to knowledge sharing and the perception of inclusion. Ilyas et al. (2020) discussed the importance of developing a sense of community amongst members and building trust to secure interest in an organization, leading to an environment of association. Knowledge sharing could positively influence member engagement by establishing intrinsic motivation and the members then feel recognized in the organization (Fait & Sakka, 2020). In other words, members and partners feel as if they have ownership in the organization, thereby improving commitment to an organization and enhancing performance (Brimhall, 2018).

L1, L2, L3, and L4 encourage member relationships as one of the central tenets to their existence by allowing members to provide open input and feedback, participate in special committees and task forces, and encourage participation in mentor or engagement programs. Part of L3's member recruitment marketing documents includes language about how they focus on creating strong connections between peers to increase resources, inspiration, and innovation. Through the use of these methods, members are made part of the organization's decision process and feel part of any solution to help the organization achieve its mission. L1 provided an example of how the organization members collectively identified and addressed an issue to resolve the need for a less expensive peer review system, using the members' knowledge to support each other. L1 stated,

[members] came to us and they said look, we need you to help us with this. ….
So, what did we do, we went, and we designed an alternative mechanism for
[them] to get peer reviews where … members of the association would work with
each other to do peer reviews. But, by virtue of the fact that they are in the same
trade organization, they are operating with a small trusted group of organizations
… it allows them to achieve this at a lower cost and in a more facile way.

L2 offers a mentor program and encourages members to join committees that
garner interest in state-level activities and positions. Within nonprofit organizations,
programs that establish fellowship amongst members encourage bonding (Ilyas et al.,
2020). Members initially volunteer for altruistic reasons but commit to future roles due to
aligning with organizational goals (Miller-Stevens & Ward, 2019). L2 described how
they gain the interest of members and encourage them to volunteer for the organization in
the future by developing relationships

You ask them to serve on a focus group, and maybe they come up to you
afterwards because they feel like they have a relationship with you, and they say
that was really good, … then you are like tapping those people on the shoulder
saying we're redeveloping [the] mentor training, kind of give us your thoughts
there, serve on this focus group, so to kind of see them come up through the
ranks, if you would, of kind of appointed and elected leadership within the
association, I think it's pretty pivotal.

L3 reiterated the importance of establishing online communities by enabling
relationship development amongst members. L3 uses online communities to bring

members together. Within these communities, "people can post questions, and people can kind of sort of like respond to." Goncharenko (2019) concluded that members could quickly ask for advice on different issues and engage with each other, strengthening relationships across an organization. In addition, L3 encourages the development of relationships by engaging board and committee members to complete work outside of staff requirements.

Finally, L4 shared how members are empowered to be ambassadors for the organization. L4 stated that they "turn it around on them and call them ambassadors … If you're a member, then you're an ambassador. Help recruit other [people] to our membership. You know it's a teamwork effort." Organizations should implement appropriate recruitment strategies for their membership, such as recruiting board members, which can result in a more effective organization (Miller-Stevens & Ward, 2019). Therefore, by empowering members to be ambassadors, an organization can show that all members have ownership, bring value, and make their own impact.

Theme 1, developing a culture focused on relationships, aligns with the SA conceptual framework. An organization's culture impacts the ability of an organization to adapt practices to fit the organization's needs (Bach-Mortensen et al., 2018). Moreover, through relationship building, members can take collective actions to promote the efficiency and adaptability of an organization (Akhavan & Philsoophian, 2018; Lee, 2020; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018), which relates to the elements of leadership unity under SA and organizational capacity.

Leaders should develop a team mindset internally and externally to facilitate meaningful partnerships and relationships (Arbussa et al., 2017) and better address future needs. Kim and Peng (2018) discussed how nonprofit organizations could increase their resources through partnerships and collaborations, increasing capacity. By developing relationships, L3 was able to swiftly, rapidly, and systematically manage and handle needs to create value and survive through the COVID-19 pandemic, which is how Doz and Kosonen (2008) defined SA.

The importance of developing relationships also aligns with a key factor of SA, pertaining to the act of nourishing teams or relationships to increase collaboration and integration. Furthermore, a team-like culture is established through leadership unity that prepares and motivates an organization (Arbussa et al., 2017; Morton et al., 2018). These actions encourage knowledge-sharing, which can improve capacity related to the SA of an organization (Debellis et al., 2021).

