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Leadership Strategies to Mitigate Alternative Dispute Resolution Grievances, Retaliation, and Revenge

Andrew Washington
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Andrew E. Washington

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Walden University

2022

Abstract

Leadership Strategies to Mitigate Alternative Dispute Resolution Grievances, Retaliation,
and Revenge

by

Andrew E. Washington

MPhil, Walden University, 2019

MBA, University of Phoenix, 2009

BA, University of Maryland, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

August 2022

Abstract

Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) has been an area of study among scholars since the 1970s. Critics have questioned protections, gaps in the literature, and inconsistencies in the law. The current study was essential for organizational leaders and EEOC facilitators to understand why the ADR process does not protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The overarching research question addressed how the ADR process protected U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study and purposeful sampling was to produce a detailed description of 15 participants who worked at least 6 months as full-time or part-time as an organizational leader, 18 years or older, and experienced or observed retaliation. The data analysis included examining and interpreting data collection instruments such as reading interview transcripts and field notes and listening to audio recordings from transcription. Seven themes emerged, and the data showed that 10 participants felt protected, mediation was not enough, and proving false claims discouraged employees from filing complaints. The study contained recommendations for the EEOC and federal agencies to update policies and procedures and Title VII law to address deviant behavior in the workplace. Applying this study's findings may help scholars, practitioners, government organizational leaders of the EEOC, and federal agencies restore the social norms and promote positive social change.

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Dedication

I dedicate my work to my wife and two sons for your love and support throughout this academic journey. I am truly thankful and blessed for having you in my life. Thank you for your understanding, support, and, most importantly, patience. The hardest part of my academic journey was finding my voice. Silence smothers the beauty inside you, and sharing your voice paves the road for others to express the beauty inside them. I am always mindful of those whose voices were never heard and have gone before me. Thank you for paving the way for me to find and share mine. Thank you.

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I want to thank Dr. Butkiewicz, whom I would like to think of as a friend first and then as the chair of my dissertation committee. Dr. Butkiewicz, thank you for your encouragement, feedback, guidance, patience, time, and unwavering support throughout the rigor of my academic journey. Special thanks to Dr. Lisa M. Barrow and Dr. Bob Haussmann for your encouragement and instruction. I am deeply and forever grateful for your experience, help, insight, and wisdom.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Since the 1970s, interest in alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in academia, businesses, and the U.S. Federal government has increased because the process has offered efficiencies in time and costs (Bennett, 2014). Scholars and practitioners have concluded that Title VII and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) have served as an umbrella that protects claimants who use the ADR process from retaliation (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-e). Title VII law prohibits retaliation against individuals who complain about a discriminatory act, reprisal, or revenge for participating in protected activity, and from adverse employment action (Nichols et al., 2014). However, the ADR process does not protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation.

The EEOC initiated 524,065 cases between 2013 and 2018 (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-d). The total retaliation-based cases from the EEOC's Charge Data System showed an increase from 33.6% in 2013 to 40.0% in 2018 (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-d). The total number of retaliation-based settlements from the Charge Data System showed a decrease from 3,272 in 2013 to 2,722 in 2018 (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-d). The total no reasonable cause retaliation cases showed 30,681 and cost \$199.6 million in 2018 (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-d).

EEOC regulations enforced by Title VII law makes it illegal for U.S. Federal government organizational leaders to retaliate against an employee for initiating a complaint or participating in a complaint proceeding or investigation (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-a). Since the EEOC enacted ADR, critics have questioned its effectiveness, tactics, and benefits from the process (Nabatchi & Stanger, 2013). There is evidence that

employees use retaliation for moral and personal reasons and get even (Bies & Tripp, 1996). However, the current system does not protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from employees using ADR to get even (Bies & Tripp, 1996). However, the current system does not protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from employees using ADR to get even. The outcome of unjustified or unreasonable claims and the use of ADR for revenge is the perception of unfairness; the need to restore order, fairness, and power; and the chance for reciprocal behavior between the provocateur and the victim (Chang et al., 2010).

Chapter 1 is a synopsis of the major sections that support the framework of this study. The following subtopics are addressed: the background of the study, the problem statement, and the purpose of the study, research question, and theoretical foundation. The conceptual framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope, and delimitations, and limitations also support this research. The significance of the study, importance to practice, the importance of theory, relevance to social change, summary, and the transition conclude the chapter.

Background of the Study

Retaliation occurs when an employer takes adverse action against an applicant or employee because they asserted rights that are protected by laws (Government Publishing Office, 2014). Retaliation is frequently used as a basis of discrimination in the U.S. Federal government, and it is common in retaliation-based cases (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-a). Title VII law and the EEOC leadership's policy enforcement guidance, policy guidance, and policy statements have prohibited U.S. Federal government organizational leaders

from retaliating against claimants who engaged in protected activity (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-a). The EEOC's leadership referenced Title VII and communicated guidance on retaliation to employers, recommended that employers should maintain a written antiretaliation policy, and provided four recommendations: (a) examples of retaliation that managers may not realize are actionable; (b) proactive steps to avoid actual or perceived retaliation to include practical guidance on interactions by managers and supervisors with employees who have lodged discrimination allegations; (c) a reporting mechanism for employee concerns about retaliation to include access to informal resolutions; and (d) a clear explanation that revenge can be subject to discipline, up to and including termination (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-a). U.S. Federal employment laws depend on employees to assert their rights without the fear of punishment and rely on statutory prohibitions against retaliation, also known as reprisal (Government Publishing Office, 2014). The EEOC's leadership determined that its policies and litigation program protected all employees who participate in opposition activity (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-a).

