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Strategies for Eliminating Workplace Bullying in Long-term Nursing Care Institutions

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Marc A. Bell

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Strategies for Eliminating Workplace Bullying

in Long-term Nursing Care Institutions

by

Marc A. Bell

MBA, Franklin University, 2005

BS, Wilberforce, 2004

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

October 2022

Abstract

Employee-to-employee workplace bullying continues to emerge in long-term nursing care institutions. Workplace bullying can lead to financial loss, high employee turnover, toxicity, and health problems which pose a disruptive challenge for some long-term nursing care leaders. Grounded in Weiss and Cropanzano's affective events theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies long-term nursing care leaders use to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. The participants comprised six leaders from three long-term nursing care institutions in the United States Midwest region who successfully used strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. The data were collected from semistructured interviews, company websites, policies, and other documentation. Through thematic analysis using Yin's five phases analysis, three themes were identified: policy integrated with training, employee value and respect, and anti-bully awareness events. A significant recommendation includes employee value and respect, where management takes immediate problem-solving action to strengthen trust between management and employees. The potential implications for positive social change include developing institutional strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying and enhancing business operations to effectively deliver services to patients, families, and surrounding communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study journey to my wife Sylvia Bell and daughter, Paris Bell for their support, patience, and understanding throughout this DBA journey. Both of you have been such a tremendous blessing to my life, and I appreciate your encouragement every step of the way. I also dedicate this doctoral study to my parents, the late Roy and Ruthie Bell. I know that both of you are proud of me. I love you, and miss you so much. I only wish that you could have lived long enough to see me achieve this great mild stone.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Workplace bullying contributes to defiant moods and repetitive offenses regarding verbal, physical, psychological, the assassination of character, vandalism, and work sabotage (Valentine & Fleishman, 2017). D'Cruz et al. (2018) asserted that bullying is any direct or indirect behavior that causes physical harm, emotional distress, mental ill-treatment, harassment, discrimination, deviation, sabotaging, or any form of violence towards another co-worker. D'Cruz et al. (2018) affirmed that workplace bullying is composed of various subtle and apparent forms of mistreatment with intentions to cause maltreatment to employees. Kernan et al. (2016) posited that workplace bullying occurs at various organization levels amongst co-workers. The findings of this study may potentially benefit long-term nursing care institutions and other health care providers to achieving reduced workplace bullying and improved service delivery towards patients, families, and surrounding communities.

Background of the Problem

Nursing care institutions provide long-term care for the aged and disabled populations of all ages (Harris-Kojetin et al., 2019). Nursing care services consist of rehabilitation, medical, and skilled care to patients with disabled conditions (Wilson et al., 2017). Considering the critical need for health services in the long-term nursing care institutions, employee-to-employee workplace bullying can affect the work culture, production, profitability, and business performance. Workplace violence, including bullying affects health care workers (Arnetz et. al, 2018). Workplace bully behavior may result into substantial legal and financial losses for organizations (Hassard et al., 2018).

Leaders who understand the intricacies of employee-to-employee workplace bullying may develop strategies to improve the culture, enhance employee morale, and productivity.

Problem Statement

Workplace bullying affects organizational costs and productivity, and causes disruption to business operations (Hassard et al., 2018). The financial expenses relating to the replacement and training new staff based on cases of bullying costs more than 150% of the salary from lost employees (Rockett et al., 2017). The general business problem is that employee-to-employee workplace bullying in long-term nursing care institutions affects profitability and performance. The specific business problem is that some long-term nursing care leaders lack strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies long-term nursing care leaders used to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. The population sample consisted of six leaders from three long-term nursing care institutions located in the Midwest region of the United States who successfully used strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. As an implication of positive social change, the findings of this study may potentially benefit health care providers to achieve successful service delivery towards patients, families, and surrounding communities.

Nature of the Study

I selected the qualitative method for this study. Researchers use qualitative research to conduct exploratory research, in which they collect data to identify themes, patterns, and categories for analysis and interpretation of the findings (Myers, 2013; Yin, 2018). Qualitative research was appropriate for this exploration, and I used this approach for in-depth understanding, and to gain insights from data generated using the participants' feedback. Researchers use the quantitative method for inferential and descriptive statistics, estimators, and test statistics to control, describe, predict, or explain data (Myers, 2013). I did not select the quantitative method as the study required in-depth meaning from participant feedback using open-ended interview questions. Mixed methods research necessitates the integration of quantitative research using statistical analyses and qualitative research to conduct exploratory inquiry using interview questions (McKim, 2017). I did not select the mixed methods research as there was no need to test hypotheses to address the specific business problem.

I selected the case study design for this study. Researchers use the case study design to conduct exploratory research, which is time-bounded to enable collecting various types of data to identify and explore themes, patterns, and categories for analysis and interpretation (Yin, 2018). The case study design was appropriate for exploring to understand the strategies long-term nursing care leaders use to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. Researchers use the phenomenology design to provide an inclusive description of individuals' meanings and experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenology design was not appropriate for the study because the understanding of

lived experiences from individuals would not have answered the research question.

Researchers use the ethnography design to study individual behavior in a cultural setting (Miles et al., 2014). The ethnography design was not appropriate as the study did not involve exploring a group or cultural-sharing setting.

Research Question

What strategies do long-term nursing care leaders use to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you used to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying?
2. What were the key barriers to implementing your organization's strategies for eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying?
3. How did your organization address the key barriers to implementing its strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying?
4. What strategies did you discover worked best for eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying?
5. What strategies were least effective for eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying?
6. How did the employees initially respond to your strategies as a long-term nursing care leader for eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying?
7. What modifications did you employ to any strategy that eliminated employee-to-employee workplace bullying?

8. What additional information would you like to share concerning strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying?

Conceptual Framework

I used the affective events theory (AET), the cognitive judgment approach, social influences approach, and dispositional approach as the conceptual framework for this study. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) developed the AET to understand employees' experiences based on the effects of their temperaments and encounters that explain what influences job performance and work satisfaction. The assumptions of the AET relate to what positively or negatively stimulates employees' attitudes, feelings, and temperaments about the office setting, job independence, assigned work duties, health condition, and the treatment coming from supervisors and co-workers (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Employees' cognitive judgment approach, social influences approach, and dispositional approach affect their perception and livelihood internally and externally (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The cognitive judgment approach derives from the conditions, setup, and space within the work environment that can significantly affect employee perspectives (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The social influences approach relates to the concept that social environments affect employees' perceptions and attitudes in the workplace; the dispositional approach refers to the notion that worker satisfaction affects employees' ability to have a positive self-concept of life (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). I chose the AET to understand the strategies long-term nursing care leaders use to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying.

Operational Definitions

Machiavellianism: Machiavellianism is a behavior of a bully that is heartless, disagreeable, and deceitful (Johnson et al., 2018).

Real bullying situation: The real bullying situation refers to the aspects of defining occurrences related to the misbehavior of an individual towards a co-worker (Catley et al., 2017).

Workplace bullying: Workplace bullying is when an employee inflicts physical, emotional, mental ill-treatment, harassment, discrimination, workplace aggression, deviation, sabotaging, bullying directly or indirectly as any form of violence towards another work associate (D'Cruz et al., 2018).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study were essential components of the research project. Researchers conducting a research study understand the significance of addressing the boundaries to achieve a creditable outcome (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Understanding the importance of the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations enhanced the validity of the research.

Assumptions

Assumptions are beliefs or preconceptions assumed as truth without substantiating facts are known as assumptions (Mertens, 2016). I had three assumptions for this study. The first assumption was the participants could provide expert knowledge about eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying. Another assumption was that the participants would divulge accurate and honest responses to the interview

questions. The last assumption was the participants had experience in developing or participating in writing policy and procedural directives about the organization's workplace bullying standards. The first two assumptions remained true for this study. However, in the last assumption, the participants did not have experience in the development or participation of writing policies and procedural directives for the organization's workplace bullying standards.

Limitations

Limitations reflect the restraints or boundaries placed on a study by the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). There were four limitations initially identified in this study. The first limitation was based on limited access of sharing company policies and procedural directives. One participant was unable to share the company policies and procedures because of the updating procedures and the time factor involved for completion. The second limitation was based on the lack of disclosure regarding company information on legal-action cases; there was no existing legal-action cases. Another limitation was the participants may become apprehensive to sharing their experience because of current or pending cases, which none existed. The final limitation was that it would take additional participants to interview to reach data saturation; thus, this study did not require additional participants to reach data saturation.

Delimitations

Delimitations refers to the researcher's delineating boundaries to account for the research parameters (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). There were three delimitations for this study. The first delimitation required the participants to have a minimum of 3 years of

experience to participate in this study. Another delimitation of the study was to select leaders from the long-term nursing care institutions who eliminated employee-to-employee workplace bullying successfully. I selected the participants who used successful strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. The final delimitation was that participants were from the Midwest region of the United States, which was enough to complete the study without having to go to other geographical areas.

Significance of the Study

Long-term nursing care leaders may consider strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying to improve the organization's productivity, profitability, and performance. Long-term nursing care leaders who use successful strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying can potentially offset the costs of productivity loss, absenteeism, and injuries. The study's findings may be significant and provide information to contribute to business practice and implications for social change.

Contribution to Business Practice

The findings of this study may be of value to business leaders who eliminated employee-to-employee workplace bullying and improved the quality of employees' lives. The findings of the study may contribute to effective business practices to reduce the expenses incurred from workplace bullying through lost time and productivity. Recommendations from the study may provide a means to develop strategies for successfully eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change for this study's findings are through understanding the development and implementation of strategies that address barriers in long-term health care environments for eliminating employee-to-employee bullying. The findings from this study may contribute to social change for the emergence of ongoing research knowledge underlining the socioeconomic conditions relative to the long-term nursing care industry's stability. The study results may implicate positive social change by improving the work culture through strategies to achieve better service performance and delivery toward patients, families, and communities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

In this literature review, I compared, contrasted, and synthesized various scholarly sources to formulate a critical analysis. I presented thematic topics to support the research question and conceptual framework for the study. The research grounded in multiple studies involving theorists, reflected the foundation of the main sections as an abridgment and compilation of reviews to embody the research body of knowledge.

I used Weiss and Cropanzano's (1996) affective events theory as the conceptual framework that encapsulated the research question based on the cognitive judgment approach, the social influences approach, and the dispositional approach relative to employees' feelings and reactions on the job. Goleman's (2006) emotional intelligence (EI) theory was the supporting theory for this study to understand the emotional state of employee behavior. The leader-member exchange (LMX) was the contrasting theory that

I used to address management's leadership relationships that influences employee-to-employee emotions.

The strategies I used for researching the literature consisted of using the Walden University Library database system. I retrieved peer-reviewed articles and seminal author books from Business Source Complete, ProQuest, Emerald Insight, Elsevier, and SAGE Journals. I also used Google Scholar and government websites to retrieve sources. The keywords used to conduct the literature research included: *workplace bullying, incivility, workplace violence, mistreatment, harassment, toxic environments, victimization, human resource management, victims, workplace aggression, employee assistance programs, co-worker abuse, employee emotions, and mental abuse*. Additionally, the search criterion required the use of Ulrich's Periodical Directory to verify scholarly journals for the study. The literature review consisted of 138 publications with 120 or 87% peer-reviewed journals with 42% published within 5 years of my anticipated graduation date.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies long-term nursing care leaders use to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. Identifying the thematic topics within the body of research knowledge reflected the purpose of study to understand the central research question concerning the aspects of employee-to-employee workplace bullying. Workplace bullying is a known global issue (Rockett et al., 2017). Relevant research of workplace bullying continues to emerge worldwide irrespective to the organizational size, industry, country, or geographic borderline (Pheko et al., 2017). Abusive employee behavior within the healthcare industry is high in comparison to other professions (Rodwell et al., 2014). A lack of

research still exists concerning the underlining causes of workplace bully behavior (Rai & Agarwal, 2016). The thematic topics in the literature include workplace bullying, effects of bully behavior, impact on bullied employees, financial burden to the organization, and the role of human resources, which establishes administrative policies and procedures for the organization.

Based on prior research and findings, scholars continue to explore the commonalities, the meaning of workplace bullying, and its effects on employees; researchers continue to inquire into the causes and damages of employee abuse and its effects on workers and the organization. Thus, the commonalities of employee abuse have evolved into various forms causing mental, physical, and emotional strains to its victims while affecting their health and well-being (Roter, 2016). Membere et al. (2015) recommended clarity to the meaning of bully behavior because the meaning has various definitions. Webster (2016) argued that workplace bully interactions among employees contribute to an unhealthy worker emotion. Assessing the aspects of employee-to-employee bullying necessitates the need for ongoing research concerning victimized employees.