Theme 2: Maintaining a Strategic Response Based on the Adopted Vision

Maintaining a strategic response based on the adopted vision was the second theme that emerged from the data analysis L1, L2, L3, and L4 shared how the leaders used the adopted vision to guide the organization's short- and long-term goals and fully define who they are and who they serve as an organization. Gratton (2018) emphasized that even though strategic planning is a challenge for nonprofit organizations, it can be used as an organizational tool to address systemic issues and improve the organization's future if followed. In addition, Sanderse et al. (2020) discussed how a business model framework to planning could serve an organization as a descriptive form of

communication that can be used as an analytical and visual tool. Specifically, L1

addressed how they approach different strategies by considering who they serve and

building their capacity; while L2 referred to their annual priorities as their "north star."

Furthermore, L4 asserted that

> you have to have some type of plan in place and then once you build your
>
> strategic plan, you build an operating plan … everything has to be in writing, and
>
> strategic planning has to be something that everybody has to be on board.

Three subthemes emerged that can influence organizational capacity: (a) by

developing a strategic plan, organizations can identify who they serve, (b) through

teamwork, strategy mapping, and continued analysis, organizations can implement and

evaluate goals and initiatives, and (c) organizations use strategic plans for accountability.

First, organizations define who they are and who they serve by developing a strategic

plan. L1, L2, and L3 each referenced times in which they, as an organization, asked if the

proposed program or action meets the intent of the organization and the needs of the

members. Jensen (2018) asserted that it must focus on its mission for a nonprofit

organization to remain sustainable. For example, L3 described how, when faced with a

need for new policies, the board evaluates whether or not the adoption of specific policies

aligns with the organization's overall strategic plan or mission. Additionally, L1

mentioned that they continually identify where they operate within the industry and how

they move forward to maintain a mindset of innovation for the industry. This statement is

supported by the organization's mission, vision, and values, which includes language on

how the organization strives to "structure the association to reflect the changing priorities of the membership."

L2 described how the organization's board annually works with selected taskforces to determine priorities to address long-term strategies. This action allows the organization's board to use the strategic framework as their north star and carry out the overall mission and vision established in 2015.

> We are using those long-term strategies. Anything that we are considering doing, we stand it up against that strategic framework. That strategic framework really is our north star … if you would, every decision, every offering, anything that we are considering doing, we are looking back at that strategic framework, saying, does this help us further our mission, does this help us reach that aspiration. … We are really looking at, what is the original spirit and intent of the long-term strategies of these aspirations what was meant there.

The organization uses its strategic framework to drive its mission, which is supported by Topaloglu et al. (2018), who asserted that nonprofit organizations operate using a primarily mission-driven business model.

Second, organizations can implement and evaluate goals and initiatives through teamwork, strategy mapping, and continued analysis. Miller (2018) used the term strategy implementation to describe the importance of involving stakeholders, demonstrating effective and efficient management, and sharing transparency of efforts. The act of strategy mapping and continued analysis allows organizations to track performance and progress throughout implementing a specific strategy. Bunger et al. (2019) found that

organizations that lack the capacity to develop evaluation processes were financially less stable. L1, L2, L3, and L4 each shared strategies that encourage teamwork, implement strategy mapping, and actively monitor the status of an initiative. For example, L1 advised how they evaluate a "suite of operational needs," as well as their capacity to fulfill an initiative, to develop programs and strategies that meet the needs of the membership, and then develop a transparent and continual process for monitoring and growing the ability of the organization.

L4 stressed how the involvement of the elected board is imperative to developing an achievable strategic plan, asserting that a strategic plan is based on teamwork. L4 stated,

> I created my own strategic plan for myself on how I want to make this organization grow. I presented to my board of directors, and then they worked with me on where we can improve it. And, you know, go from there. … A strategic plan was based on teamwork like we worked as a team to come out with this strategic plan, and everybody had to do their part.

A nonprofit board should be involved in the strategic decision-making of the organization because it can influence the organization's direction, survival, and legitimacy through social capital (Ihm & Shumate, 2019). Zhu et al. (2016) added that strategic board involvement enhances organizational performance, although neglected at times. Therefore, leaders should involve the board when developing and implementing a strategic plan through teamwork.

L3 discussed how their organization sets aside space in a designated conference room to hang up posters accounting for the stages of strategy implementation for each annual priority. By doing so, the organization can actively and visually assess where they are on the strategy and easily answer questions from stakeholders, use it as a reminder to contact or encourage those involved in implementing the strategy, and continually be aware or reminded of the intent behind the initiative. L3 stated,

> So, what we do, is we have, we call strategy mapping … but we have each strategy that we identify for the board level, we have a map, with a beginning, middle, and end. We start backwards. In the end, what would success look like with that strategy?