The EEOC initiated 524,065 cases between 2013 and 2018 (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-d). The total retaliation-based cases from the EEOC's Charge Data System showed an increase from 35.7% in 2015 to 41.4% in 2019 (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-d). The average retaliation-based settlement from the Charge Data System shown from 2015 to 2019 was 3,015 and cost \$205.2 million in 2019 (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-d). The total no reasonable cause retaliation cases showed 27,948 and cost \$205.2 million in 2018 (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-d). The annual costs associated with aggressive and retaliatory behaviors reach up to \$200 billion annually and cause 30% of all business failures (Kluemper & Taylor, 2012). There

is evidence that 98% of U.S. employees experience uncivil behavior in the workplace and are capable of reciprocating retaliatory acts, and 76% of employees engaged in at least one aggressive behavior (Brown et al., 2014; Gouldner, 1960).

Aquino et al. (2006) concluded that subordinates are unable to retaliate and that certain types of harassment claims are on the decline. Eigen and Litwin (2014) and the Government Publishing Office (2014) confirmed Aquino et al.'s assertion that the current process protects individuals from retaliation, employees are satisfied EEOC and ADR results, mediation is enough, and participants agreed with the outcomes. The EEOC leadership assessed that the current process is adaptable, flexible, and practical (Eigen & Litwin, 2014). There is evidence that Title VII law and EEOC policy enforcement guidance referenced employers and supervisors using abusive tactics, not employees or claimants who retaliate against U.S. Federal government organizational leaders (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-b). Fox and Stallworth (2010) defined workplace bullying as repeated unwanted actions or practices against one or more workers deliberately or unconsciously to cause distress, humiliation, and offense that may interfere with workplace performance or cause an unpleasant work environment. Nontraditional forms of bullying, such as retaliation, are rising (Becton et al., 2017). Studies have indicated that individuals find vengeance both satisfying and enjoyable, and they are capable of using revenge to defend themselves to deter future harm and to display deviant behaviors to hurt individuals and the organization (Aquino et al., 2002; Bennett et al., 2009; Heider, 1958). Scholars have discovered that individuals might attempt to resolve imbalances by using quid pro quo methods to retaliate with the intent to inflict harm against individuals, supervisors, or the

organization and to balance the exchange (Ambrose & Mitchell, 2007; Gouldner, 1960; Molm et al., 1994). Title VII law and the antiretaliation policies and litigation programs enacted by the EEOC leadership do not provide equal protection to U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and the use of ADR for retaliation. These distinctions are important because there are specific characteristics that might cause different behavioral, cognitive, and emotional reactions in the targets of the revenge when compared to the recipients of other forms of harmful workplace acts of aggression (Kluemper & Taylor, 2012). Revenge is a threat multiplier that might contribute to an increase in organization costs, threaten the psychological resources of the victims and the perpetrators, escalate the conflict, and lead to high distress (Bushman et al., 2010). The use of revenge might incite anger, and more severe, reciprocal, or intentional negative responses (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Anthony et al., 2017; Kluemper & Taylor, 2012).

The use of ADR for revenge is a problem for U.S. Federal government organizational leaders, and it is essential to understand how retaliation in the workplace manifests, how to prevent it, and the purpose of ADR. Despite the practical and theoretical importance of Title VII and the protection of complainants and witnesses, the EEOC provided enforcement guidance on retaliation and related issues to U.S. Federal government agencies and no literature about the use of ADR for revenge (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-b). The EEOC referenced employers retaliating against individuals for participating in the process and not participants using ADR to seek revenge (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-a). According to the EEOC (n.d.-a), applicants, current employees, and former employees of

any employer, employment agency, or labor organization are protected from retaliation under EEOC laws. Employers are not allowed to do anything in response to protected activity that would discourage claimants from filing a complaint. The complainant should not be allowed to use EEOC policies and programs and the ADR process for retaliation. The inconsistencies in the law and gaps in the literature are inconsistent with the purpose of ADR, which is why this study could be vital in the management of organizational leadership.

Problem Statement

Retaliation is an aggressive act in response to a perceived threat to a person's emotional well-being, physical, social, or self-identity (Cohen et al., 2015). The targets of retaliation may appear weak or vulnerable. Revenge is personal and involves an emotional tone or pleasure in the suffering of another (Szablowinski, 2015). U.S. Federal government organizational leaders and EEOC facilitators use ADR to assist disputants in resolving conflict, avoiding the costs and delays while improving workplace communication and morale (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-b). The ADR process is currently available to 2.7 million U.S. Federal government employees, and the workplace should be free from retaliation (Brown et al., 2014; U.S. EEOC, n.d.-d). The EEOC initiated 524,065 cases between 2013 and 2018, and there is evidence that 76% of employees engaged in at least one aggressive behavior (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-d). The total Title VII retaliation-based cases from the EEOC's Charge Data System from 2013 to 2018 showed an increase in the total retaliation-based cases from 33.6% in 2013 to 40.0% in 2018 (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-d). The general management problem is that complainants should not be allowed to use

the ADR process for retaliation. The specific management problem is the ADR process does not protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-b).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the process of ADR and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The use of ADR for retaliation is generally defined as the use of the Title VII law and EEOC policy and guidance in response to a perceived threat with the intent to inflict damage, injury, discomfort, or punishment. There are motivating factors that contribute to the use of revenge in the workplace (Black et al., 2018; Howard et al., 2016; Strelan et al., 2014). Responses to offenses can differ and motivate employees to justify reasons to retaliate, such as blame, personality differences, empathetic emotions, unfairness, and the sophistication of moral reasoning (Aquino et al., 2006). The potential social implications for organizational leaders are deviant reciprocity behavior, social exchange, inequity responses to the perception of unfairness, the need to restore order, fairness, and power (Aquino et al., 2013; Chang et al., 2010). Organizational leaders should initiate, define, design, develop, and implement effective policies and procedures to promote positive social change in cultures and mediation solutions for their organization.