Affective Events Theory

The affective events theory (AET) developed by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) is the conceptual framework I used as a lens for this study. The AET is a description of the cognitive judgment approach, social influences approach, and the dispositional approach based on employees' feelings and reactions to job performance and worker satisfaction. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) stated that the moods, emotions, the work culture

dynamics, workspace setups, relationships, behavioral outcomes of employees, and the external aspects of what occurs socially also influence behavioral outcomes. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) also indicated that employees' behaviors are relative to experiences on the job. Cropanzano et al. (2017) purported that the AET will enable business leaders to analyze the emotional effects of employees as the experiences will have noteworthy outcomes. Butts et al. (2015) asserted that workplace encounters have significant effects on employee perspectives positively or negatively, depending on the events. Colquitt and Zipay (2015) stated that the use of the AET helps to accentuate employees' perception of fairness, equity, and truthfulness about the organizational culture.

Cognitive Judgment Approach

A significant component of the AET for this study is the cognitive judgment approach. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) asserted that the cognitive judgment approach relates to workers' awareness to work situations based on the office setting, proximity, work culture, company procedures, policies, and reporting relationships. The cognitive judgment approach also includes the effects of job satisfaction, which may vary and cause feelings of indifference relative to the functionality of the job, workload, and interaction with others (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). An employee's attitude affects their perception of the job and organization (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Carpenter and Berry (2017) affirmed that the AET reflects employee attitudes and behavioral responses that may cause alienation, pessimistic attitudes, sabotage, and attendance problems, all of which evoke disruption to the work climate. Cropanzano et al. (2017) purported that the findings from a research study conducted demonstrated worker interactions in the office

setting, which may have contributed to disruption, misbehavior, and conflicting viewpoints. The cognitive judgment approach is used to gain insight into employees' experiences and behavior.

The cognitive judgment approach has dimensional factors for the topic of study. An employee's cognitive reasoning ability reflects the dynamics occurring in the work environment (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) asserted that comparing employee differences to work surroundings is a considerable amount of cognitive interaction based on group participation, company events, or situations that provide insight into the conditions, attitudes, and reactions. Continuous studies by researchers may potentially demonstrate the effects of an arranged work environment design that influences employees' reactions and behavior (Cropanzano et al., 2017). The AET has dynamic implications for the work culture. Workers learn the aspects of the work environment and culture (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

Researchers studied employees' relationships, experiences, and attitudes to worker performance. Some employees' cognitive judgment varies according to personality, background, character, and an array of experiences (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Most organizations have a diverse working populace where employees spend one-third of a lifetime developing relationships with staff and clients (Colquitt & Zipay, 2015). Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) studied the effects of employee emotional reactions that contribute to working performance and productivity. Employees have thoughts and feelings about the job in relation to worker interactions, experiences, and other factors.

Social Influences Approach

The social influence approach component refers to employees' external social influential surroundings. The employees' reactions to societal issues may influence their livelihood (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Cropanzano and Dashborough (2015) affirmed that employees' attitudes and reactions to social circumstances of conditioning might influence behavior, depending on the interpretation of exposure. Bakker and Demerouti (2017) posited that the social influences approach of the AET links to the organization's internal operations, which can trigger stressful work conditions. Insight into workers' views toward social effects on the job may be provided through the social influences approach.

Dispositional Approach

The dispositional approach associates the meaning of job satisfaction with the characteristics of employees. The dispositional approach refers to workers' satisfaction, career development, and the ability to maintain a positive self-concept, belief system, balance, and optimistic outlook on life, which determines the ability to have autonomy (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Some employees may offset negative experiences in exchange for potentially favorable outcomes by participating and volunteering in job activities to stimulate a personal balance for well-being (Cropanzano et al., 2017). The dispositional approach also reflects how employees develop poor relationships that take root with management and staff, which can cause a negative emotional disposition (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). When employees do not find satisfaction on the job, the experience may cause a recourse of action positively or negatively, which some may

discover creative ways to survive (Tillman et al., 2018). The use of the dispositional approach may help organizations explore ways to address worker dissatisfaction.

The dispositional approach of the AET applies to resolving employee disputes. Situational encounters at work may trigger positive or negative emotional reactions (Tillman et al., 2018). When the work culture reflects positivity, workers become engaged in the job and organization (Johnson et al., 2018). Cropanzano et al. (2017) affirmed that leaders who used the AET observed the emotional effects of employees to discover some noteworthy outcomes. Colquitt and Zipay (2015) asserted that leaders who understand the AET could nurture employees' perceptions regarding the organization's fairness, equity, and truthfulness to the impartiality of outcomes. The use of the dispositional approach may facilitate intuitive knowledge for employers.

Supporting Theory

Emotional Intelligence Theory

Theorists conducted studies to understand the characteristics of emotional intelligence. Goleman's (2006) emotional intelligence (EI) theory supports the research body of knowledge concerning the employees' emotional state to empower self-control and maturity. The EI theory addresses additional insightful knowledge regarding employee emotional conflicts. Rothman and Melwani (2017) purported that understanding the emotional complexities of employees helps leaders to confront work difficulties by making effective decisions with flexibility. Tyler (2015) posited that insightful knowledge about the EI theory can significantly improve healthcare and patient relationships for a safe working environment. Employees exercising EI competencies

illustrate their ability to reconcile differences, alleviate conflict or organizational disruption by developing self-mastery skills personally and professionally (Goleman, 2006). Cole et al. (2018) conducted a study to reveal how employees achieved skillfulness using emotional intelligence to enhance their relationship abilities to problem solve collectively on assignments; the results of their study led to developing strengths, opportunities, and aspirations with measurable outcomes.

Management uses strategies to support employees emotionally. Goleman (2006) asserted that EI leaders have the knowledge and skill to motivate employees. EI reflects emotional intellect conditioning exhibited by leaders toward their employees who demonstrate a level of maturity, self-discipline, and empowerment. Goleman (2006) addressed the organizational relationships of workers, which directly influenced the employees' emotional well-being, and affirmed that EI starts with self-evaluation for everyone. Employee emotional development is a skill that management uses to build employees' self-concept.

The emotional well-being of employees is essential to job performance. Goleman (2006) affirmed that the emotional state of employees matters to the organization, especially when staff is no longer able to perform at the standard level. Goleman (2006) recommended that employees practice rest techniques and develop self-mastery skills of self-conditioning to lessen negative self-thought and emotional memory patterns. Cole et al. (2018) conducted a study to demonstrate how employees reach an emotionally skilled level, which increased the ability to develop emotive solutions while working in groups,

on projects, and as team members. Understanding the emotional conditioning of employees has a significant factor in the work environment and organization.

Contrasting Theory

Leader-member Exchange Theory

Scholars studied the effectiveness of management's leadership influence on employees. Dansereau et al. (1975) developed the vertical dyad linkage (VDL) approach in 1975, currently known as the leader-member exchange theory (LMX). Herman et al. (2018) studied the relationship component concerning management's leadership role of relationship and influence on employees. The LMX theory entails three stages including role-taking, role-making, and role routinization (Cropanzano et al., 2017). The first stage entails the role-taking stage of leadership engagement, the driving factor of influence to worker emotions in developing the relationship (Cropanzano et al., 2017). The role taking of the LMX relates to leadership engagement, the driving factor to influence workers' emotions in relationship development (Cropanzano et al., 2017). The second stage of role making encapsulates how means leaders and workers become resourceful based on work situations that enable more reliable connections (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Not all positions within an organization require close leadership engagement. The third stage of the LMX theory is routinization, which is the ability to formulate engagement based on the relationships developed within the workgroup setting that forms an emotional bond between leaders and workers (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

Management's influence of leadership roles could be helpful for employee relations. One of the LMX model components signifies the importance of building

relationships and influencing employees in three stages: role taking, role making, and role routinization (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Each component of the LMX theory relates to the interaction leaders have with staff to improve worker reactions and lessen the negative attitudes of employees (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Leaders have the skill to enhance employee development. The role making of the LMX is a way for leaders and workers to become resourceful in work situations to enable stronger bonds (Cropanzano et al., 2017). The role routinization of the LMX exists based on one's ability to formulate an engagement-based relationship tied to a workgroup, forming an emotional bond between leaders and workers (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Lang and Yeh (2020) conducted a quantitative study using the LMX theory on the effects of the employee voice and workplace bullying. The study garnered 950 participants to understand the effects of LMX in relation workplace bullies and employees. Lang and Yeh (2020) concluded that LMX is a needed method between workplace bullying and employees to increase improved outcomes in the workplace. Leaders can utilize the LMX theory to increase workplace communication and employee relationships.

Managers who consider LMX and AET could influence employees' work experiences. The LMX as AET's supporting theory reflects the same leadership approach in management-to-employee communications and interactions, which most likely improves worker reactions and attitudes to lessen any negativity (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Herman et al. (2018) extended the meaning of the AET and used the LMX theory as an integrated support model. The LMX theory does not signify identifying the leadership style or personality (Dansereau et al., 1975). The LMX theory links and

overlaps to the AET within the context of manager-to-worker experiences, which may become a challenge for researchers to explain (Herman et al., 2018). Scholars using the AET conduct research to understand the exhibited emotional experiences workers have in relation to the leader-follower relationship and behaviors (Ashkanasy, et al., 2018). Using the LMX theory is the contrasting theory, which extends the meaning of the AET.

Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying is a diverse and essential topic of discussion. D’Cruz et al. (2018) affirmed that workplace bullying has increased in all organizations regardless of occupation or industry. Samnani and Singh (2016) asserted that studies of workplace bullying reflect employee views instead of the perspectives coming from a group or business. Scholars conducted studies using self-reporting evaluations to measure dysfunctional behaviors of employee dissatisfaction, staff turnover, and the lack of loyalty to the company (Valentine & Fleishman, 2017). Researchers studied how exposure to workplace bullying contributes to employee work reduction, productivity, toxic work environments, health problems, high turnover, financial loss, and the number of reported incidents (Pera, 2017). The results of the study revealed a strong evidence-based case of deviancy in relation to the work culture, employees, and groups influences that affects the work environment in conjunction with medication, and functions of human resources and the organization (Pera, 2017). The prevention of workplace bullying requires leaders to discover ways to prevent disruption to the organization (Einarsen et al., 2016).

Workplace bullying has various meanings with numerous behavioral effects.

Workplace bullying is any misbehavior towards another employee (Mokgolo & Barnard, 2019). Workplace bullying is an employee inflicting physical, emotional, or mental ill-treatment towards another employee (D'Cruz et al., 2016). Hassard et al. (2018) defined workplace aggression as bullying and harassment. The workplace bully is the same as the work abuser, having commonalities of poor mental health, insecurity, suspicion, control, and interpersonal conflicts (Francioli et al., 2015). Incivility is another definition of workplace bullying; most managers lack the skills to comprehend the damaging consequences of unwanted behavior (Rahim & Cosby, 2016). Incivility is subtle, devious behavior with the intent and purpose to harm another employee (Reich & Hershcovis, 2015). Bullying is also deviant behavior demonstrated in an organizational or social setting and occurs when such behaviors start in the early school years (McDaniel et al., 2015). Pera (2017) affirmed that deviant behavior predominantly occurs in companies that reported various abnormal behavioral forms that influence worker-to-worker reciprocation.

Categorizing the multiple behaviors and meanings of a workplace bully is controversial escalating or evolving into other behaviors or actions. Business leaders often fail to identify uncivil behavior because of ambiguous meanings, viewpoints, and different behaviors, which creates a concealed and unsafe work environment (Rahim & Cosby, 2016). Researchers and business leaders often use variable and descriptive meanings of incivility, bullying, emotional abuse, sexual harassment, and workplace violence; thus, separating the misbehaviors come from diverse perceptions (Rahim &

Cosby, 2016). Leaders understanding employees' views and experiences of incivility behavior and the varying misbehaviors will learn the effects on the work environment (Rahim & Cosby, 2016). Challenges with research exist when comparing other studies because of the lack of clarity to systematized terminologies and classifications of workplace violence, including the legal categories that describe the offenses, which merits much awareness (Phillips, 2016). The differences of workplace violence in the research cause inconsistencies and misinterpretations of the behavior forms (Phillips, 2016). Identifying, classifying, and understanding the various misbehaviors of workplace bullying is essential for leaders.

Assessing the influences occurring within the work environment from various perspectives is an effective approach for business leaders. Examining the varying cultural, social, and specific differences throughout the organization to the connection of relationships, specializations, and leadership authorities become essential to understanding the influential behaviors encompassing workplace bullying (Pheko et al., 2017). As the workplace bully's conduct escalates into phases over time, victimized employees learn to employ different solving solutions and coping mechanisms based on the type of offenses; confronting the bullying may cause counterattacks (Park & Ono, 2016). The outcome of continued workplace bullying may become a power or injury to the victim; the bully's worsening effect takes numerous courses of behavioral action (Peregrin, 2019).