The act of involving the entire staff and making the strategy map accessible to all, not only those involved, helps the organization successfully implement the strategy. L3 went on to add that they ensure the right people on involved in getting the initiative completed when stating that they make "sure that the strategy we have, making sure they are purposeful, and everyone is on board, and the right people are implementing them." Miller (2018) reiterated that the efforts of an organization's staff could successfully impact the implementation of an initiative. In addition, relationships between organizations and stakeholders could improve an organization's overall strategic planning capacity (Shumate et al., 2018). The generation of shared goals within an organization could contribute to the effective performance that is collectively and continually monitored.

Third, organizations use strategic plans for accountability. Given the variety of stakeholders that nonprofits encounter, it is essential to address accountability, albeit to do so is challenging (Slettli et al., 2018). By providing accountability measures related to the strategic plan, nonprofit organizations can increase transparency (Ito & Slatten, 2020), increasing commitment to an organization. L1, L2, L3, and L4 practice a form of performance evaluation and respond as needed within their organization.

Each year, L1 works with other organization leaders to identify focus areas for the coming year. Annual priorities are developed to include key performance indicators to assess performance based on desired outcomes. Then, L1 again works with the organization's leaders to conduct an annual program review, evaluating the performance of each implemented priority. L1 stated,

> We have an annual program review, where every one of these solutions, every product, program, service that we have in place, and in particular the ones that have financial metrics or specific criteria for success. Once a year, they are evaluated, are they performing as they were supposed to. Did they hit the ROI that it was supposed to, did it happen, did the TCO occur, the total cost of ownership results in what we thought it would be? If the answer is yes and it is performing well, then let's grow it. If the answer is no, then we figure out what is wrong and make a decision, do we improve it or do we sunset it. And most of the time, these go on, and sometimes they do get sunsetted.

L1 advised how, when evaluating the option to sunset a program, the organization engages the membership and provides options, working together to figure out and

identify possible changes regarding what is best for the organization and the members, based on performance. To move forward and remain adaptive, it is important for organizations to consider the outcomes of evaluations and make improvements (Romano & Levin, 2021). Therefore, through this action, L1 highlighted the importance of sunsetting as a mechanism to modify and evolve programs to adapt to current needs.

When developing their annual initiatives, L3 ensures that the initiatives are measurable before proceeding with implementation. L3 emphasized the importance of honestly assessing a goal and developing a form of measurement that fits. There is a need to consider the stakeholders who will evaluate the performance and develop metrics based on how they define success (Haber & Schryver, 2019). L3 stated,

> What we do is, is that we make sure that the initiatives we kicked off actually are measurable, uh, because there are a number of, and it doesn't always work that way when we initially have those conversations, but when the board starts talking, and someone suggests that one of the initiatives should be let's make the members more happy, I don't know how to measure that. … We try to be very specific on our strategies and goals. Like, um, let's diversify revenue and sponsorships by growing [membership] by 2%. Right? So, that is a measurable goal, and we can easily pull that and find out how we did.

By asking if the initiatives are measurable, L3 also ensures that the initiative is achievable and purposeful.

Each participant purposefully evaluates initiatives regularly through a variety of means. Feedback is imperative from all stakeholders and leaders to guide future direction.

L2 uses surveys to collect information to assess the progress and opinions of the membership. L4 evaluates goals every quarter to ensure they are on target to meet the goal and adjust as needed. These actions enable organizations to engage with membership while conveying and cultivating a culture of transparency, integrity, and accountability (Strang, 2018). By developing metrics and sharing the data with stakeholders, organizations address the need to provide some level of reporting on performance, increasing accountability (France & Tang, 2108).

The findings in Theme 2 align with the SA framework. One of the critical factors of achieving SA is to develop structures that empower actors and spur accountability (Cunha et al., 2020; Doz, 2020). Through strategic sensitivity, an organization uses resources to apply organizational sense-making to make judgments, identify the direction, and proceed (Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Ivory & Brooks, 2018). Organizations build strategic sensitivity through communication, which can encourage strategic discussion (Morton et al., 2018), such as establishing a process for cyclical feedback. Nonprofit organizations can use strategic sensitivity to gain knowledge about programs and initiatives to make needed improvements, such as highlighted by L1, when evaluating the progress and future of programs and initiatives.