Research Question

The overarching research question addressed how the ADR process protects U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The research question is the following:

Research question (RQ): What protection does the process of ADR provide to U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework consisted of themes drawn from six theoretical fields: (a) equity theory, (b) fairness theory, (c) retaliation theory, (d) theory of revenge, (e) social exchange theory, and (f) social learning theory. Each approach served as a roadmap and theoretical base to guide the findings of this study. The use of the two models, Dollard et al.'s (1939) Dollard-Millar (D-M) model, or frustration-aggression theory, and the needs-based model supported the framework of this study. Dollard et al.'s frustration-aggression theory supported the conceptual scheme in this study because it provides a framework of how anger and frustration precipitate aggression. SimanTov-Nachlieli and Shnabel's (2014) needs-based model is an outline of how transgressions might drive the need for empowerment to regain power and strength. Retaliation-based data compiled by the EEOC's Office of Research, Information and Planning and Charge Data System, and Integrated Mission System from 2014 to 2019 supported this study.

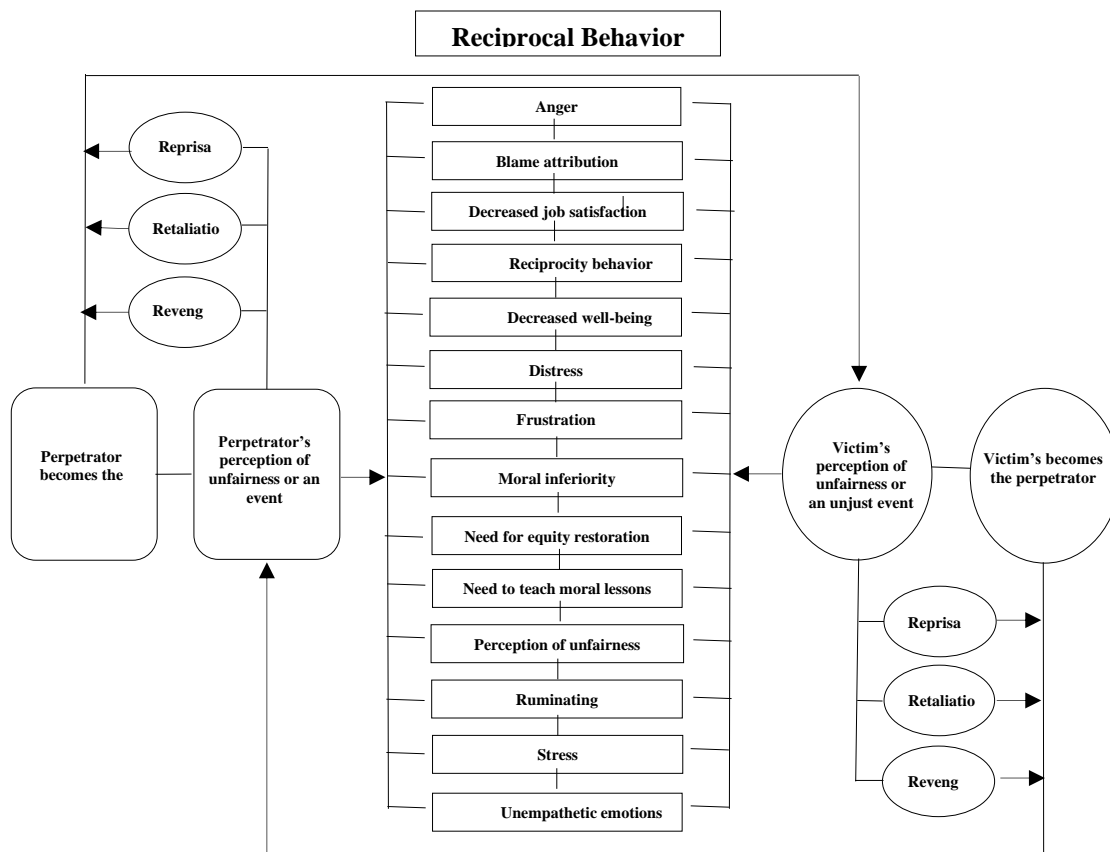
The EEOC was established to serve as a change agent, and Title VII law made it illegal to retaliate against claimants (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-a). Title VII law and the EEOC process related to this study because the EEOC requires U.S. Federal government organizational leaders to make ADR programs available (see U.S. EEOCs, n.d.-b). Title VII law authorizes EEOC representatives to bring lawsuits in its name (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-a). The EEOC leadership enacted the Administrative Dispute Resolution Act of 1996, or ADR, to assist organizational leaders in resolving work-related grievances (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-e). Although the Government Publishing Office (2014) defended the notion that ADR mediation is enough, the use of ADR for retaliation might cause psychological distress, intimidation, and negative consequences for the targets of the complaint. The findings of this study might be useful to organizational leaders in understanding the ADR process and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation.