Business leaders assessed various contexts for understanding the effects of workplace bully behavior in the organization. The manager's attention is to prevent

workplace bullying before the escalated outcomes disrupt the organization (Einarsen, 2016). When considering victimized employees' experiences, there may be some bullying encounters that can lead to adverse effects such as frustration, progressive absenteeism, and job dissatisfaction, which disrupt the work environment (Rajalakshmi & Naresh, 2018). Bullied victims may experience unexpected personal circumstances that could alter their demeanor, belief system, and attitude toward the organization (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Eliminating workplace bullying can positively improve the functionality of the organization.

Workplace Bullying Characteristics

Workplace bullies have cognitive and behavioral characteristics. Prior researcher studies focused on the disposition of the victimized employees exposed to workplace bullying instead of the bully's character (Dåderman & Ragnestål-Impola, 2019). Researchers who studied workplace bullying from a biological, psychosocial, and psychological aspect identified the competitive and emotional characteristics of the behavior (Trepanier et al., 2015; Verkuil et al., 2015). One aspect of workplace bullying relates to workers withholding information or avoiding the other employees needing information to carry out the job tasks (Hassard et al., 2018). A workplace bully who withholds work information from another work associate can also demonstrate acts of avoidance to reinforce the intent of the behavior (Rajalakshmi & Naresh, 2018). Hassard et al. (2018) also described the misbehavior as personal conflicts, repetitive negative attacks expressed in verbal abuse, exhibited in a discriminatory expression against employees. Workplace bullies demonstrate several crucial behavioral traits within the

context of their actions while exercising the power of negative influence, emotional abuse, and other characteristics of harassment (D'Cruz et al., 2018).

Oversight of workplace bully characteristics could lead to organizational problems. Francioli et al. (2015) evaluated the emotional conditioning of bully behavior to understand the unsatisfying needs that set-in motion a sense of dominance and entitlement, which suffices the intricate tactics during the moment of turmoil. The workplace bully's feeling of entitlement and self-gratification affects the morale of the work culture (Pilch & Turska, 2015). The workplace bully exercises power and control towards employees using subtle negative tactics to create and foster a continuous toxic work environment (D'Cruz et al., 2018). The bully's underlying feelings of suspicion, threat, and mistrust leads to misbehavior (Phillips, 2016). Offenses coming from work bullies exist based on their anxieties, insecurities, and possible job loss (McDaniel et al., 2015). The behavior of workplace bullies can only lead to heightened levels of complex, severe outcomes, which will require a thorough approach to intercede effectively (D'Cruz et al., 2018). Hence, when the workplace bully does not receive corrective action, the behavior may replicate or progress over time, leading to toxic stimulation (Pilch & Turska, 2015).

Workplace bullying impacts business culture and productivity. Pera (2017) used the term interpersonal deviance to describe an employee who causes harm to the business operation and damages another employee's work tasks. The effects of workplace bullying lead to hardship and liability to the business (Valentine & Fleishman, 2017). Einarsen et al. (2017) asserted that leaders should become discomfited when employees'

commitment to the work process decreases. Pilch and Turska (2015) asserted that the victimized employee of the bullying experience might encounter problems with work productivity and job satisfaction. The work atmosphere of the bully's disruptive behavior can lead to mistrust, dissension, chaos, and confusion, subjecting the culture to intolerable behavior (Giorgi et al., 2015). The bully's mental conditioning takes precedence over becoming unaware of the after-effects of their behavior (Phillips, 2016). The bully's self-gratification is the cause of every plot to gain dominance or win as an underlying intention (Phillips, 2016). Hence, the subtle tactics at work used by bullies may not be as transparent until their intentional satisfaction causes victims to resign (Verkuil et al., 2015). Cortina et al. (2018) asserted that under no circumstance should mistreatment become acceptable, leaving victims with discomforted emotions.

Researchers studied the effectiveness of a bully's influence on peers in varying contexts of the work environment. A bully is known to influence and empower co-workers using undercurrent tactics to mistreat a peer (Einarsen et al., 2016; Figueiredo-Ferraz et al., 2015). The bully will not have positive working relationships with co-workers (Johnson et al., 2018). Scott (2018) affirmed that the influence of the bully's group-effect approach of persuasion might lead to a harmful outcome for the victim. Knight and Eisenkraft (2015) affirmed that during the onset of the encounter, an array of experiences might alter the perceptions of the group depending on the dominant character exercising persuasion and strength to influence the group. The onset of the offensive encounter and varying continuation may alter the groups' perception (Tillman et al., 2018).

Employees who become bystanders of workplace bullying behavior may have varying views. Some observing employees may disapprove of uncivil acts towards the victimized employee; hence, if co-workers ignore the incivility behavior, the encounters may influence or intensify (Reich & Hershcovis, 2015). Knight and Eisenkraft (2015) also affirmed that the group of co-worker reactions takes precedence regardless of shared experiences, including other forms of relationship bonds. Hence, the victimized employee's perception and emotional stress may change the climate, which observing witnesses may disapprove of the abusive treatment that could evolve into group discouragement (Reich & Hershcovis, 2015). A work associate may even have an influential personality maintaining a dominant voice of persuasion different from the group but could take a position to support the organization's policies (Knight & Eisenkraft, 2015). Reich and Hershcovis (2015) purported that observing peers may respond the same way the offender does to the victim.

The Effects of Bully Behavior

Assessing workplace bully behavior necessitates the need to gain a thorough understanding of the effects on victims. The victims of workplace bullying have lower job satisfaction, a lack of work commitment, self-confidence, and internal struggles (D'Cruz et al., 2018; Samnani & Singh, 2016). Workplace bullying leads to job burnout for victimized employees (Rahim & Cosby, 2016). Conversely, when exposed employees feel useless and unprotected, their conduct may exhibit feelings of unsafe behavior and may not want to jeopardize their jobs or livelihood (Ones, 2018).

The side effects of workplace bullying exposure could become damaging. Workplace bullying may cause some victimized employees to lose motivation, passion, lack of career interest, and promotional opportunities (Verkuil et al., 2015). Employees exposed to workplace bullying must immediately seek support and guidance (Leach et al., 2017). Employees experiencing bullying will become concerned about the level of toxicity (Trepanier et al., 2015). Pheko et al. (2017) concluded that no positive relationship exists between the work environment and the bully. Employees failing to address the abusive encounters of workplace bullying will experience burnout, dissatisfaction, disconnection, attendance problems, and pessimism (Rahim & Cosby, 2016).

The actions of workplace bullying behavior do affect the work environment. If victimized employees do not follow the organizational procedures for reporting the offense, they can become enablers to the offender, intensifying the situation (Trepanier et al., 2015). Employees exposed to workplace bullying have the tendency to develop a perception of the work environment as stressful (Richardson et al., 2016). When an individual is incapable of using defensive mechanisms, victimized characteristics develop, which becomes a dysfunctional attribute that can skew an individual's perception of reality (Pheko, 2018). Leach et al. (2017) asserted that employees witnessing workplace bullying toward another employee might perceive the bully's actions as disrespectful and report the offense assuming to become the next target. The responsibility of employees is to report workplace bully behavior.

Impact on Bullied Employees

Employees who experience workplace bullying may experience some health-related concerns. Employees with pre-existing health conditions may intensify when exposed to workplace bullying and toxic work environments over time (Pheko et al., 2017). Granstra (2015) asserted that in healthcare environments, workplace bullying occurs between employees. Employees victimized by workplace bullying experience a lack of psychological well-being, which affects the need to acquire job satisfaction and quality work performance (Trepanier et al., 2015). Tillman et al. (2018) asserted that what employees experience in the workplace does not necessarily affect job performance or attitude. Employees exposed to any form of bullying may experience psychological distress disorders, exasperation, confusion, emotional setbacks, and job dissatisfaction (Cavaiola & Stout, 2017).

Scholars have studied the effects of employee health-related problems resulting from exposure to workplace bullying. Pilch and Turska (2015) purported that when employees experience a significant intensity of mental distress from bullying, the outcome may have severe effects leading to poor-quality work performance and feelings of low self-esteem. Employees exposed to workplace bullying may experience emotional distress, which may cause situations to intensify (McDaniel, 2017). Employees developing symptoms of depression is one of the known mental health disorders of working in a hostile environment (Lim et al., 2018). Employees will likely experience mental health disorders, cardiovascular problems, or other ailments under such working conditions (Zhang & Bednall, 2016). Employees victimized by workplace bullying lack psychological well-being, which affects their needs to acquire job satisfaction and quality

performance (Trepanier et al., 2015). Employees developing symptoms of depression is a common mental health disorder from working in a hostile environment (Einarsen et al., 2016; Lim et al., 2018). Feelings of rejection, withdrawal, or traumatic experiences cause mental and physical suffering, becoming traumatic, causing unhealthy interpersonal development problems without potential career growth (Pheko et al., 2017).

The effects of workplace bullying differ from an atmosphere trivial exposure. Victimized employees exposed to workplace bully behavior over time will suffer mental and physical anguish, which attributes to 33% of work-related problems (Verkuil et al., 2015). Employees experiencing emotional upsets from the bully must learn to develop positive solutions to maintain their self-worth (Einarsen et al., 2016). Brandebo et al. (2016) asserted that when employees work in an environment with minimal stress and concern, they trust management, exemplifying a positive work attitude. When employees feel devalued in the work environment, the drive to perform diminishes, and toxicity develops, causing an unhealthy work culture (Lee et al., 2018). Abnormal work behaviors significantly affect employees, causing unnecessary emotional stress and cognitive and mental issues (Fujiwara & Lawton, 2016; Valentine, 2015). Employee emotional distress is one of the leading factors contributing to low productivity, poor business operation, absenteeism, and lost profits (Atwater et al., 2016).

Researchers and business leaders have studied the efficacy of health and safety work environments. Beus et al. (2016) purported that unhealthy and unsafe work environment concern employee and the business including, poor employee attitudes, misbehavior, and negative opinions that adversely affects the work culture. When

employees struggle to separate personal problems from work-life, difficulties occur, causing relationship problems with co-workers as misbehavior ensues (Fabius et al., 2016). Employees bullied, whether by physical, non-physical, or verbal abuse, experience emotional, physical, or psychological distress, affecting the health and safety wellbeing of the work culture (Pheko et al., 2017). Francioli et al. (2015) asserted that events connecting workplace bullying to the wellbeing of employees have, to some extent, similar adverse stress effects on co-workers. When employees experience workplace bullying, they may significantly suffer emotionally, mentally, and physically, resulting in medical and legal outcomes (Schilpzand et al., 2016). The dynamics of workplace bullying studies reflect the conditioning factors related to the health and safety of work environments.

Financial Burden to the Organization

Workplace bullying is a financial burden to business leaders. Researchers conducted financial losses and risk factors associated with workplace bully behavior (Hollis, 2015). The financial loss to replace and train new employees is more than 150% of the employee's salary (Rockett et al., 2017). Hassard et al. (2018) asserted that workplace bullying might have considerable legal and financial outcome losses to the organization. Hassard et al. (2018) reviewed 12 studies within a framework of 5 national standard settings, which included Australia, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Hassard et al. (2018) determined that the cost of workplace bullying and incivility had fluctuating financial expenses within health care organizations ranging from \$114.64 million to \$35.9 billion. Organizations absorb the costs of employee

misbehavior, which increases the cost of health care, including the lack of productivity and low-quality worker performance (Pera, 2017).

The actions of workplace bullies can become a financial detriment and loss to the organization. Rahim and Crosby (2016) affirmed that workplace bullying affects worker job satisfaction; employees who leave the organization because of incivility or workplace bullying contribute to the cost of replacement. Bullying and other forms of aggressive behaviors, including employee turnover, cost organizations millions of dollars annually (McDaniel et al., 2015). Johnson et al. (2018) affirmed that employee turnover entails an immense organizational expense resulting from resignations, increased sick-leave time, short and long-term absences, all of which affect organizational productivity. Leaders must identify strategies to offset the compensation of costs affecting employee turnover (Emre & Elci, 2015). The costs incurred in employee turnover reflect the financial burden and operational hardships of public health care operations to recruit, replace, and train new workers (Jinnett et al., 2017).

Workplace bullying contributes to increased health care costs for organizations. Workplace bullying has a broader financial effect that transcends beyond the business to the psychological, social, and economic perspective (Hassard et al., 2018). Costs associated with employee illness based on workplace bullying contribute to the financial strains on public health institutions, society, and the economy (Nielsen et al., 2016). Nielsen et al. (2016) asserted that grasping a thorough comprehension of the cost of employee illnesses will have a significant effect on public health institutions. Reducing

costs associated with workplace bullying will help to support the viability of the organization.

Role of Human Resource Management

Human resource leaders use policies and procedures to establish compliance for the business environment. The responsibility of human resources is to provide services to all areas of the business by ensuring employee health, wellness, and safety (Jinnett et al., 2017). One area of human resources is to provide resources that will help employees cope with the work environment (Hammer et al., 2016). Human resource departments also implement organizational policies and procedures related to workplace bullying to avoid a toxic work environment (Daniel, 2017). Catley et al. (2017) explained that policies designed towards bullying need a process for evaluating complaints, investigation protocol, and provide a safe place for witnesses to come forth. The organization's human resource office gives employees guidance and resources (Feijo et al., 2019).