Furthermore, the resource fluidity metacapability of SA aligns with Theme 2. Through resource fluidity, organizations need to modify operations and meet needs rapidly. Through the evaluation process organizations can perform faster and capitalize on more opportunities that impact overall goals (Arbussa et al., 2017; Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Ivory & Brooks, 2018; Nejatian et al., 2019). Leadership should build operational

processes to enable change (Cunha et al., 2020), identify means to change, and use

resources effectively (Lungu, 2018). The need to rely on people to achieve goals is also

aligned to resource fluidity (Doz & Kosonen, 2010; Morton et al., 2018).

Theme 3: Practicing Open Communication

The third theme to emerge from the data analysis was the necessity to practice

open communication. L1, L2, L3, and L4 each highlighted the need for open

communication, providing examples of how within their organizational structure they

share the mission, strategic plans, new or changing programs with members, and to listen

to members to understand member needs better. By establishing an organizational

structure based on meeting member needs, organizations can achieve strategic success

(Bae et al., 2020). Through their established mission, vision, and values, L1 focuses on

communication to develop a culture of teamwork by "respecting each other's voice and

opinion through effective communication and collaboration."

Three subthemes emerged that can impact organizational capacity: (a) the need

for transparent communication, (b) employing multiple forms of communication, and (c)

establishing a culture that enables two-way communication. First, the need for

transparent communication was stressed by all participants. Transparency within a

nonprofit organization is neglected but vital to explain further the opportunistic and

economic activities of an organization (Perić et al., 2020), as transparency adds value to

an organization (Harris & Neely, 2021). L2 uses every means of communication as an

opportunity to share the strategic framework of the organization, constantly tying the

message back to the strategic framework. L3 is transparent with the membership on the

projects and annual priorities they are undertaking, ensuring that the membership is aware of all activities; their strategy is "communication, communication, communication." The practice of transparent communication increases the legitimacy of the organization, enabling a nonprofit to clearly share and reiterate its impact and effectiveness as an organization (Bryan, 2019).

Furthermore, L4 uses transparent communication with the board of the organization as a means to actively re-establish the organization. Mason and Kim (2020) emphasized the relevance of regular communication between the board and staff to increase the feeling of engagement and sense of being informed between both parties. To overcome the barrier of being micro-managed by the board, L4 practices open communication to ensure that the board knows that the job is being completed and shares how the job is being accomplished to establish a sense of trust. Open communication across hierarchical levels within an organization is essential empowerment (Baird et al., 2018). Therefore, L4 uses open communication to not only enable the board to trust their work ethic and direction but also enable them to encourage and empower L4 to independently fulfill the needs of the organization as part of their position.

Second, employing multiple forms of communication is essential when seeking to reach different stakeholders and members across an organization. Different forms of communication may include in-person, website, social media, printed or narrative form, digital, telephone, and e-mail. By using different forms of communication, leaders can ensure that at least one of the ways of communicating enables the recipient to understand the message, and an organization may reduce any incorrect information being shared. To

develop an appropriate communication strategy, an organization needs to understand its audience (Hopton & Walton, 2019). Effective communication requires clear messages, shared via appropriate platforms, and developed based on a diverse audience, promoting trust between all parties (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021).

L2, L3, and L4 each discussed different strategies to share information and openly communicate with members. L2 and L3 emphasized the important use of digital platforms to share information, such as the organization's website, daily emails, social media, or discussion boards. L3 uses their member discussion board to share information, while L2 acknowledged how their daily electronic newsletter is a means to share key information about the organization regularly, stating

> We have a daily electronic newsletter that goes out that is emailed to all of our members every weekday morning. So that is going to include news from around the state, going to include key offerings within the association. But there is also key content that is cycled and put in front of the members, both through the daily electronic newsletter [email], as well as a social media presence.

L2 reiterated that this email allows the organization to keep members informed and aware of what is being offered and what is being accomplished to achieve annual goals. The daily email notification is an opportunity for the organization to use a variety forms of digital platforms, point the members back to the website, and continually share information on the strategic plan and mission. López-Arceiz et al. (2019) found that digital means of communication that are accessible can help organizations share information better and reduce any misunderstandings or conflicts that may occur if

communication was not as accessible. Kuzmina and Kuzmin (2021) reinforced the need for nonprofit organizations to share information in a digital space, finding that nonprofits can build their communication contacts through expanding their marketing practices.