The multiple case study approach and the RQ offered a logical structure that connected the process of ADR and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The broad themes provided a base to guide the findings of this study, and the conceptual scheme highlighted how anger and frustration related to one another (see Dollard et al., 1939). The schemes that precipitate aggression and transgressions outline the use of retaliation to restore order, power, and strength (Aquino et al., 2013; Breaux et al., 2009; Cortina et al., 2001). Figure 1 is a self-designed holistic view of the reciprocal outcome between the perpetrator and victim when claimants use ADR for revenge. The perception of

unfairness might trigger emotions and motivate claimants to respond to perceptions of inequity, deviant reciprocity, or the need to restore order, and power against coworkers, supervisors, groups, or an organization. Figure 1 shows how the perception of unfairness or an event might trigger physical or psychological emotions that motivate reciprocal acts of aggression between the perpetrator and the victim. There is evidence that employees are capable of reciprocating retaliatory behavior to uphold the principles of moral norms and to restore order (Aquino et al., 2013; Gouldner, 1960; Knutson, 2004). The problem statement, and the purpose of the study, and RQ supported the conceptual framework of the study.

Figure 1

The Reciprocity Revenge Model



Note. The model shows the reciprocal outcome of revenge when there is a perception of unfair mistreatment, and there is a chance for reciprocal behavior between the provocateur and the victim.

Nature of the Study

The use of the qualitative research method provides a variety of ways to explore the ADR process and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The method was appropriate because it expands into areas of human behavior that are important to organizational case studies. The methodology for this study aligned with the conceptual framework because the qualitative method produces a detailed description of the personal experiences, feelings, and opinions of the participants and might assist in interpreting the meanings of their actions (see Rahman, 2016). The design was chosen because it is not quantifiable, admits discovery, and consists of theoretical paradigms, methodologies, research strategies, and methods (see Rahman, 2016; Yilmaz, 2013). The application of the design was suitable because of its holistic interpretive approach toward making sense of the participants' inner experiences (see Rahman, 2016).

There are broad differences between quantitative and qualitative paradigms, such as the quantitative values of detachment and objectivity and the qualitative values of personal involvement, subjectivity, and reflexivity (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The quantitative method is used to take snapshots of a phenomenon and uses numbers for data (Rahman, 2016). The use of this method consists of words, images, written, and a spoken language to represent data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Quantitative research is not in-depth and overlooks the experiences of the participants (Rahman, 2016). Scholars use the quantitative method to analyze social phenomena or human problems using mathematical methods, especially statistics, to test a theory or a prediction of measurable variables

(Yilmaz, 2013). The design consists of deductive logic that is used to seek regularities in human lives and to separate them into numerical frequencies or rates and empirical components called variables (Rahman, 2016). Quantitative researchers use positivism to underpin quantitative research and emphasize the quantification of data, starting with attempts to investigate the answers that start with how many, how much, and to what extent (Rahman, 2016).

A multiple case study was the best methodology for discovering and determining the influence of retaliation on the ADR process, relationships, professional effectiveness, and the aftermath of the process. The themes and conclusions from multiple case studies, archival documents, Title VII law, EEOC policies, and the ADR process might help organizational leaders develop and implement strategies to promote positive social change and solutions for their organizations. Using a case study and transcripts from interviews and descriptions could help lay the foundation for a managerial understanding of how to handle the postconflict environment and effectively restore professional working relationships (see Smith, 2015; Stake, 2006). The approach to this study provided an in-depth holistic view of using ADR processes for revenge. The design of this study revealed a descriptive account of the participants' experiences and behaviors using field notes, formal and conversational interviews, surveys, and observations (see Patton, 2002). The findings could be valuable in management and organizational leadership when using the ADR process on multiple occasions for revenge. The maximum variation sampling was appropriate for this study because it is a platform for various sampling strategies to ensure representativeness and the diversity of organizations

when selecting participants and data collection (see Duan et al., 2015). The use of variation sampling is essential toward the documentation of unique or diverse variations and to achieve desired outcomes and triangulation (Duan et al., 2015).

The participants in the collection of data consisted of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia and took place in the natural setting. A natural setting is a context in which a phenomenon appears and is a naturalistic inquiry that does not require the participants to deviate from their daily routines while participating in a study (Bailey, 2018). The collection of data in a natural setting provides an opportunity to interact face-to-face with the participants and observe their social behavior. At the convenience of the participants, the location of the interviews took place in a natural setting so that the participants could feel uncomfortable and speak freely. The interview site included audiovisual platforms, such as Microsoft (MS) Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, and Zoom. The participants reported offenses between January 2016 and September 2021. The use of email, face-to-face, online focus groups, documents, and/or audiovisual materials are all valuable data collecting techniques. Because the type of interview might affect the research data, a semistructured interview was appropriate for this study. The participants expressed different opinions or may have changed their opinion. I explored the various points of view of participants and the evidence that supported this study (see Patton, 2002). The use of triangulation identified data consistencies and inconsistencies when comparing observations and interviews and what people say in public versus private. The data collection process consisted of checking for evidence and supporting documentation that validated what the participants

reported (see Patton, 2002). The use of multiple methods to analyze and collect data adds triangulation and reduces weakening the credibility of the data (Patton, 2002). The employment of saturation served as the guiding principle to support this study. The methods helped me triangulate the data and evaluate the results for quality, consistency, dependability, and applicability. The collection of data throughout the study had value and answered the initial RQ.

The qualitative researcher serves as the main instrument for collecting data using resources such as audiovisual methods, content analysis, interviews, measures, observations, surveys, and tests (Patton, 2002). The qualitative sampling plan is based on how many cases, focus group discussions, interviews, and observations are needed to ensure that the findings contribute to accurate data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The target number of participants was 20 or until data saturation. The sample required comparing the demographics of select U.S. Federal government organizational leaders, such as males compared to females, Whites compared to African Americans or other ethnic groups. Lewis et al. (2013) recommended that samples must be small to collect detailed and manageable data and contain diverse responses for qualitative studies. The size of the sampling required corresponding levels of education, salaries, or the degree of social engagement between higher and lower hierarchies in an organization. The sample required comparing promotions, demotions, terminations, rewards, and incentives between culture-sharing groups. An analysis of the data and themes from multiple case studies, documents, and policies supported the conceptual framework of the study.