Organizational policies reflect workplace bully behavior. Human resource leaders and managers have the responsibility to identify workplace bullying (Mokgolo & Barnard, 2019). The role of human resource management is to act as the systematizing lead for handling substantiated bully behavior claims amid inadequate ethical principles, injustice processes, company modifications, and overseeing the social and psychological factors of employee safety in the context of the work culture (Feijo et al., 2019). Human resource professionals identify bullying as counterproductive or misbehavior by employees (Mokgolo & Barnard, 2019). The organization's human resources staff considers it a responsibility to identify and manage the toxicity and subtleties affecting

victims (McDaniel et al., 2015). However, human resource professionals may consider immediate supportive remedies aside from the company directives when victimized employees become emotionally paralyzed by unexpected offenses (Pilch & Turska, 2015). Immediate remedies contemplated diffuse toxicity (Daniel, 2017). Human resource leaders have the responsibility to oversee the organization's policies and procedures involving workplace bully behavior.

Human resource leaders have specific guidelines for handling workplace bully behavior. Human resource leaders study bullying behavior develop intervention solutions based on employees' reactions during conflicts (Cropanzano et al., 2017). McDaniel et al. (2015) affirmed that some human resource offices had assigned staff to support employees who experience bullying in the workplace and recommend experienced workers with the same skill to support victims. Human resource leaders also consider the conditions of employees' mental and physical well-being based on the hardships of the home or job life, which can influence either environment (Zilioli et al., 2016). The objective of the human resources department is to remain abreast of the nuances of workplace bullying and continue to develop ongoing strategies that protect victimized workers (Einarsen et al., 2016).

Human resource leaders use policies and procedures to administer claims of workplace bullying. Laws and policies administered by human resource leaders reflect the corrective disciplinary actions by investigating employees who demonstrate bully and abusive behavior (Valentine & Fleishman, 2018). Bullied employees seek assistance from their supervisors or human resources, emotionally upset with the expectation of a positive

resolution (Daniel, 2017). The organization's stability depends on how well management exercises authority to oversee the work culture and negative work behaviors (Ones, 2018). Human resource leaders use company procedures based on policy administration to ensure appropriate intervention for workplace bully behavior.

Employees have the responsibility to review the organization's policies. Employees often reviewing organizational policies, obtain knowledge of the procedures concerning the prevention and intervention of abusive encounters (Cortina et al., 2018). Zhang and Bednall (2016) asserted that when human resource administrators implement policies and procedures on workplace bullying, the occurrences will most likely decrease. Johnson et al. (2018) affirmed that managers strive to ensure that the company's directives and procedures are functional to demonstrate the preventative measures for handling workplace aggression. Employees following company policies use them as a safeguard, even though some may feel potential retaliation (Leach et al., 2017). Just as it is essential for employees to receive organizational policies, they should consider reviewing the policies practices of solving workplace bully behavior.

Leaders understand that the viability of the organization to develop ways to ensure support for employees. Richmond et al. (2017) asserted that the purpose of employee assistance programs is to assist with work or personal problems; however, meticulous research reflects the ineffectiveness of service results concerning work encounters. Employees choose to stay with organizations when functional working relationships and resources are available (Lee et al., 2018). The mental and emotional

health of employees influences the work environment, worker performance, job satisfaction, and organizational stability (Daniel, 2017).

A healthy work environment is essential to business success. The leaders' approach to administering health and safety training gives employees an understanding of wellbeing and healthy work culture (Mullen et al., 2016). D'Cruz et al. (2018) posited that removing workplace hostility develops a psychologically safe work environment and demonstrates how valuable employees are to the organization. Johnson et al. (2018) affirmed that statistics reported in Australia and globally reflect how organizations experience workplace aggression.

The human resource leaders provide resources to ensure a healthy and safe work environment. When promoting a culture of health and safety, human resources work with management to motivate workers by providing the necessary resources to accomplish the needed results for a wholesome work environment (McCleary et al., 2017). Human resources use organizational strategies to avoid unhealthy work environments by staying up-to-date on the latest information on why employees stay or leave organizations (Lee et al., 2018). Employees can choose to participate in behavioral health and wellness seminars, professional therapy counseling, or coaching (Joseph & Walker, 2017). One of the main objectives for human resource leaders is to support employees through training and various programs.

The purpose of employee assistance programs is to support the well-being of employees. Human resources have the responsibility of referring workers to employee assistance programs (EAPs) for improving their health and well-being and providing

professional counseling services regarding the problems of work and life-related difficulties (Richmond et al., 2017). Health and safety programs made available to employees contribute to healthier workers (Fabius et al., 2016). Joseph et al. (2018) acknowledged the mixed views concerning the EAP effectiveness to employee absenteeism ratings; therefore, if employees' absence ratings decrease, the program has become effective. The findings from a study reflected that 8% of employees' attendance rates improved as an essential beneficial factor to the company, while future research may explain the latest developments of EAP (Joseph et al., 2018). Richmond et al. (2017) asserted that the significance of employee assistance programs becomes essential to meeting the company needs and employees' job performance.

Some human resource administrators have specialized therapy programs to assess and provide treatment for employees. Human resource leaders have considered group engagement activities using a facilitator to promote a respectful work environment (Cortina et al., 2018). Pheko (2018) affirmed that employees should consider therapeutic writing, which enables journalizing the experience instead of verbalizing abusive encounters reflectively. The purpose of using therapeutic writing is to enable employees to ascertain knowledge and self-awareness to consider the cultural differences of bullies (Pheko, 2018). Victims gain renewal through therapeutic writing to promote healing from bullying while providing an opportunity to express a voice through writing (Chang, 2016). Leaders continue to provide health programs to assist employees.

Businesses have policies related to federal and state government guidelines concerning workplace bullying. The federal legal system does not have any specific laws

about psychological abuse in the workplace; some significant cases of violence and discrimination may lead to new regulations (Smith & Coel, 2018). No federal laws explicitly address workplace bullying but the types of discrimination, equal employment, disability acts, and equal pay (Akella, 2016). Federal laws concerning victims who endure, rationalize, or stipulate the conditioning factors of harassment must have evidence based on the severity and prevalence of occurrences (the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). The severity and prevalence of the harassing acts in the work environment include intimidation, hostility, abusive behavior, and acts of retaliation (the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). Under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, harassment is not lawful; states adopted the fair employment laws of discrimination and harassment (the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.).

Transition

Section 1 of this study consists of the foundation and background of the employee-to-employee workplace bullying and the costs and lost productivity. Section 1 included the problem statement, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study, and the nature of this study that includes an explanation for choosing the research methodology and design. Section 1 also includes the research question, interview questions, the conceptual framework, and operational definitions, ensued by the significance of this study to business practice and implications for social change. To provide an in-depth understanding of the project in Section 2, the review of the

professional and academic literature relates to conducting extensive research knowledge to encapsulate the AET as the conceptual work used as a guide to this study.

Section 2 denoted the role of the researcher, the selection of participants for this qualitative research with the case study design; it also entailed the population, the sampling criteria, and the governing ethical principles. Additionally, Section 2 included the specifications of the data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, data analysis, reliability, and validity, concluding with the transition and summary. In Section 3, I presented the findings, the application to the professional business practice, implications for social change, recommendations for future research, reflections with a conclusion of the study.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 includes an abridgement of qualitative research involving the population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, and techniques used that ensured reliability and validity. I also address data saturation, analysis, interpretation, and storage plan. As the researcher, I became an integral part to demonstrate the dependability, credibility, and confirmability of this research.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies long-term nursing care leaders use to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. The population consisted of six leaders from three long-term nursing care institutions in the Midwest region of the United States who successfully used strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. As an implication for positive social change, the results from this study may potentially benefit health care providers to achieve successful service delivery towards patients, families, and surrounding communities.

Role of the Researcher

I was the primary data collection instrument in my role as the researcher for this qualitative research. I collected data by interviewing the participants. Researchers who collect data using the qualitative research will ensure an evidence base study (Yin, 2018). My role consisted of using an interview protocol (see Appendix A). Researchers use the interview protocol to collect data from the participants using an interview protocol (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

I worked in the hospital business sector for 35 years and inquired about the turnover rates and financial decline of long-term nursing care institutions. My inquisitiveness led to a topic of discussion about employee-to-employee workplace bullying in the long-term nursing care industry although I do not have a direct or indirect affiliation with the participants for this study. The researcher is responsible for the relationship connection with participants, which may negatively influence the study's outcome (Sanjari et al., 2014).

I adhered to the respect of persons, beneficence, and justice principles for the protection of human participants addressed in the *Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). I respected the participants in the study by acknowledging that their participation is voluntary and by ensuring their independence without impeding any judgment of opinions. I adhered to the beneficence principle by treating and protecting the participants from any impending danger or harm to ensure the entitlement of protection to their well-being and the security of data. The researcher's responsibility is to safeguard the data to ensure that participants remain confidential (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I ensured justice by demonstrating fairness to treat the participants equally. Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines support the ethical standards for participant protection. The researcher is responsible for adhering to the ethical considerations required to administer a reliable and valid study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

As a mitigation strategy to avoid any bias through a personal lens, I actively listened to the participants during the interviews to accurately document the data. Yin

(2018) asserted that researchers with excellent listening skills understand the vast quantities of information obtained from the participants without bias during the interview process. I used a journal to document my insights, observation of voice tones, and assumptions, which helped me to remain objective during data collection. Researchers use reflective journals to reduce bias by reflecting on the outcome of the study (Kross & Giust, 2019). I collected company documents from the participants via email and websites to enrich and support an evidence-based study. Scholars garner company resources to enhance the quality of the study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I built a researcher-participant relationship by establishing trust and transparency; I treated the participants with respect by fully disclosing the details of the study involving their volunteering participation. Reducing bias means the researcher must consider the type of relationship established with the participants before the interview, which could jeopardize the outcome (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

I used the interview protocol to have an organized interview process for this qualitative study. The interview protocol used for qualitative studies consists of an organized strategy that generates purposeful data from the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I used the interview protocol to establish a consistent process with participants to maintain an evidence-based data collection. Houghton et al. (2015) stated that consistently applying the same interview protocol questions to each participant in the study helps to strengthen the study.

Participants

I selected nursing care leaders from long-term nursing care institutions having 3 or more years of experience who used strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying in the Midwest region of the United States. Qualitative research entails the effectiveness of the data collection process, which determines the quality of the findings for a complete study (Mohajan, 2018). The strategies I used to recruit participants consisted of researching the internet in the Midwest region of the United States to identify long-term nursing care institutions with high-performance ratings of four to five-star ratings. I contacted the participants via email to confirm their current position, tenure, and to ensure the successful strategies they use to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. The participants responded back to the initial email. All participants in the study had more than 7 years of management experience. Qualitative researchers recruit participants by gaining access using public directory resources (Richards et al., 2018).

I sent several invitations via email to the long-term nursing care institution leaders within each organization, choosing the first two participants who accepted the invitation to the study. I initially anticipated not receiving participant responses based on sending out only six invitations; therefore, I sent out a total of 18, which I was able to accept the first two participants who responded from each institution while thanking the others who did not respond in a timely manner. During the initial contact with the participants using the interview protocol, I explained the contents of the informed consent form by informing them of the topic and purpose of the study. I discussed their voluntary

participation and nature of the study, the risks, and benefits of participating. If the participants continued to express interest, I explained the background of the study and the procedures involved. I also reviewed the sample of interview questions, and provided them with my contact information. When the participants agreed to participate, I confirmed their personal email to send the informed consent form and to contact me if they have any questions after they reviewed the information. Participants who can provide insight into the research topic, meets the recruitment requirement for the selection criterion (Richards et al., 2018).

I scheduled interviews via email or conference call for private interviewing. The COVID-19 state and local regulatory requirements is a concern for qualitative researchers. The restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic have caused limitations for researchers to conduct face-to-face semistructured interviews, focus groups, and in-person observations; social distancing, participant prioritizing, and the safety of researchers has become a factor to collect data (Roberts et. al., 2021).

I established a trust relationship with the participants by providing full disclosure of the study that included the informed consent form, which was an essential factor for establishing a rapport to ensure their rights to confidentiality and privacy. I gave the participants an opportunity to ask questions regarding the study. I also informed the participants that I would use special coding to keep their names and institution confidential. The researcher must protect the participants in the study, which reflects their rights of privacy and uncompromised predicaments (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Research Method and Design

The three research methodologies used by researchers include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Depending on the field of study, scholars may choose the single or multiple qualitative research and case study design to data collect evidence to support the findings of the study (Yin, 2018). The purpose of selecting the appropriate research method and design is to provide an in-depth. evidence-based study with a purposeful outcome (Miles et al., 2014).