L3 and L4 discussed the importance of in-person communication and engagements to garner interest and support for the organization. L3 shares information on strategies in various formats, such as their printed and digital magazine. However, they reach most members during their membership processional at their annual conference. L4 also shared the importance of increasing engagement through in-person communication. L4 indicated how they are involved in other organizations and how making it a point to talk directly to current and potential members or external supporters can bring recognition to the organization, whether by growing membership, increasing funding sources, or highlighting legislative awareness.

The third subtheme identified under the open communication strategy was the need to establish a culture that enables two-way communication. Effective two-way communication is key to developing a good relationship that allows both parties to harness trust and obtain commitment (Drollinger, 2018). Trent et al. (2020) found that organizations must establish effective ways to communicate information and provide adequate mechanisms and opportunities for others to express their voice. L1, L2, and L3 expressed how they actively listen and respond to members.

L1 regularly listens to members through various mechanisms, seeking to garner member voices to develop programs and other strategic priorities to improve organizational capacity. L1 listed the means by which they engage with members,

We are engaged with our members through a variety of means. Whether it is

through our advocacy team, our clinical team, our technology team, we have a

number of member ambassadors that are in the field talking to members … we

listen to our members, and based on their needs, we will go to industry and look

for products, programs or services that help meet their needs … we then

communicate that capability.

After execution, L1 will reach out to the membership asking for feedback to assess the

direction of different programs and how the membership's views may impact future

strategic priorities. L1 emphasized the importance of a feedback loop enabling the

organization to assess the health of the organization by evaluating different established

metrics. The goal of L1 is to develop a "cyclical growing list of successes….so, the

success of each iteration is what feeds the next iteration."

L2 requests feedback from members through evaluations and other informal

responses, such as emails and social media, to redesign, redevelop, and create programs

and experiences for their membership. L2 stressed how garnering feedback empowers

members and allows them to influence the organization. Trent et al. (2020) discussed

how members who have opportunities to provide voice are more involved with and

committed to an organization.

The findings in Theme 3 align with the SA framework. First, open

communication aligns with the strategic sensitivity metacapability. Organizations can

build strategic sensitivity through communication by (a) allowing for open conversation

that encourages strategic discussion, (b) increasing alertness and awareness to foster

business development, and (c) ensuring connectivity and collaboration through quality

dialog (Morton et al., 2018). L1 and L3 stressed the need to use multiple communication

channels to reach members, such as the website, social media, email, and in-person,

allowing for an open two-way conversation to improve programs and increase the

organization's value proposition.

Secondly, communication is also essential to build leadership unity within an

organization, which is another metacapability of SA. Through a developed

communication channel, leaders can collectively share gained knowledge, increasing the

overall organization's sharpness of perception and ability to make judgments (Ivory &

Brooks, 2018; Morton et al., 2018). L2 stressed the importance of communication when

engaging future leaders to garner interest in guiding the organization's strategic direction,

enabling future leaders to be aware of and fully understand the organization, listen to

members, and provide feedback for improvement. The actions of L2 helps to solidify and

develop leadership unity within the organization while also ensuring that future leaders

can apply strategic sense-making when assessing priorities and offerings.

Theme 4: Implementation of Industry Research and Learning

The final theme that emerged from the data analysis was implementing industry

research and learning. Research and learning can impact internal processes and external

relationships within nonprofit organizations. Leaders that encourage research and

learning can enable staff and other stakeholders within a nonprofit organization to

disseminate the learned information, increasing innovation and bettering an organization

(Gil et al., 2018; Naqshbandi & Tabche, 2018). All participants of this study discussed

how they support and encourage industry research and learning and the sharing of gained knowledge to further the value of their respective organizations. Each organization also addresses the importance of learning and sharing information as part of various organization documents, such as purpose or goals.

Three subthemes emerged that can help to build organizational capacity: (a) conducting market research within the industry, (b) supporting a culture of learning, and (c) promoting the sharing of innovative measures to spur development across the industry. First, L3 and L4 stressed the importance of conducting market research to learn from others. L3 shared how they continually conduct research, looking outside of their organization to determine what others are doing. L3 stated,

> anybody who is pushing out content on our space, I try to stay abreast on what is coming out, right, because I want to make sure that our board is talking about the latest and greatest, not something that should have happened like 3 to 4 years ago.

L3 will assess what other like size or larger organizations with similar purposes are doing to be more successful, acknowledging that it is essential to research similar or aspirational organizations when conducting research. In addition, L4 shares knowledge of different industry opportunities, such as funding, with members, serving as a conduit to get information in front of those who can benefit from whatever it may be.