Definitions

The definitions of key terms used in the context of this study are as follows:

Alternative dispute resolution: Alternative dispute resolution, also called the appropriate dispute resolution, or ADR, is an umbrella term for a variety of conflict management techniques and processes instead of the traditional judicial and administrative dispute resolution methods such as litigation and adjudication (Nabatchi & Stanger, 2013).

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: A Federal agency called the EEOC that is responsible for EEO complaints filed in the Federal sector and issues policy and regulations on the discrimination complaint system. The agency conducts hearings, analyzes findings, and makes final decisions regarding complaints (Department of the Army, 2004).

Incivility: Low-intensity deviant or antisocial behavior in the workplace with an ambiguous intent to harm a target (De Pater et al., 2016; Gross & Meier, 2015).

Interactional justice: The actions of specific organizational agents, such as supervisors, who differ in the extent to which they embody the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2013).

Mediation: The consensual process of resolving a dispute using a third, neutral party whose value stems from enhancing communication and encouraging reflection to assist in reaching a mutually agreed resolution (Brubaker et al., 2014).

Organizational conflict: The characterization of a state of social discord by negativity such as frustration, anger, or anxiety and the perception of interpersonal dissonance (Gilin Oore et al., 2015).

Procedural justice: A process to determine the outcome distribution and reflects policies and practices, such as employee participation and bias in decision making under the overall organization's control (Brown et al., 2014).

Quid pro quo: When a supervisor, employee, or coworker engages in uncivil activities that fall into harassment activities and into the two categories of sexual harassment and hostile work environment (Hersch & Shinall, 2015).

Assumptions

Assumptions comprise preconceived beliefs, feelings, hidden agendas, ideologies, values, and views of the assumed to be accurate and without proof by the researcher or participants (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016). Scholars and practitioners have determined that Title VII, the EEOC, and the ADR processes protect complainants from retaliation. The assumption is that Title VII law and the antiretaliation policies and litigation programs enacted by the EEOC leadership do not provide equal protection to U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and the use of ADR for retaliation. The perception of individuals might motivate perpetrators to use the ADR process to disrupt, degrade, or inflict harm on coworkers, supervisors, groups, an organization, or entity.

The participants in the study were willing to participate. There is evidence that as many as 98% of U.S. employees have experienced uncivil behavior in the workplace,

76% of employees have engaged in at least one aggressive behavior, and employees are capable of reciprocating retaliatory behavior to defend themselves to deter future harm (Brown et al., 2014; Gouldner, 1960). An aggregated EEOC employer information report showed 232,243 employees in 2017 in the District of Columbia, 1,020,113 employees in Maryland, and 1,489,733 employees in Virginia in 2017 (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-d). The participation of minorities and disenfranchised groups might be limited because of distrust, poor access, or other barriers to participation (Duran et al., 2014). Minority participation and these groups are important because their experiences can highlight issues of inequality and disparities. Employees were willing to participate in this study to help their organizations reduce the use of ADR for retaliation.

There is a perception among scholars and practitioners that the law and ADR process provide equal protection for individuals and organizations from retaliation (Eigen & Litwin, 2014; Hersch & Shinall, 2015). Chang et al. (2010) assessed that victims are not capable of retaliating, do not seek vengeance when the power and status dynamics of a situation too high, and alter their performance to restore fairness. Eigen and Litwin (2014) interpreted that most employees are satisfied EEOC and ADR results, mediation is effective, and participants agree with outcomes. The members of the study were honest and truthful when answering the interview questions and providing descriptions about individuals using ADR to seek revenge. I assumed that the interview questions were clear and specific and that the participants would respond. I anticipated that the participants could demonstrate a sound emotional state and not become emotionally overwhelmed by

their experiences while participating in this study. The participants were encouraged to focus on and reflect on RQ to mitigate these assumptions.

The individuals participating in the study spoke and read the English language. Language barriers can present methodological challenges that threaten the confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability of the study. Because translation is an interpretive act, the meaning of what is being translated might get lost when using interpreters or translators to mediate barriers between the researcher and participants. Qualitative research is considered valid when the meanings as experienced by the participants and the interpretation of the meanings in the findings are as close as possible (Polkinghorne, 2007). To reduce the loss of meaning, avoid potential limitations, and enhance validity when interpreting data, the participants were required to speak and read the English language. The use of accurate descriptions with the quotes of the participants contributed to trustworthiness, and keeping a record of the discussions increased transparency during the data collection phase of the study.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the process of ADR and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. In this study, I interviewed and observed random select U.S. Federal government organizational leaders who worked in the Washington, D.C., Maryland, or Virginia area of the United States. The sampled population came from U.S. Federal government agencies that consisted of randomly selected U.S. Federal government organizational leaders. The boundaries included a

target number of 20 participants or until meeting data saturation. The participants had to (a) work for at least 6 months as full-time or part-time U.S. Federal government organizational leader; (b) be 18 years or older; (c) have experienced or observed the use of Title VII, the EEOC, or ADR for retaliation; and (d) work in the Washington, D.C., Maryland, or Virginia area of the United States.