Research Method

I selected the qualitative method for this study to conduct an exploratory inquiry into the strategies that long-term nursing care leaders used to successfully eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. The qualitative method is a scientific approach of inquiry used to conduct an evidence-based study for analysis and interpretation concerning a social issue (Levitt et al., 2017). Qualitative research necessitates the use of exploratory research, in which researchers can identify thematic topics and classify data for analysis and interpretation (Yin, 2018). I selected qualitative research as an appropriate method to this study instead of the quantitative or mixed methods. The use of qualitative research enables me to gather in-depth data using an exploratory inquiry.

The quantitative method is an inferential, statistical approach used for testing hypotheses and identifying variable changes or relationships (Turner et al., 2017; Yin, 2018). Researchers use quantitative research to examine measures of variable changes for experimental or nonexperimental designs (Fetters et al., 2017). I did not select

quantitative research for this study because I did not use statistical examinations or variable relationships that does not answer the research question for type of study design.

Mixed methods research is a dual philosophical means that includes both qualitative and quantitative research outcomes from inquiries, surveys, and statistical tests (Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2017). When one method does not rationalize a comprehensive study, consideration of the mixed methods to combine the data sequence at differing phases justifies the mixing of both qualitative and quantitative research (Fawcett, 2015). The mixed-methods approach was not appropriate for this study because it does not require hypothesis tests using variable relationships or predetermined techniques involving statistical analyses. I selected qualitative research to explore and provide an in-depth understanding for eliciting insights from the data generated using participants' feedback.

Research Design

I considered three research designs for this qualitative research: case study, phenomenology, and ethnography and selected the case study design to conduct an in-depth exploratory inquiry into the phenomenon of the research topic. The case study design is an exploratory inquiry used by scholars to address the *what*, *how*, and *why* research questions about the phenomenon of the study (Manley et al., 2016). Case study is a philosophical assumption of exploratory inquiry bounded by case and time to enable the data collection process for identifying themes, patterns, and categories to complete an analysis and interpretation of the study (Yin, 2018). Qualitative researchers conduct case study research using individuals, real-world issues, and social interactions (Myers, 2013).

The multiple case study in comparison to the single case study design establishes a stronger evidence-based meaning of the phenomenon. Researchers use the multiple case study design is to elicit knowledge from various cases regarding the intricacies of the study, information already identified, and the requirement for new data to validate and complete the research (Yin, 2018). The multiple qualitative case study was the appropriate design for this study as I explored the phenomenon using multiple cases.

The phenomenology design is the philosophical examination of research used to describe personal meanings of individual lived experiences about the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenology design is not appropriate for this study because the personal means of the individual experiences are not the purpose of this study. The ethnography design is used by researchers to study and interpret behaviors, beliefs and shared cultural values or social group norms in a natural setting (Goldstein et al., 2014; Guetterman, 2015). The ethnography design was not appropriate because I did not explore a shared-cultural or social group in a natural setting.

I assessed the participants' feedback to determine when data saturation occurred by looking for repeated data. I continued interviewing until no new themes surfaced, and reached data saturation to determine it was the occurrence of data replication as no new data or emerging themes resulted from the sample size. When the participants provide the same information, the researcher will know saturation has occurred (Saunders et al., 2018).

Population and Sampling

I used a small purposeful data sample from the population of the study. The population sample consisted of six leaders from three long-term nursing care institutions from the Midwest region of the United States who successfully used strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. The purpose of using a small purposeful data sample from the population was to provide sufficient exploratory research case study. Researchers use purposeful sampling to gain trust and transferability by ensuring validation from an internal and external perspective; small samples are appropriate for case study research (Palinkas et al., 2015). A purposeful data sample size is based on what is an efficient resource for collecting data for an in-depth study based on participant perspectives to enable flexibility and simplicity for selecting participants from a population without equal chances of selection (Gentles et al., 2015).

The criteria for selecting participants involved accessing the internet and local directory resources. I collected data selecting six participants from three nursing care institutions with high-performance ratings from the Midwest region of the United States with 18 years of age or older having 3 or more years of successful management strategies. During the initial contact, I introduced myself, my role as the researcher, and provided the purpose of the study. The selection criterion consists of recruiting participants who can provide insight into the research topic (Richards et al., 2018). Based on the participants' convenience, I provided information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic conditions for the interview setting. The participants chose to have conference calls and the use of their personal emails for data collection. Recruiting participants

during the COVID-19 pandemic can present challenges for qualitative researchers because of the restrictions of person-to person contact (Roberts et al., 2021). In qualitative studies, researchers work with the participants to select the time and location for the appropriate interview techniques (Yin, 2018).

I ensured data saturation by member checking the participant responses until I reached replication with no new data occurring in the collection process. If data saturation does not occur, the collection process continues (Malterud et al., 2015). Data saturation can occur from interviews and other data collection methods for a qualitative study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Adhering to the techniques using the interview questions of the study, the use of the participant responses, member checking, and company publications enabled me to achieve data saturation, which led to the conclusion that no new data occurred from the sampled population. I obtained data regarding the strategies the participants used to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying.

Ethical Research

I used the informed consent form to explain the procedural contents to the participants regarding the purpose of the study, the background, their voluntary involvement, and predetermined times of participation. I adhered to Walden University's standards by obtaining permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct research with approval number 05-17-22-0544914 and expires on May 16, 2023. The informed consenting process is about informing the research participants with enough information to understand their involvement and intent of the study (Maxwell, 2013; Nusbaum et al., 2017). The informed consent form must consist of an understandable

written language to ensure that no coercion or implied messages will influence the participants' decisions about the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I sent each potential participant an introduction email with a copy of the informed consent form. I asked the participants to respond via email with 'I Consent' if they agree to participate in the study. I confirmed receipt of the informed consent form with the participants and gave them opportunity for review or additional questions prior to the start of the interview. I scheduled the interviews based on the participants' preferences, which all confirmed the use of a conference call and their personal email to participate in the study. I ensured the practice of ethical standards with the participants by informing them of the risks and benefits of participating, including any personal discomforts during the interview, and allowed them to ask questions. Ethical guidelines and procedures communicated with the participants enhance the credibility and reliability of the study (Yin, 2018).

The participants understood their rights to freely withdraw from the study at any time via email, telephone, or in-person without any repercussions. A participant's withdrawal from the study will not violate the ethical research principles addressed in the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). I again informed the participants of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time with any consequences by contacting me via phone or email. I informed the participants that the study does not include any incentives, compensations, or reimbursements.

I maintained the confidentiality of the participants and organizations' rights by using an alphanumeric coding system of P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6. Special codes used in place of the participant names will ensure the ethical protection and confidentiality rights of individuals used in a research study (Nicolaidis, 2016). This study does not contain any participant names or any information that may identify the affiliated organizations. I informed the participants that I stored the electronic data on a flash drive and any hard copies such as company documents in a locked safe for 5 years to protect the confidentiality and rights of the participants and organizations used in this study.

Data Collection Instruments

I assumed the role of the primary data collection instrument used in this qualitative multiple case study to explore the strategies long-term nursing care leaders use to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. As the primary data collection instrument, I used an exploratory inquiry approach as part of the data collection process. In a qualitative study, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument to obtain, review, and interpret data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Yin (2018) asserted that the researcher employs a strategic approach as the primary data collection instrument that builds an explicit evidence-based study.

I used an interview protocol and questions (see Appendix A) as the primary data collection instrument to conduct semistructured interviews with open-ended questions for this study. The interview protocol is a procedural guide designed by researchers to organize and prepare the participants for the interviews to facilitate the collection of quality data (Saldaña, 2016). A semistructured interview consists of predetermined open-

ended interview questions to enable the participants the freedom to express viewpoints and elicit new ideas, giving the researcher the ability to analyze data inductively (Patton, 2015). Case study researchers use various types of data collection instruments to enhance the quality of the study, such as semistructured interviews using an interview protocol (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I also requested company documents such as company policies and procedures as a secondary source to ensure an in-depth and evidence-based comprehensive study. Company documentation supported the information ascertained from participants. Researchers' requests company documents to ensure an in-depth study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

I used hand-written notes during the interview meetings to validate and establish credibility. Yin (2018) asserted that researchers take notes during the interview proceedings as a support source to collect evidence-based data from the participants relative to the phenomenon of the study. I used a recording device to validate the accuracy of the data collected as part of the data collection instruments used in this study to enable the reliability and validity of the study. Researchers use company electronic recording devices to establish the accuracy of the study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

After the initial interview, I followed up each participant via email and telephone to conduct member checking regarding their interview question responses to ensure the accuracy, consistency, or any additional information. I ensured the credibility for an in-depth study by returning their responses from the interview questions to establish the reliability and validity of the study. Member checking is a process that allows the participants of the study the opportunity to validate or revise their documented interviews

(Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Qualitative researchers use member checking to establish trustworthiness in their studies (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2014).

Data Collection Technique

The data collection technique I employed involved the interview protocol (see Appendix A) to establish an organized procedure to gather data for this study. When the participants agree based on the criteria from the informed consent form, I continued with the interview protocol by confirming the interview setting and acknowledged the COVID-19 guidelines. Marshall and Rossman (2016) asserted that the researcher's interview protocol would ensure a well-organized flow of proficiency to prepare the participants for the interview. I used the interview questions from the interview protocol (see Appendix A) to conduct semistructured interviews with open-ended questions as a data collection technique. Social scientists use various data collection techniques to enrich their research through semistructured interviews (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

I contacted the participants via email and telephone and scheduled the date and time of the interview at a location suitable for a private interviewing session based on the COVID-19 guidelines. I conducted interviews via email and telephone, which was based on the participants' preferences. Yin (2018) and Patton et al. (2017) asserted that qualitative researchers will use face-to-face, e-mail, telephone, or focus groups as an exploratory inquiry for a data collection technique. Richards et al. (2018) affirmed that the purpose of providing the participants with the aspects of the study is to collect rich and meaningful evidence.

I obtained permission from the participants before the interview sessions to use an electronic recording device as another data collection technique to ensure the accuracy of the data collection. Yin (2018) explained the importance of getting the participant's permission to use an audio recording device before the interview. Researchers use electronic recording devices to establish accuracy in the study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

I also requested company documents such as policies and procedural directives from the participants in the interview to ensure a complete in-depth study. Researchers collect company documents to enhance the quality of the study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Yin (2018) affirmed that ensuring qualitative research credibility requires strategies to facilitate the research.

I took hand-written notes as I observed the participants' changes in voice tones during the interview to validate the accuracy of the data collection technique. I also asked questions for clarity and understanding based on my taking notes during the interview. Marshall and Rossman (2016) asserted that researchers also take notes during the interview proceeding as a reassuring technique to collect evidence-based data from the participants relative to the phenomenon of the study. Researchers use note-taking to identify significant responses from participants (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

In qualitative research, the use of semistructured interviews necessities some advantages. I selected the semistructured interview approach to have the advantage of asking open-ended questions that enabled me to gather in-depth knowledge from the participants. I had the flexibility of gaining additional insight through verbal communication for an inclusive study. Hyett et al. (2014) asserted that the participant

interviews necessitate the complete significant source for case study evidence. Bradshaw et al. (2017) affirmed that an advantage for researchers to conduct semistructured interviews is to ascertain the ability to elicit thorough and in-depth knowledge through the lens of the participants, which generates new ideas and emerging themes. Kallio et al. (2016) asserted that conducting interviews enables flexibility, developing effective reciprocity between the researcher and the participant.

As the primary research instrument, I prepared for any disadvantages by using Walden University's IRB ethical procedures and standards. A disadvantage I could encounter is the possible continuing limitation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to conduct face-to-face interviews. An often-overlooked fact that may pose a disadvantage using interviews is the researcher's safety while conducting face-to-face interviews with the participants (Oltmann, 2016). It is the researcher's responsibility to diffuse any subtle problems during the interview process, which may jeopardize the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

I conducted member checking meetings before the data interpretation and analysis process. Bernard (2013) and Marshall and Rossman (2016) posited that member checking consists of a procedure that enables the participants the opportunity to validate or revise their documented interviews in the study. I used member checking by asking each participant to review my summary notes taken during the interviews to document the categories properly. If I do not achieve data saturation by the end of the sixth interview, I continued to interview participants until I reach data saturation. If data saturation does not

occur, the collection process continues (Malterud et al., 2015). In qualitative research, reliability is the use of evidence-based data to reach data saturation (Fusch et al., 2018).

Data Organization Technique

I selected to use the Microsoft Excel software based on its functionality to maintain and track an accurate research data activity. Using this application gave me the ability to organize, categorize, identify data patterns, develop codes, retrieve, and store data for interpretation and analysis. Researchers using qualitative research employ various system techniques to keep track of the collected data for the study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Ose (2016) asserted that Microsoft Excel has similar built-in features as other qualitative research software that sorts the text with codes.