Second, leaders should support a culture of learning, allowing employees to engage in professional development. The provision of training is essential to promote employee growth within an organization (Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2016), helping to empower employees, diversify talents, and improve the workplace (Kwon & Park, 2019),

and increase proficiency in tasks performed, resulting in improved job satisfaction and performance (Saengchai et al., 2019). L1 expressed how they address human resource capacities by offering training to build the capacity of employees and thereby the organization, "[we] build our capacity by building our human assets to reflect skills and expertise that align with some of [the members] needs." L1 also discussed how the provision of training is directly related to employee retention and satisfaction within the organization.

Finally, the third subtheme identified under the strategy of implementing industry research and learning was the need to promote innovation and industry development. An organization that focuses on learning can improve its innovative capacity (Gil et al., 2018). L3 stressed that developing special projects can help to further the industry each year, addressing something that none of the leaders or board members know the answer to. L3 stated,

> One of the things that I try to push with the [annual] initiatives is that I love it when they pick something that none of us have the answer to, right. Because if we could somewhat not even have an answer but formulate a process for what the answer might be for you, uh, that's an industry service, that is kind of why we are here.

L3 also discussed how leaders are responsible for staying "on top of whatever is coming out" not to be surprised by anything.

L2 focuses on collective learning across the organization to build organizational capacity. It aims to curate a living library that will house innovative and transformational

leadership practices for leaders to share and learn from each other to further the industry and promote knowledge sharing. L2's organization also lists a goal of developing a "cohesive, nationally recognized professional learning system that builds leadership capacity and a culture of transferable learning." Through knowledge sharing, nonprofit organizations can serve as a source of innovation, which can further increase the organization's value proposition (Fait & Sakka, 2020).

The findings noted in Theme 4 correlated with the SA conceptual framework. Human resources are critical when managing a nonprofit organization, as people are the primary resource, as a dimension of capacity. Therefore, organizational learning is meaningful because leaders invest in employees by enhancing organizational innovation and heightening the use of knowledge management for increased responsiveness during times of change (Wang & Zeng, 2017). In addition, nonprofits can overcome problems early by evaluating and establishing organizational structures that enable the resolution of challenges (Andersson, 2019), aligning with the strategic sensitivity and resource fluidity metacapabilities, and improving organizational capacity.

Implementing industry research and learning can help accelerate strategic sensitivity by empowering employees and increasing their skills to perform more effectively. Arbussa et al. (2017) discussed how organizations lack staff and specialists to address strategic sensitivity. Through learning, employees can sharpen foresight through anticipation, gain insight through experimentation, and gain perspective to be able to guide an organization, as explained by Doz and Kosonen (2010) when discussing

strategic sensitivity. L1 highlighted the importance of tying employees' skills to the organization's overall capacity.

The SA metacapability resource fluidity also aligns with the findings in Theme 4. Resource fluidity entails an organization's ability to rapidly modify operations and processes to meet needs, which can be increased through research and learning. Resource fluidity applies to human resource management and innovative means for collaboration (Ivory & Brooks, 2018). Through research and learning, organizations can address resource fluidity and its ability to reconfigure and redeploy resources rapidly to perform faster and capitalize on opportunities (Arbussa et al., 2017; Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Ivory & Brooks, 2018; Nejatian et al., 2019). Overall, organizations can create value and ensure survival through organizational learning, increasing capacity, and remaining competitive.

Applications to Professional Practice

Nonprofit organizations provide valuable services and employment opportunities in the United States, even though some nonprofit organizations lack effective capacity-building strategies to meet the organizational mission and growth goals (Xiaodong et al., 2017). In addition, many nonprofit organizations are experiencing increased service demands (Kim & Peng, 2018) and a need to address changing operational dynamics related to growth and funding (Topaloglu et al., 2018). These conditions require nonprofit organizations to continually focus on expanding service capacity to avoid organizational failure or insolvency (Mitchell & Calabrese, 2019). The findings of this study highlight effective capacity-building strategies of nonprofit organizations that leaders of nonprofit organizations can use to improve growth and funding stability, which has a direct effect

on the organization remaining solvent and relevant. Overall, the findings include examples of effective practices by identifying examples of strategies for improving nonprofit management, thereby illustrating how nonprofit organizations could remain sustainable.