I used in-depth interviews and focused group questions with substance and meaning that were stimulating to the participants. A *pilot study* is a pretest that consists of all instruments and procedures used to identify problems before the primary research begins (Johnson & Vogt, 2011). The pilot was used to screen for bias using friends and colleagues to ensure that the questions and response options were understandable and clear. An *interview protocol* is a list of rules and guidelines for asking questions when conducting interviews (Dikko, 2016; Johnson & Vogt, 2011). The protocol was used to document, step-by-step, the procedures used in the study to reduce random errors and bias (see Johnson & Vogt, 2011). I examined why claimants might choose to use ADR to seek revenge and provided a proactive approach to filling the inconsistencies in the law and gaps in the literature and not evaluate the mediation process. The transferability of data enables the reader to assess the results of the study.

Limitations

There are limitations when using the qualitative method. According to Lewis et al. (2013) and Yilmaz (2013), the samples must be small for qualitative studies, and because of their size, they are limited in-depth. Despite this limitation, small-scale samples were necessary for this study to draw broader inferences about the social world (see Lewis et

al., 2013). The boundaries included a target number of 20 participants or until meeting data saturation. The participants must have (a) worked for at least 6 months as full-time or part-time U.S. Federal government organizational leader; (b) been 18 years or older; (c) experienced or observed the use of Title VII, the EEOC, or ADR for retaliation; and (d) worked in the Washington, D.C., Maryland, or Virginia area of the United States.

Threats to data validity are a challenge in qualitative research because it affects the confirmability, credibility, reliability, and the transferability of the study. Validity means that the RQ is valid for the desired outcome, the methodology is appropriate for the RQ, and the design is valid for the methodology (Leung, 2015). Validity is used to indicate that the sampling and the data analysis are appropriate, and the results and the conclusion are valid for the sample and the context of the study (Leung, 2015). The triangulation of multiple methods, techniques, and data sources might reduce threats to validity and flaws in the investigation or research method. The use of this strategy may reduce inconsistencies and contradictions in the sampling, the data analysis, the results, and the conclusion of the study (Abdalla et al., 2018). The use of self-reported data might influence method bias. Using a pilot study may reduce potential biases (Chenail, 2011; Graham et al., 2001).

Significance of the Study

The use of ADR for revenge is significant to practice, theory, social change, and organizational leadership because perpetrators might use the process to get even because they understand the law and process from adverse actions and laws against retribution.

The ADR process is available to 2.7 million U.S. Federal government employees, which

encompasses a variety of techniques used to improve compliance with agreed conflict solutions in the workplace (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-d). Organizational leaders use the ADR process to assist disputants in resolving conflict, reduce costs and stress, save time, and build and strengthen relationships. U.S. Federal government organizational leaders and EEOC facilitators have concluded that mediation is enough, subordinates are unable to retaliate and agree with outcomes, and antiretaliation policies and litigation programs are win-win solutions to conflict in the workplace (Aquino et al., 2006; Eigen & Litwin, 2014; Government Publishing Office, 2014). However, there is evidence that nontraditional forms of bullying, such as retaliation, are on the rise, and employees do use revenge tactics against individuals, supervisors, or the organization (Becton et al., 2017). Bies and Tripp (2009) predicted that ordinary employees might feel compelled to seek revenge when organizational systems designed to redress unfairness do not operate effectively and may retaliate against the organization or a specific individual. Collins and Mossholder (2017) assessed that a systemic misuse of power provokes organizationally directed deviance, and episodic mistreatment might incite retaliation against a perceived originator.

Significance to Practice

The study of U.S. Federal government employees using ADR for retaliation has significance for U.S. government agencies, organizational leaders, and the field of management and organizational leadership because revenge is the most common discrimination suit filed with the EEOC in the federal sector (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-c). Ballard and Eastal (2018) discovered that retaliation is used to suppress complaints and the

status quo of the social order. Veirs (2017) concluded that workplace retaliation is the most reported complaint to the EEOC by employees in all U.S. sectors of employment. Perpetrators might use unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation to restore order, fairness, and power when there is a perception of unfair mistreatment. Although Chang et al. (2010) and Erez et al. (2015) determined that ADR mediation is enough, the use of ADR for retaliation may cause psychological distress, intimidation, and negative consequences for the targets of the complaint and increase the chance for reciprocal behavior between the provocateur and the victim. Employee grievances are costly regarding finances, reputation, emotional climate of the organization, and employees (Goldman et al., 2016). Workplace retaliation claims can cost Federal employers potential back pay, reinstatement, changes to agency policies, mandatory training, and other remedies provided by law (Veirs, 2017). Since the enactment of ADR in the 1970s, critics have repeatedly questioned the use of ADR tactics, its effectiveness, and the benefits of the process (Nabatchi & Stanger, 2013). The EEOC initiated 524,065 cases between 2013 and 2018, and there is evidence that 76% of employees have engaged in at least one aggressive behavior (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-d).

The current ADR process, which is devoted to the protection of complainants and witnesses, might stem from scholars and practitioners focusing on the aggressive behavior, abusive tactics, and power and the destructive nature of supervisor-directed retaliation (Ambrose & Mitchell, 2012; U.S. EEOC, n.d.-a). The fear of retaliation is the leading reason why U.S. Federal government organizational leaders stay silent instead of voicing their concerns about unjustified or unreasonable claims and the use of ADR for

retaliation (Ballard & Easteal, 2018). When the targets of retaliation speak out against a false or malicious claim, Title VII and the EEOC protects the perpetrators who use the ADR process for revenge (Ballard & Easteal, 2018; U.S. EEOC, n.d.-a). The targets of retaliation might experience fear and/or the possibility of more retaliatory acts, may take long-term sick- or personal leave, resign, or seek other employment (McKenzie, 2015). Practitioners could use this study to develop creative solutions to protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation and to maximize awareness, education, and training. U.S. Federal government organizational leaders and EEOC facilitators might use the findings from this study to understand why employees are almost three times likely to elect the mediation process for disputes (Goldman et al., 2016). EEOC leaders could use this study to revise current policy enforcement guidance, policy guidance, policy statements, and the purpose of ADR.