I secured the electronic data on a USB drive and stored it with the paper documents such as company documents and my interview notes in a locked safe in my home office for 5 years from graduation to protect the confidentiality and rights of the participants. I will shred all paper documents after 5 years and destroy the USB drive. As per the Walden University IRB guidelines, the data requires the highest level of privacy and protection by locking up all research-related documents and ensuring the removal of names and organizations. To ensure ethical responsibility of the data, disposing of the paperwork and electronic files requires proper procedures such as shredding, burning, and using software to overwrite information that disbands any chances of recovery (Guest & MacQueen, 2008).

Data Analysis

Researchers choose among the four types of triangulations: methodological, data source, investigator, and theoretical approach to conducting data analysis to demonstrate the strength of the study (Yin, 2018). Qualitative case study researchers use methodological triangulation to ensure the richness and inclusiveness using multiple data sources to achieve a comprehensive analysis from the evidence collected (Fusch et al., 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Burau and Andersen (2014) employed triangulation to garner information from various perspectives from collected data. Methodological triangulation is the use of multiple sources of data in qualitative research to ensure the dependability and trustworthiness (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2014). Harvey (2015) explained that the use of various sources to collect data is to reduce bias by combining the data collection instruments in the study. Saldaña (2016) asserted that qualitative case study researchers who use the methodological triangulation approach exemplify validity and reliability. I used the methodological triangulation to ensure an inclusive and comprehensive study. I used multiple sources of data, which linked to the literature research, the interviews, and company documents.

I conducted a data analysis to this qualitative study. I used Microsoft Excel to code, categorize responses into themes. Ose (2016) affirmed that Microsoft Excel has features and functionality as other qualitative research software with the capability to sort data with codes. I used Microsoft Excel pivot tables to organize and sort data by identifying reoccurring concepts, new ideas, subtopics, key words, patterns based on the interview question responses from the participants to create categories for the discovery

of emerging themes and patterns. Relative to the interview responses, receiving company documents via email, and conducting literature research, I compiled the data to categorize and identify and label themes in a logical, sequential, and grouping arrangement. Using color coding methods, I was able to discover the connections between the research topic, literature research, thematic topics, and the findings encompassing the strategies long-term nursing care leaders used to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. Qualitative case study researchers typically create a data analysis plan using a research software for code development, categorizing data, arranging descriptions, and developing themes or patterns for analyzation and interpretation from the findings (Yin, 2018). Scholars use the thematic analysis approach in qualitative studies to identify and analyze patterns for meaningful interpretation from the collected data-set (Fugard & Potts, 2015).

Reliability and Validity

Qualitative researchers make evident the soundness of the research through data sufficiency, appropriateness, and consistency of a study to ensure reliability and validity (Spires et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). Reliability and validity in qualitative case studies require the use of triangulation, data evidence from multiple sources, and data saturation (Fusch et al., 2018; Kaman & Othman, 2016). I established the reliability and validity of the study by implementing methodological triangulation, member checking, and achieving data saturation.

Reliability

I enhanced the dependability, consistency, and trustworthiness of this study by using an interview protocol and member checking to ensure an accurate account of data

interpretation. I also continued with interviews until I reached data saturation to help ensure the dependability of the findings. Reliability refers to how researchers will address the dependability of research (Patton, 2015; Rose & Johnson, 2020). Researchers ensure reliability when replication and consistency occur by assessing the data using various qualitative research to establish trustworthiness and dependability of the findings (Miles et al., 2016). The use of member checking and data saturation ensures the dependability of the findings (Brear, 2019).

Validity

Qualitative research validity is the use of various research methods to the design to ensure accurate representation, rationality, and logic of the phenomenon (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Yin, 2018). Validity attained in research demonstrates the evidence of data accuracy (Yin, 2018). The use of member checking is another way to achieve validity in a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I obtained validity by scheduling another appointment with the participants for member checking to obtain revisions or updates for accuracy.

Credibility

The significance of ensuring credibility in qualitative research is to establish believability by using evidence-based data sources (Miles et al., 2016). Researchers employ various qualitative studies to demonstrate the integrity and trustworthiness of the study; however, the researcher remains objective to the view and perspectives of the participants by eliminating bias (Kross & Giust, 2019). In qualitative research case studies, an interview protocol, member checking, and a triangulation analysis used consists of verifying data

for interpretation (Yin, 2018). Researchers use an interview protocol, member checking, and a triangulation analysis to verify the data for interpretation (Yin, 2018). I used multiple data sources using an interview protocol, semistructured interviews, note-taking and audio recording, and a review of company documents. I conducted member checking by scheduling a follow-up meeting with the participants to review the summary of the interview to update or revise my interpretation of their interview answers. I used methodological triangulation, which includes multiple data sources such as interviewing, member checking, and company documentation to establish an in-depth, evidence-based study.

Transferability

I achieved transferability by using qualitative research and the case study design. I conducted an exploratory inquiry into the research question using an interview protocol with member checking to ensure the accuracy of data. The replication from the findings of this study should transfer relative to audiences of interest and future researchers. Transferability is the responsibility of the researcher to demonstrate how the findings of the study replicate within the context of the original study using the same research method and design (Fusch et al., 2017). Yin (2018) affirmed how scholars apply transferability to the study using qualitative research such as an interview protocol, following up with the participants, to member checking for data saturation.

Confirmability

I achieved confirmability by following up with the participants to data accuracy as a technique to mitigate any potential bias. I also employed member checking by asking

each participant to review their responses to ensure data accuracy prior to conducting the analysis and interpretation for the presentation of the findings. Member checking ensures the accuracy of the data (Yin, 2018). I employed the methodological triangulation approach using multiple sources to support the research evidence, such as an interview protocol, semistructured interviews, note-taking, an audio record interviews, and a review of company documents. Confirmability is an approach, which scholars use to avoid bias in a research study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Data Saturation

I used a thematic analysis approach by validating the collected data for accuracy to check for redundancy and new information to ensure data saturation. I reached data saturation during data collection when no new information or themes emerged. If I did not reach data saturation using the six interviewees, I continued with participant interviews until duplicate answers surfaced and no new information appeared. Reaching data saturation necessitates an analysis approach to establish reliability, validity, and credibility to the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation occurs when a researcher's analysis reveals redundancy from the interviews and ceases the data collection based on no new information exists to support the study (Fusch et al., 2018). When the participants provide the same information, the researcher will know when saturation occurs (Saunders et al., 2018). I also used my note-taking skills to ask questions for clarity and understanding.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 of this qualitative multiple case study consists of the researcher's role and the descriptive topics relevant to my study. Section 2 included the specifications of the population and sampling for qualitative research and case study design, ethical considerations, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization techniques, data analysis, and concludes with the reliability and validity of the study. Additionally, Section 2 required an in-depth understanding of this project and the criteria for participants selected for the study. In Section 3, I provided a presentation of the findings, application to the professional business practice, and the implications of social change. I concluded Section 3 with the recommendations for future research, final reflections of my research experience, and a closing statement.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies long-term nursing care leaders used to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. The data came from six selected leaders and company documentation within Midwest region of the United States. The findings reflected methods that long-term nursing care institution leaders used to improve service delivery towards patients, families, and surrounding communities. Three emerging themes derived from the data analysis: policy integrated with training, employee value and respect, and anti-bully awareness events. Section 3 includes a discussion of the application to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for action and further research. The topic of this study concludes with reflections and a conclusion of the study.

Presentation of the Findings

I addressed the topic of study that was significant to the overarching research question for this qualitative multiple case study: What strategies do long-term nursing care leaders use to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying? Some long-term nursing care leaders lack strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. In this study, three emerging themes derived from the data analysis: policy integrated with training, employee value and respect, and anti-bully awareness events. By conducting this study, I was able to explore the findings derived from interviews, handwritten notes, electronic recording devices, and company records. Alphi and Evans

(2019) asserted that interviews, documentation, archived records, participant observation, and physical artifacts are evidential sources for case studies.

I used the Microsoft Excel software application to store the data for organization and categorization, which enabled me to develop codes, identify emerging data patterns, and retrieve information to analyze interpretation and data storage. Yin (2018) asserted that researchers who conduct qualitative research normally creates an analysis plan from the data using research software for coding, categorizing with the functionality to arrange descriptions to develop themes or patterns for analyses and interpretation. I identified keywords and phrases from the data to conduct an analysis. The following emerged themes attributed by the participants reflect the findings of the study in Table 1.

Table 1

Themes: Strategies for Eliminating Employee-to-Employee Workplace Bullying

| Themes | Frequency of Key Words | Percentage of total |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Policy integrated with training | 54 | 88% |
| Employee value and respect | 38 | 62% |
| Anti-bully awareness events | 24 | 39% |

Theme 1: Policy Integrated with Training

The first emerging theme from the participants' interviews consisted of policy integrated with training, which addressed the elimination of employee-to-employee workplace bully behavior. All participants acknowledged that their company policies combined with training became a necessity for eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying. The participants also mentioned that newly-hired employees

participated in training sessions before starting or learning their work assignments. All six participants acknowledged how their training sessions explicitly described the types of bully behaviors, the effects on employee morale, the procedures for reporting, and the steps management took to determine disciplinary actions. P1 stated, “We have continuous training programs that starts at orientation, which defines the bully behavior type, the effects on employees who experienced the problems, including the consequences, and disciplines.” P2, P4, P5, and P6 explained that their training classes have preventive techniques for handling bully behavior, which provides deterrents that offset negative outcomes of poor work performance, attendance problems, potential loss of employment, health problems, and other consequences.

P3 stated, “We had a few employees directly involved in an incident, which they had to retake the training courses on bullying.” Developing a wholesome work culture starts with resources provided to employees. Management’s approach to administering health and safety training provides employees with knowledge about their wellbeing in a healthy work culture (Mullen et al., 2016). P2 said,

What worked best for eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying was the training courses about the subtle forms of workplace bullying. We also provide employees with information about our wellness program and how it works during our training sessions. If they would ever need counseling services to help them through any bullying problems, the program is always available. As far as when an employee experiences a bully situation, we encourage them to immediately meet in confidence

with our HR department for a one-on-one meeting, which helps to protect and calm them during their situation. Allowing the bullied employee to provide recommendations was also a good strategy.

P2 emphasized that when the encounters took place and the bully was at fault, disciplinary actions occurred to ensure the behavior does not happen again.

P4 explained they had employees, including all parties involved, repeat mandatory workplace bully training courses after the reported complaints went to management, which reminded them of the offensive behaviors, the affects to victimized employees, and progressive disciplinary actions. P4 also stated that filing a complaint report requires a repeated training course on workplace bully behavior for victimized employees to understand and identify the type of offense when reporting their case as well as provide positive resolutions. P4 stated, “Allowing bullied employees to make suggestions made a big difference for management, which helped solve problems; we had to separate bullied employees and give them different work assignments.” Preventing workplace bullying behavior necessitates leaders to identify strategies to counteract organizational disruption (Einarsen et al., 2016).

Since all the participants acknowledged having a workplace bully policy integrated with training, they also included in their policies the procedures to report complaints as well as who to directly contact. This became an effective plan outlined in their training sessions. As part of collecting company documentation, I received copies of workplace bully policies and procedures from all participants except for P6 who explained that there were multiple updates, which may take time when they hire another

manager. I also received copies of PowerPoint presentation slides from P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5, which reflected the companies' policies and procedures used during the trainings. Thus, P6 explained that since they had to make updates to some policies, one ineffective approach was,

HR sent a workplace bully complaint form via email to the victimized employees, which indicated 'anonymous' but somehow employees discovered that their names were no longer anonymous using the company's computer having an IP address. Employees were afraid to come forth as their identities did not remain confidential, which led to mistrust and office gossip. This strategy was the least effective. We had to revamp the procedures to ensure employee confidentiality and trust. We contracted with a third-party vendor to document complaints to secure the confidentiality of employee complaints.

P6 acknowledged that sending email workplace bully complaint forms to victimized employees will become revised in the updated workplace bully policy; the new approach introduced in the training sessions helped to establish trust in management, explained P6. Leaders understanding the AET may nurture employees' views relevant to the organization's fairness, equity, and truthfulness to establish impartiality (Colquitt & Zipay, 2015).

The three components of the AET: the cognitive judgment approach, social influences approach, and dispositional approach created by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) reflects how policy integrated with training aligns to this study's conceptual

framework. Policy integrated with training establishes the basis of every employee's cognitive understanding about the company's code of conduct. Cognitive collaboration in the training environment necessitates how company training programs integrated with policies enhances a delivery platform for employees to conform to the institution's conduct standard with a positive attitude that promotes job satisfaction and performance. When the work atmosphere exhibits a positive work culture, employees become involved in their job duties (Johnson et al., 2018). The cognitive judgment approach is relevant to employees' awareness about work situations related to the office setting, the atmosphere of the work environment, the policies, and procedures including the organizational reporting structure (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

The social influences approach of the AET links to the participants' employee perceptions and behaviors exhibiting concerns about the external factors of the COVID-19 pandemic encompassing results of the severity of ailments, qualms about the vaccinations, potential layoffs, and economic uncertainty. P5 explained that their institution had problems scheduling on-site meetings about the current bullying problems,

We had to use a unique approach because of the ongoing bully offences and tried problem-solving within the context of what occurred before and during the onset of the COVID-19 lockdown. Some employees could not attend the meetings and on-site training sessions because of the unknown ailments and problems that turned out to be associated with the pandemic so we had to postpone the meetings. We had to immediately develop online courses with the policies while reorganizing the office spacing.