Based on the findings of my research, leaders of nonprofit organizations could build capacity by implementing the four strategies, as follows: (a) developing a culture focused on relationships, (b) maintaining a strategic response based on the adopted vision, (c) practicing open communication, and (d) conducting industry-specific research and learning. The first strategy, developing a culture focused on relationships, is critical when developing versatile organizations dependent on reliable relationships to achieve missions and goals. The second strategy, maintaining a strategic response based on the adopted vision, is imperative for nonprofit organizations because future growth and development are realized based on the actions taken to achieve the established mission, vision, and goals. The third strategy, practicing open communication, is vital to maintain the organization's value proposition, enabling members' voices. Lastly, the fourth strategy, conducting industry-specific research and learning, is vital because leaders must stay abreast of current industry standards and share information with the membership.

By implementing these capacity-building strategies, leaders of nonprofit organizations could increase the abilities and strategic responses of the organization. According to AbouAssi et al. (2019), implementing capacity-building strategies can help organizations learn to adapt to change and expand their ability to innovate and improve practices for better performance. Therefore, the results of my research may add to the

body of knowledge on strategies leaders of nonprofit organizations can use to address capacity-building strategies that positively impact performance.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the potential for nonprofit leaders to implement capacity-building strategies that lead to sustainable growth and funding performance within nonprofit organizations. The action of implementing these strategies is vital for the industry, as nonprofits are an essential part of society and economic development within communities (Mitchell & Calabrese, 2019). These strategies of building culture, plans, means of communication, and knowledge will assist nonprofit organizations in garnering support and interest, as increasing dependency and visibility of an organization can help address accountability (Carvalho et al., 2019). Furthermore, increased knowledge of management strategies can improve nonprofit organizations' performance and enable them to fulfill organizational missions and goals that positively benefit society (Dobrai & Farkas, 2016), further impacting the overall social impact of an organization.

Nonprofit organizations that successfully apply the capacity-building strategies of (a) developing a culture focused on relationships, (b) maintaining a strategic response based on the adopted vision, (c) practicing open communication, and (d) conducting industry-specific research and learning, can increase their ability to meet their mission. Through increased ability to meet their mission, these strategies can ultimately benefit communities by enabling the organization to provide services not met by for-profit businesses or government agencies. Therefore, this study may help leaders of nonprofit

organizations benefit communities through improved operational efficiencies that can increase the capacity to provide services to meet the established mission and goals for benefiting communities.

Recommendations for Action

Research on capacity-building strategies within nonprofit organizations is imperative to the positive impact of the overall industry. As the need to expand services provided by nonprofit organizations to meet resource gaps increases, leaders need to understand guiding best practices that impact overall organizational capacity (Walters, 2020). Through the findings of this research, I highlighted areas that leaders of nonprofit organizations should focus on to improve an organization's capacity to address performance.

My first recommendation is that leaders of nonprofit organizations develop strategic plans based on the organization's culture and expectations, input from members, and industry best practices. Sanderse et al. (2020) discussed how established business models could benefit leaders when creating and implementing strategies to promote and grow the organization and increase the value proposition. Second, nonprofit leaders should establish achievable and measurable metrics to assess organizational performance when developing strategic plans. These metrics should be assessed regularly and continually shared with members of the organization and other interested parties through annual reports, at a minimum. By providing accountability reports and reviewing measures related to the strategic plan, nonprofit organizations can increase transparency (Ito & Slatten, 2020), improving relationships and communications with members.

Finally, I recommend that leaders of nonprofit organizations collaborate and work in partnership to share information, best practices and learn from each other. As different strategies are implemented, leaders of nonprofit organizations can work together to improve the industry. When working together, nonprofit partners collectively encompass an individual value network specific to the organization (Sanderse et al., 2020). Together, these networks can expand to the collective efforts to improve the overall industry's value.

There are various ways I can share the results of this study. First, there are numerous journals for nonprofit organizations to disseminate a condensed version of the report. I can also present the findings at various conferences for those working for and serving nonprofit organizations, specifically those for nonprofit trade associations. I will share the study results with the interviewees and other nonprofit associations that request a copy.

Recommendations for Further Research

Leaders of nonprofit organizations should use strategies to improve the capacity of the organizations for addressing growth and funding stability. The small sample size of this qualitative multiple case study was one limitation of this study. The use of four participants in 501(c)6 nonprofit trade associations may not represent the larger population of nonprofit organizations limiting the ability to generalize the information presented. Therefore, further research should focus on a larger population and include a quantitative methodology to obtain a more extensive data set, including data from financial statements and annual reports. Another recommendation for further research is

to conduct a more extensive, long-term study exploring the four strategies' impact on capacity-building within nonprofit organizations.