Significance to Theory

The study of U.S. Federal government employees and the use of the ADR process to file unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation has potential contributions for scholars and practitioners because it might extend the knowledge of conflict management, conflict resolution, and organizational psychology. The study of conflict management, conflict resolution, and organizational psychology in the context of using ADR for revenge could lead to the development of strategies to prevent retaliation from occurring and effective communication skills, productivity, and the well-being of employees. The potential contribution of this study toward the knowledge of what may

motivate individuals to use the ADR process for retaliation is essential to management and organizational theory. There is evidence that perpetrators find retribution satisfying and justify the use of revenge as sweet even when they have something to lose (Breux et al., 2009). Scholars and practitioners could advance the knowledge in the field of management of organizational leadership regarding the retaliatory theory and the various forms of counterproductive workplace behavior such as the targeting of employees and internal and external organizations. The application of this study can enhance the understanding of scholars and practitioners about learning patterns, how individuals mimic interpersonal behaviors, and factors that trigger emotions such as anger, rage, and retaliation.

Significance to Social Change

Positive social change is the ability to effect change that benefits individuals, groups, or society (Ahlquist, 2014). Cameron and Webster (2011) predicted that an individual who has experienced an unfair exchange might develop an interpersonal distrust that affects positive social change and the perception of inequality by unbalanced exchanges that damaged and destroyed trust. The findings may have implications in the field of management and organizational leadership because positive and negative social exchanges influence trust cycles, and there is evidence that U.S. employees are capable of reciprocating retaliatory acts and have engaged in at least one aggressive behavior (Brown et al., 2014). An unfair exchange between an employee and coworkers, supervisors, groups, an organization, or an entity might damage trust and make it challenging to develop a positive social change experience. The detrimental effects of

retaliatory behavior could influence uncivil exchanges to spiral out of control and lead to negative consequences, the weakening of relationships, and social isolation (Carroll & Lauzier, 2014). Organizational leaders are responsible for creating a culture that is free from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation and can use this study to develop and implement progressive organizational policies and practices that align with the organization's cultural goals that lead to social change.

Mediators employ the use of the ADR because they have concluded that the process is fair, and the participants agree with outcomes (Eigen & Litwin, 2014; Government Publishing Office, 2014; McKenzie, 2015). A satisfactory outcome is defined as a collaborative and nontraumatic experience for the participants in a legal context or conflict resolution process when the parties work to solve a dispute in a cooperative and respectful way (McKenzie, 2015). There is evidence that employees use retaliation for moral and personal reasons and to get even (Bies & Tripp, 1996). The current system does not protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from employees using ADR to get even. Mediators could use this study to create and facilitate essential conflict management skills, develop future managers, and contribute to positive social change (Bennett, 2014; Jones et al., 2015).

Bennett et al. (2018) and Bennett et al. (2009) stated that self-interest is related to deviant behavior and that individuals find vengeance both satisfying and enjoyable and could use deviant behaviors to hurt individuals and the organization. The potential social implications for organizational leaders are deviant reciprocity behavior, social exchange, inequity responses to the perception of unfairness, the need to restore order, fairness, and

power (Aquino et al., 2013; Chang et al., 2010; Collins & Mossholder, 2017). Employees might use the ADR process to legitimize deviant behaviors and unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation when they perceive unfair treatment in the organization. Organizational leaders could use this study to assess the ethical climate in their organization to decrease deviant behavior. Employees who trust their leadership and feel safe in their organizational environment may have a positive reaction to their experiences and be less likely to feel the need to retaliate (Bennett et al., 2018). U.S. Federal government organizational leaders might use this study to reduce deviant behaviors, restore the social norms, and promote positive social change by promoting trust and a safe work environment to counter the use of ADR for retaliation. The application of this study could help leaders reduce the costs of destructive behavior and potentially foster an efficient and productive work environment (Ambrose & Mitchell, 2012).

The use of the ADR process for retaliation is a subtle form of interpersonal mistreatment. Title VII and mediation procedures might be more frequent and widespread than other acts of uncivil behaviors. The current law and EEOC policies protect participants who use the ADR process from retaliation under all circumstances (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-a). The use of EEOC and ADR for mediating and resolving matters regarding an individual's employment, including cases in which an employee alleges coercion, reprisal, or retaliation for using the grievance system, has become one of the most successful programs (Aquino et al., 2006). Jones et al. (2015) highlighted the importance of early and proactive conflict resolution. Efforts to design EEOC and ADR policies and

procedures to train leaders and close inconsistencies in the law and gaps in the literature have not adequately addressed by researchers. Ambrose and Mitchell (2012) and Breaux et al. (2009) focused on supervisory power, supervisor-directed reprisals, and adverse outcomes. The themes and conclusions from multiple mini-case studies, archival documents, the law, EEOC and ADR policies, and transcripts from interviews and descriptions could help lay the foundation for a managerial understanding of how to handle the postconflict environment and efficiently restore professional working relationships (Smith, 2015; Stake, 2006).