P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 and P6 expressed the same concerns, which all had to resort to rescheduling and developing new online training courses as most of their trainings were on-site until COVID-19.

The dispositional approach of the AET aligns to the thematic topic. All participants emphasized that the employees appreciated the effective techniques during the training sessions to understand the policies and practice of the procedures. P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6 explained how they created employee satisfaction by adopting strategies to develop employee self-worth in the training environments that supports their career development, and independence by distributing resources, and training materials. P1 stated, “We also present career opportunities for employees who desire to advance within the company.”

P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6 explained that they now have online courses due to the COVID-19 pandemic for all health and wellness virtual courses as well as supporting counselors who require employees to review the EAP resources to gain insight of the company incentives and benefits offered. P1, P3, and P4 stated that they use volunteer employee mock demonstrations of bullied victims and bully behavior. The employees learned preventative principles of how to handle encounters based on the various bully behaviors learned in the training, which supported their understanding and overall wellbeing. Employees can counteract negative experiences in exchange for favorable results when volunteering in job events that motivates a personal balance for well-being (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Averting bullying behavior enables leaders to identify strategies to counteract organizational disturbance (Einarsen et al., 2016). Participants P1,

P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6 gave me copies of their training materials including PowerPoint presentations. I concur that these materials are affective strategies for eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying, which supports the dispositional approach of the AET. The AET is an encapsulation of policy integrated with the training theme, which highlights the strategies the participants use to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying.

The thematic topic, policy integrated with training, aligned with the research body of knowledge. Human resource administrators took into consideration of having a facilitator deliver group engagement activities to advance a reverential work environment (Cortina et al., 2018). An effective business practice strategy is to train employees about the health and safety of the organization. Management's handling of administering health and safety training gives employees an understanding of their wellbeing in a healthy workplace (Mullen et al., 2016).

Theme 2: Employee Value and Respect

Employee value and respect is the second identified emerging theme. All participants acknowledged having value and respect in their mission and vision statements. P1 explained that in the beginning when employees knew that management took training on this significant core value, they noticed a change in the work atmosphere, which enhanced their trust in management, feeling valued and respected. P2 acknowledged that when employees knew how management took their employee-to-employee bullying encounters seriously, they felt valued and respected instead of feeling dismissed or ignored. P3 stated,

When I understood how employee-to-employee workplace bullying affected the morale of our employees, my team worked very hard to educate ourselves of how to approach the situation in a delicate matter because it had already filtered through the work environment. We had to understand the type of behavior and tried to find ways to get rid of this kind of employee conduct because it was just so subtle and treacherous! We could not identify it at first, even when we were present but we were finally able to learn it, recognize it, and stop it. We immediately addressed the behavior as it was escalating to the point that employee morale dwindled and we could not have this! So, we met with all parties involved one-on-one and at different days and disciplined the bully; and we never had problems since. We met with the bullied employee to gain an understanding of what they were feeling and asked for suggestions of what we should do, this was a positive turn for us to gain the employee's trust, confidence, and respect. We never had any more problems since we used this strategy.

P4 acknowledged the importance for their employees to feel valued and respected, "Because without these two core value principles, employee performance will decline causing a ripple effect to the environment, which will breed other work relationship problems." P4 also explained, "I cannot go into too much detail but please understand, it took time to resolve the bully behavior encounters and one reason encircled the timing of the COVID-19 pandemic". Additionally, P4 explained, "Being fully present means that

we want the employees to know that we are fully engaged with them and care about their wellbeing.” P5 stated, “Several years ago, we lost employee value and respect, it seemed like an insurmountable hill to gain it back. When employees feel that management has no value in them, they will most likely not come to you with any problems or possibly decide to quit instead of going through the administrative process to solve work problems.

P6 stated,

In our organization, we realize the importance of good workers; to maintain these quality worker performance skills, we need to come up with ways to demonstrate value and respect. We also need to make sure employees can come to us with any work issues or problems. Therefore, we would do our best to improve the employee morale by listening to their concerns. We used anti-bully events and developed activities for employees to demonstrate positive employee collaboration and engagement skills. This project brought in a whole new dynamic, which changed the entire work culture. We created a new work environment that centered around the employees’ worth, giving recognition to employees who practiced our company’s core values.

The employee value and respect thematic topic emerged and aligned with Weiss and Cropanzano’s (1996) AET: cognitive judgment approach, social influences approach, and dispositional approach. Each approach of the AET characterizes employees’ experiences in the workplace in that management was able to build employees’ self-

concept, especially during COVID-19. The cognitive judgment approach applies to how management focused on each institutions' policy standards by having all employees including the management team follow the core values, which is a conditional factor to cognitively influence employees' perceptions, attitudes, and awareness about the institutions' core standards for achieving employee value and respect. The long-term nursing care institutions had to develop different office spacing setups based on the COVID-19 pandemic guidelines, which caused workspace distance, perhaps even for employees who experienced bully behavior, which lessened the normal daily interactions. Employees will inevitably have beliefs and reasoning doubts about their value and respect based on employee relation interactions to job satisfaction, including how the company manages employee-to-employee workplace bullying.

The findings of the second thematic topic, employee value and respect, aligned to the social influences approach of the AET. The social conditions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic might have had a detrimental influence on employees' emotions in the workplace. Bakker and Demerouti (2017) affirmed that the social influences approach of the AET links to the company's operations and procedures. The social conditions encompassing the COVID-19 pandemic caused a disruption to the institutions to internally change the normal work environment setup by reorganizing the spacing setup and the developed of online training sessions in place of onsite training. All participants used supporting email messages including updates regarding the COVID-19 pandemic to show how much they valued their employees' lives.

The dispositional approach of the AET links to the thematic topic of employee value and respect, which personifies how employees feel valued and respected at their place of work. The dispositional approach applies to employees' feelings and perceptions about their worth to the company, which demonstrates how they perform with a sense of job satisfaction and autonomy (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Employees have the propensity to express their worth when management promotes an environment of employee value and respect. The participants validated the relevance of practicing employee value and respect to set the tone for maintaining a positive work culture. All participants also used value and respect to all their training modules as a reinforcement to emphasize employee worth.

The thematic topic, employee value and respect links to the research body of knowledge as an effective business practice strategy. The participants in the study used a mixture of strategies, which consisted training with policy directives, events, and employee assistance programs (EAPs) to enhance employee value and respect. The purpose of the EAPs is to improve the health and well-being of employees by providing professional counseling services relative to problems at work and life-related difficulties (Richmond et al., 2017). Some businesses may offer their employees extended-service programs, namely: behavioral health and wellness seminars, professional therapy counseling, and coaching (Joseph & Walker, 2017). Employees who often review organizational policies, obtain knowledge of the organization's procedures concerning prevention and intervention of abusive encounters (Cortina et al., 2018). The amalgamated strategies used by the participants encompass employee value and respect.

The body of research knowledge aligns to the thematic top of how a lack of employee value and respect can develop into a dysfunctional work environment, if not handled appropriately and timely. Institutions need to have functional work environments that contribute to health and wellbeing of all employees to reduce job dissatisfaction and abnormal stress. Employees who demonstrate bullying behavior are subject to corrective action administered by the organization's human resources department (Valentine & Fleishman, 2017). Employees need a safe workplace to enable them the ability to effectively perform and fulfill the job requirements.

Theme 3: Anti-bully Awareness Events

The thematic topic, anti-bully awareness events was the last emerging theme identified in this study as a significant factor used to enhance the institutions' ability to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. When conducting interviews with the participants, P1, P2, P4, P5, and P6 acknowledged having anti-bully awareness events because of the difficulties identifying the subtle forms of workplace bully behavior. P1 stated, "To increase anti-bully awareness, we had events involving employee engagement quarterly. Employees from different sections volunteered to role play and game play." P4 stated, "Reinforcing anti-bully awareness activities on a continuous basis helps us to reach our operational performance standards, especially during employee evaluations." P6 explained, "Our company regards the overall health and wellness of our employees because they want to feel a sense of security and protection so we used stimulated messages in the anti-bully awareness events to enable volunteer role play, guessing games, and other activities." Defining and classifying the multiplicity of bully behaviors

and the varying connotations of a workplace bully becomes a challenge to identify and discipline (Rahim & Cosby, 2016). Rahim and Cosby (2016) asserted that management often fails to recognize uncivil behavior because of vague meanings, perspectives, and ambiguous behaviors that creates a subtle and unsafe workplace; employees' experiences will help to learn the effects on the work environment. Management employing the use of anti-bully awareness activities will reinforce the awareness of employee-to-employee workplace bullying behavior.

P3 explained, "A lack of knowledge about bully behavior is not an excusable action when we can learn and rectify this behavior. We may not have events, but we have incorporated computer simulated games with employee incentives to recognize the forms of bully behavior." P2 and P5 acknowledged that anti-bully awareness events presented challenges because of the need to understand the vastness of behaviors that come in various forms, which became difficulty to categorize. P2 stated, "Once we educated ourselves about the varying employee-to-employee workplace bully behaviors, we knew how to implement anti-bully awareness events and what work best for our organization." P5 explained, "We know that it is not a one-size-fits-all plan because every organization has a diverse employee population, structural makeup, and workplace environment. P6 stated, "We had to make sure we found anti-bully awareness events that worked because we did not want to implement programs there were not beneficial to our organization and employees; therefore, we wanted to avoid unnecessary incurred costs." All participants except P3 agreed that the anti-bully awareness events or activities has helped to improve the work environment and organization, while promoting confidence and trust between

management and the employees. P5 stated, “Introducing anti-bully awareness events helps with providing an understanding about the uniqueness of every bully encounter and ways to categorize the offenses to help employees identify employee-to-employee workplace bullying.” P4 agreed that anti-bully awareness events helped them to be more responsibly aware of bully behavior and not put all the pressure solely on the employees but being fully present as a source of assistance when needed.

The thematic topic of anti-bully awareness events emerged and aligned with the conceptual framework from Weiss and Cropanzano’s (1996) AET: the cognitive judgment approach, social influences approach, and dispositional approach. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) explained the comparisons related to employee differences from the work surroundings is a substantial amount of cognitive interaction based on group participation, company events, or situations that provide insight into the conditions, employee attitudes, and their reactions. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) affirmed that an employee’s cognitive ability reflects what occurs in the workplace. Employees had preconceived perceptions and feelings about the management’s administration of anti-bully awareness events, which contributed to the employee knowledge-building experiences, reflecting the company’s image. The findings of the thematic topic anti-bully awareness events align with the social influences approach of the AET.

Understanding the social implications and the effects of employee-to-employee workplace bullying will help organizations with anti-bully awareness events broaden the comprehension of this misbehavior. The social influences approach of the AET connects the company’s internal functionalities, that triggers stressful work conditions (Bakker &

Demerouti, 2017). The social influences approach can provide an awareness of employees' feelings of the job to the social ramifications involved.

The dispositional approach of the AET linked to the thematic topic of anti-bully awareness events that signifies the importance in which events helps to bring an understanding and awareness of employee-to-employee workplace bullying. The participants identified the relevance of anti-bully awareness and its significance to the organization and employees giving infusing a sense of inclusion, respect, awareness, and safety. This is also a reflection of their personal life outlook, motivation, and work satisfaction. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) acknowledged that employee views regarding work satisfaction affects their ability to have a positive self-concept of life, which also influences employee behavior. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) understood that the natural tendencies of employees come from their viewpoint of whether work satisfaction plays a significant role in a positive or negative disposition. Brandebo et al. (2016) affirmed that employees working with minimal stress and worries will exhibit trust with management as well as display a positive attitude in the work environment.

Anti-bully awareness events exemplify the literature research to the findings of the study to reflect how the long-term nursing care leaders responded to workplace bully behavior using effective business practices. These effective business practices demonstrated the strategies used to eliminate operational disruption and the expenses incurred from employee-to-employee workplace bullying encounters. Rahim and Cosby (2016) purported the various facets of bullying, incivility, emotional abuse, sexual harassment, and workplace violence according to scholars and business managers,

enabled the ability to separate these defined behavioral attributes from diverse perspectives. Phillips (2016) posited that because of the lack of clarity to the classifications of workplace violence and the legal categories of the descriptive offenses, challenges exist in research when comparing other studies because the varying meanings of bully behavior require much attention. The various meanings of workplace violent behavior in academic research cause discrepancies and misunderstandings of the various forms of this behavior (Phillips, 2016). One factor that may lessen employee abuse is for management to consider group engagement activities using a facilitator to promote a respectful work environment (Cortina et al., 2018). The long-term nursing care leaders used group engagement activities during the new-hire orientations and at planned events.