Reflections

Completing the DBA doctoral study process has been challenging and rewarding. I started the process to finish in a set time, without considering that life would continue to happen, especially the curveballs of Covid-19, three boys under the age of 10, and my husband's constantly changing military life requirements. Although the time has taken longer than I expected, I have gained valuable insight that has already proven beneficial in my career.

Through the process, I had to make personal sacrifices while developing self-discipline and self-motivation to keep moving forward. I learned to embrace feedback and take each step as an opportunity to learn from different perspectives. I remained versatile as I worked through each approval process and while garnering participants, which proved to be one of the most challenging steps, with many potential participants leaving the nonprofit industry or not meeting the qualification criteria to participate. Ironically, throughout the process, I had to apply my chosen conceptual framework, SA, to remain agile and adaptable to achieve my overall goal of completion. I appreciate all those who helped along the way and the knowledge that I have gained concerning the management of nonprofit organizations and how to develop the capacity to address funding and growth needs better.

Conclusion

I wanted to highlight the need to focus on developing nonprofit organizational capacity through this research. Identifying capacity-building strategies can help nonprofit organizations learn to adapt to change and expand their ability to innovate and improve practices for better performance. Through analysis of collected data, I found that leaders of nonprofit trade associations use successful strategies, such as focusing on culture, following the adopted mission and vision, openly communicating, and staying abreast of current industry trends and knowledge to maintain and improve organizational performance. These strategies are not only helpful for nonprofit trade associations but also for other types of nonprofit organizations.

The four themes that emerged, (a) developing a culture focused on relationships, (b) maintaining a strategic response based on the adopted vision, (c) practicing open communication, and (d) conducting industry-specific research and learning, were strategies implemented by the participating leaders to improve overall organizational performance. These strategies may be essential for nonprofit leaders to understand and implement to address better the different capacity skills needed to provide appropriate services and achieve strategic goals. Together, these strategies can help nonprofit trade associations improve funding and growth performance.

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Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Step 1: Welcome and Overview of Purpose of Interview and Protocol (2-3 minutes)

Turn on the recording of Zoom meeting.
 	
      Welcome. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview, especially via Zoom. My name is Ashley Williams, and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I work in the nonprofit sector, and I want to learn more about leaders of nonprofit organizations who have experience in successful capacity-building strategies to improve growth and funding performance.
 	
      I will ask seven questions and possible follow-up questions, if necessary. The interview will take approximately 30 – 60 minutes. I will facilitate the interview. Do you mind if I record the audio/video of the interview? It will help me focus on our conversation and ensure that I will have an accurate record of what we discuss.
 	
      The audio/video recordings and typed transcripts will be kept on my computer in a password protected file for 5 years. You can decide at any time to discontinue their participation. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have. Do you consent to continuing the interview? Shall we start?

Step 2: Introductions (2-3 minutes)
Please tell me about your background and experience in the nonprofit industry.
Step 3: Seven Questions Posed to the Participant (4-5 minutes per question)
1. What strategies do you use to improve growth and funding performance within your organization?   2. How do you implement and communicate capacity-building strategies to support long-range plans to improve growth and funding performance?   3. How does your organization measure the effectiveness of each strategy to improve growth and funding performance?   4. What were the key barriers to implementing capacity-building strategies for improving growth and funding performance?   5. How did your organization address the key barriers to implementing capacity-building strategies for improving growth and funding performance?   6. How have capacity-building strategies benefitted your organization's ability to focus on growth and secure funding sources?   7. What other processes, knowledge, skills, or additional information do you use to support the success of your organization's strategies to positively effect growth and secure funding?
Step 4: Closing Question (3-5 minutes)

Is there anything else you would like to share that has not been discussed related to the research question?
Step 5:   Thank Participant, Review Next Steps, and Member Check (2-3 minutes)
Thank you once more for your willingness to participate in this study and your candid answers to my questions. The next steps entail transcription of the audio/video recording, followed by a review of the transcript summary on your part. I will provide a transcript summary, which will be 1–2 pages, and ask you to evaluate my interpretation of the data collected and ensure that it is what you intended to share. I would be grateful if you would review the transcript summary for completeness so that you will be able to provide clarifications, additions, or deletions where necessary to the interview. Is it okay if I email the transcript summary to you? In addition, can I contact you in the event that I have any follow-up questions?   Turn off the recording of Zoom meeting.