Applications to Professional Practice

The applicability of the findings to this study becomes relevant to improving professional business practice for the strategies long-term nursing care leaders used to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying. The consequences of workplace bullying induce a burden on business operations (Valentine & Fleishman, 2017). Business leaders could employ operational practices by developing strategies to improve organizational productivity, profitability, and performance to counteract costs incurred from lost productivity, absenteeism, legal ramifications, and injuries.

The findings of the study alluded to three significant themes that accentuated the body of research knowledge. Each theme materialized from the AET as a contributing factor for improved business practices about successful strategies used to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying within the long-term nursing care industries.

Colquitt and Zipay (2015) explained that leaders using the AET could cultivate employees' experiences in relation to the organization's equity and truthfulness for impartial outcomes. The themes that emerged and aligned to the AET: the cognitive judgment approach, social influences approach, and dispositional approach were policy integrated with training, employee value and respect, and anti-bully awareness events. Employee-to-employee workplace bullying can disrupt business performance. Cropanzano et al. (2017) affirmed that the AET would enable business leaders to analyze employee emotional effects as their experiences will reflect significant results.

Policy integrated with training emerged as the dominant thematic topic, which encapsulates improved professional business practice. The long-term nursing care leaders stipulated that this type of business practice works best with continuous training programs throughout the year, starting with orientation. Organizations need to have functional business environments to contribute to health and wellbeing of all employees to reduce job dissatisfaction and abnormal stress. Managements' techniques used to administer health and safety training gives employees the knowledge and competence for wellbeing and a healthy work environment (Mullen et al., 2016). Policies included with training program exemplify effective resolutions that support operative business practices with an aim to prevent disruption.

Employee value and respect is a thematic topic that represents an improved professional business practice. A lack of value and respect weakens the employees' drive to perform causing an unhealthful workplace. When employees feel devalued in the work environment, the drive to perform diminishes, and toxicity develops, causing an

unhealthy work culture (Lee et al., 2018). Employee value and respect have relevancy to improved business practice as the long-term nursing care leaders realized that not having this concept will cause significant detriment to the organization's performance and profitability.

Anti-bully awareness events emerged reflecting professional improved business practice. Strategically developing anti-bully events to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying contributes to a healthy work environment for maintaining productivity, job satisfaction, and profitability. When promoting a culture of health and safety, companies motivate workers by providing the necessary resources to accomplish the needed results for a wholesome work environment (McCleary et al., 2017). The main objective is for organizations to stay abreast of the nuances of bully behavior to develop ongoing strategies that protect victimized employees.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change based on the findings of this study may beneficially affect health care providers and other genres. Achieving successful service delivery to patients, families, and surrounding communities enhances business performance and productivity. This study has the proclivity to deliver tangible improvements that can eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying by developing continuous training integrated with policies as a platform with an emphasis on employee value and respect. The prevention of workplace bullying requires leaders to discover ways to prevent disruption to the organization (Einarsen et al., 2016).

This study may contribute to positive social change by providing resources to healthcare providers and other genres to understand the effects and ramifications of employee-to-employee workplace bullying. Identifying strategies will help healthcare institutions to improve financial and economic losses incurred by employee-to-employee workplace bullying. The use of positive and effective organizational communications helps to lessen internal conflicts, which diminishes employees' emotions and stress to job stability (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). These implications for positive social change can have optimistic effects on employees' livelihood, job, their family, and to the society, especially during uncertain economic conditions. The social influences approach of the AET is a key factor that provides additional insight to health care providers. Employees' attitudes based on social factors influence behavior, and job performance as employers aim to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying.

The literature encapsulated the successful strategies long-term nursing care leaders used to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying; however, some evidence of limitations exists. Therefore, long-term nursing care leaders need to consider using additional successful and productive techniques based on the needs of employees to maintain an efficient organization. Understanding the subtleties and effects of employee-to-employee workplace bullying in long-term nursing care institutions necessitates strategic and innovative opportunities for long-term nursing care leaders to avoid financial and organizational collapse requiring social change. Therefore, long-term nursing care leaders should consider immediate and solutional attention employees need regarding the emotional timing factors to seek professional therapy care, preventative

assistance used to offset stressful buildup related to health disorders and affecting pre-existing conditions escalated by employee-to-employee workplace bullying. An analysis of this literature further drew from multiple studies underlies this research body of knowledge to compare, contrast, and synthesize various scholarly resources. A critical analysis from the literature research exemplified the findings for effective business practices that may lessen operational disruption and expenses incurred from employee-to-employee workplace bullying. The findings of this study implicated that positive social change may potentially benefit healthcare providers for achieving effective service delivery to patients, families, and surrounding communities.

Recommendations for Action

Employee-to-employee workplace bullying has become an essential topic of discussion amongst scholars and businesses. Rai and Agarwal (2016) asserted that the rationale of comprehending workplace bully behavior exists and requires additional research to understand its causes. The recommendations for action in this study include ongoing continuous training, emphasis on employee value and respect, and the need for anti-bully awareness events. Additional recommendations involve long-term nursing care leaders staying abreast of the various social and economic changes affecting employees' attitudes on the job and comprehending the complexities of workplace bullying during economic uncertainty. If management takes a proactive approach to eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying, this will improve and enhance the organization's job satisfaction, productivity, and financial stability. Hassard et al. (2018) posited that organizational disruptions occur when not addressing workplace bullying,

thus affecting costs and productivity. Human resource departments within the organization have the responsibility of helping employees by ensuring their health, wellness, and safety (Jinnett et al., 2017). The findings of this study may be resourceful to healthcare leaders and other related genres. Leaders creating effective strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bully behavior could improve productivity, job satisfaction, cost deficiencies, and the health and wellness of victimized employees.

Recommendations for Further Research

The recommendations for future research encompass the areas of policy development integrated with training. The first recommendation is long term nursing care institutional leaders must identify strategies in their policies for victimized employees to present complaints anonymously without retaliation. The next recommendation for further research entails limitations of revealing specific cases of bullies and victimized employees relevant to mental health to determine effective approaches to problem solving to prevent negative outcomes. Rai and Agarwal (2016) affirmed that the basis of understanding workplace bully behavior exists and requires additional research to understand its causes. The final recommendation is to clarify the broad meaning of workplace bully behavior since there are varying meanings associated with the conduct to provide a meaningful disciplinary grid. Victimized employees' claims will need objectivity without partiality, which will enable sufficient information for future studies to determine corrective action.

The findings of this study may be of value to improved practices in business for leaders to create strategies that eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bully

behavior. Developing effective practices in business helps to improve the quality of employees' lives whereby contributing to business standards that reduce the expenses incurred through a lack of productivity, increased absenteeism, and job dissatisfaction. Pera (2017) affirmed that scholars studied that exposure to workplace bullying contributes to work reduction, productivity, toxicity, health ailments, turnover, financial loss, and the number of reported incidents. Recommendations from this study may provide a means to develop strategies for successfully eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying.

Reflections

As I reflect on my DBA journey experience, I learned the significance of employee-to-employee workplace bullying as it goes beyond the healthcare industry into other genres and not solely limited to long-term nursing care institutions. I did not realize how much of a challenge it was to get the number of participants following the Walden IRB standards but I had to continue to research more long-term nursing care institutional leaders. However, during the participant interviews, I put aside my personal bias and views when the participant's made statements that reminded me of my personal experiences when I resolved employee-to-employee conflicts. I became enlightened by some of the participants shared experiences as I learned that eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying requires management's full support for quality resolutions that worked. During the literature research, I also learned about the severity of workplace bullying and the affects it has on victimized employees, the bully, work environment, and the organization. Learning about the financial losses incurred from mishandling

employee-to-employee workplace bullying affects the organization's stability, productivity, including the health and wellness of the employees directly involved. The encounters become a financial expense, which drives up the costs. I also learned that long-term nursing care leaders have a significant key role for implementing policy with practice and procedures to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying; such practices help to reinforce and support the institution's image and operational standards.

After completing this study, I learned about how management uses effective approaches of how employees must professionally engage one another with respect and value. I learned that what has occurred in the personal lives of every employee outside of the office does really matter in regards to external factors. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has distanced some employees who became accustomed to using hybrid schedules as others fully remotored from home, which may have helped to reduce some tension based on the office set up. Some employees experienced family loss, sickness, and economic downturns, which also may have affected their office relationships, as they are coping with the constant internal and external changes. Learning about the employees' attitudes, emotions, and behaviors of workplace bullies to victimized employees may cause emotional trigger moments because of the pain and suffering in their personal-life experiences.

As I continue to reflect on some experiences working in administrative capacities, one experience reminded me of employee-to-employee workplace bullying. Working in the hospital business sector of the healthcare industry for 30 years, I became inquisitive about the operational matters of the long-term nursing care institutions relative to

employee-to-employee workplace bullying, which generated a topic of interest. I had prior experience successfully meeting with employees separately as I carefully assessed the matter by looking for the appropriate approach to handle the problem before getting involved. I had to evaluate if the broken work relationship extended from work system processes, employees having personal-life problems outside the work place, or personality conflicts. Therefore, having one-on-one sessions with these employees gave me an opportunity to approach the problem the right way. I first listened to each employees' view point as the first assessment tool based deciding the effective approach.

This first assessment helped me to establish common ground, using shared experiences for best outcomes; and finally, I asked them about the kind of resolution they were seeking. I did not reference the policies as this case was situational based on personal-related emotions. Restoring the working relationship between the two employees was most important. I did not have any mediation sessions with the employees because of the tension levels of each employee. I followed up with the two employees at the end of the same day to ensure if the resolution approach worked successfully, and received confirmation that it worked as they had an interconnected workflow process.

Conclusion

The three fundamental concepts of the AET: the cognitive judgment approach, the social influences approach, and dispositional approach facilitates as a guide to enhance business operational standards and practices. The positive or negative outcomes of the AET may enable leaders of long-term nursing care institutions to understand employee experiences, attitudes, temperaments, and the dynamics that influence job performance,

morale, and satisfaction. The strategies leaders ascertain to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying can take time to identify the appropriate techniques based on various trial-and-error practices with consideration of having a diverse workforce.

Leaders whose management style aligns to the AET concepts considers all institutional scenarios that enables an efficient, productive, and financial operative institution. Understanding the subtleties, effects, and outcomes of employee-to-employee workplace bullying encounters provided insight for institutions to consider strategic opportunity approaches to avoid financial loss or organizational decay over time. The emotional state of victimized employees should become a top priority for leaders to foster strategies of prevention and intervention procedures. As leaders immediately respond to the needs of bullied employees, they will have a better opportunity to garner effective resolutions.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

- (a) Introduction of Research Project: I will notify the participants via telephone to participate in the study, request personal emails, and solicit company publications. I will send the consent forms via email as I thank the long-term nursing care leaders for considering to participate in the study and look forward to their participation.
- (b) The Research Overview: I will again thank the participants for volunteering in the study to explain the intent of the study, review the sections of the informed consent form, allow time for questions, obtain signature approval, and schedule the interview proceedings for the date, time, via conference call, email correspondence, or a public location without distraction for the timeframe of 45-minutes-to-1 hour (based upon the CONVID-19 conditions).
- (c) Data Recording Options: I will review the electronic recording procedure with the participants to establish permission and explain the use of notetaking. I will enable time before the next scheduled interview with the participants to allow time for transcribing.
- (d) Confirmation Acceptance of the Informed Consent Form: I will confirm the receipt of the informed consent form with the participants and ask them if they would like to review it or have any additional questions prior to the start of the interview. I will thank each participant for their voluntary participation.

- (e) Conduct Semistructured Interviews: I will use semistructured open-ended interview questions. I will also request approval to use an electronic recording device, explain the timeframe of 45-minute-to-1-hour, and start the interview.
- (f) Conclude the Interview Session: I will thank the participants for their voluntary contribution to the study.
- (g) Transcribe Interviews and Secure the Data: I will explain to the participants I will transcribe their data after the interview and secure the information.
- (h) Schedule Second Interview: I will confirm the date, time, and public location for the second interview to validate the documented interview.
- (i) Conduct Second Round of Interviews for Member Checking: Give the participants a copy of the documented interview to review for changes and validation.
- (j) Provide a final documented interview copy to each participant for their professional records.

Interview Questions

What strategies do long-term nursing care leaders use to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying?

1. What strategies have you used to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying?
2. What were the key barriers to implementing your organization's strategies for eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying?

3. How did your organization address the key barriers to implementing its strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying?
4. What strategies did you discover that worked best for eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying?
5. What strategies were least effective for eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying?
6. How did the employees initially respond to your strategies as a long-term nursing care leader for eliminating employee-to-employee workplace bullying?
7. What modifications did you employ to any strategy that eliminated employee-to-employee workplace bullying?
8. What additional information would you like to share concerning strategies to eliminate employee-to-employee workplace bullying?