Summary and Transition

Chapter 1 was a starting point for exploring the ADR process and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The ADR process is available to 2.7 million U.S. Federal government employees, the EEOC initiated 524,065 cases between 2013 and 2018, and there is evidence that 76% of employees have engaged in at least one aggressive behavior (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-d). Aquino et al. (2006) and Eigen and Litwin (2014) concluded that mediation is sufficient, the participants in the mediation process agree with outcomes, and subordinates are unable to retaliate. There is evidence that nontraditional forms of bullying, such as retaliation, are on the rise, and employees do use revenge tactics against individuals, supervisors, or the organization (Becton et al., 2017). Chapter 2 is a synopsis of the current and relevant literature and outline of the fundamental elements that support the framework of this study. The chapter begins with an overview of the literature regarding the origins of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII, EEOC, and ADR

literature and theory that is relevant to retaliation. Included in Chapter 2 are subtopics of various research regarding the equity theory, fairness theory, frustration-aggression theory, retaliation theory, theory of revenge, social exchange theory, social learning theory, and needs-based model; it concludes with a summary.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the perception among scholars and practitioners and the public is that the Civil Rights Act of 1964, its agencies, and processes provide equal protection of individuals and organizations from retaliation (Eigen & Litwin, 2014; Hersch & Shinall, 2015). Aquino et al. (2006) concluded the targets of revenge are not capable of retaliating. There is evidence that 98% of U.S. employees have experienced uncivil behavior in the workplace are capable of reciprocating retaliatory acts (Becton et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2014). Seventy-six percent of employees have engaged in at least one aggressive behavior and nontraditional forms of bullying, such as retaliation, are on the rise (Becton et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2014).

The general management problem is complainants should not be allowed to use the ADR process for retaliation. The specific management problem is that the ADR process does not protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-b). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the process of ADR and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. Chapter 2 includes the literature search strategy, conceptual framework, literature review, and summary and conclusions. The chapter begins with an overview of the literature regarding the origins of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII, EEOC, and ADR literature and theory that is relevant to retaliation. Included in Chapter 2 are

subtopics of equity theory, fairness theory, frustration-aggression theory, retaliation theory, theory of revenge, social exchange theory, social learning theory, needs-based model, and inconsistencies in the law and gaps in the literature.

Literature Search Strategy

The scope of my literature review consisted of peer-reviewed scholarly journals, government reports and statistics, Walden library databases, scholarly books, and search engines to support my study. The literature review was limited to the search terms *alternative dispute resolution* or *ADR* (13,500 results) or *ADR employee* (17,600 results). The research was narrowed to articles published since 2016 using the same search terms across the same databases: *Title VII*, *employee*, *revenge* (8,130), and *workplace retaliation* (17,000). The literature review contains 235 references consisting of 151 peer-reviewed journals, 35 articles, and 49 books. Forty-one, or 17%, of referenced sources were published within 5 years from the expected completion date of my study, eight sources, or 3%, had no date, and 196, or 83%, of references were published more than 5 years from my anticipated graduation date.

The information was obtained from the following sources: Academy of Management Annals, Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Management Review, Administração: Ensino e Pesquisa, Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, American Journal of Psychology, American Journal of Public Health, American Sociological Review, British Journal of Social Psychology, Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne, and Conflict Resolution Quarterly. The literature review consisted of the Employee Relations, Employee Responsibilities and Rights

Journal, European Journal of Education, European Journal of General Practice, Industrial & Labor Relations Review, International Journal of Conflict Management, International Journal of Law and Psychiatry, International Journal of Manpower, Human Relations, Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, and Journal of Applied Psychology. The sources include the Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of Education and Learning, Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care, Journal of Leadership Studies, Journal of Management, Journal of Management Studies, Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, Psychological Bulletin, Psychological Bulletin, Public Administration Review, and The Heythrop Journal. The use of peer-reviewed journals included the following: Leadership & Organizational Development Journal, Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, Organizational Dynamics, Organization Science, Personality and Individual Differences, Psychologist-Manager Journal, SAGE, Southern Law Journal, Universal Journal of Psychology as well as relevant material from Business Horizons, Laws, Employment Relations Today, Qualitative Inquiry, Personnel Review, Sociological Spectrum, The Qualitative Report, Work and Stress, and the Google search engine. The key search terms in this study included *alternative dispute resolution*, *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*, *incivility*, *interactional justice*, *mediation*, *organizational conflict*, *quid pro quo*, *retaliation*, and *procedural justice*.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study consisted of the equity theory, fairness theory, an examination of the retaliation theory, theory of revenge, social exchange theory, social learning theory, D-M model, and needs-based model. Adams (1963, 1965) and Hollander and Homans (1963) employed the equity theory to support the notion that individuals make interpersonal reward comparisons to determine whether outcomes are equitable or inequitable (Lawler, 1968). Extending Hollander and Homans's theory in 1963, Adams (1963, 1965) accepted that people react when they feel distressed from inequity. Brown et al. (2014), Folger and Ganegoda (2015), and Folger and Skarlicki (1997) predicted that if an employee believed that an organizational decision or supervisor's action was unfair or unjust, they may experience feelings such as anger, outrage, or resentment and elicit the desire for retribution or revenge to punish those responsible for their grievance. The equity theory was suitable for this study because individuals evaluate their outcomes and inputs by comparing them with other persons.

Folger and Ganegoda (2015) discovered that individuals perceive an event as unjust when holding another party accountable for any action or inaction and responsible for the harm or transgression. Folger and Ganegoda applied the fairness theory to their research to examine how decisions influence the counterfactual thinking of individuals and frames the perception of fairness supports Strelan's et al. (2014) suggested that revenge is aggression that distinguishes itself by emotional and motivational behaviors that motivate individual perceptions of justice-related goals, injustice, deterrence, comparative suffering, equity restoration, fairness, and teaching moral lessons. Aquino

and Bradfield (1999) drew on the theory of revenge and the perception of expectation violations to connect revenge with accountability and anger. Aquino and Bradfield employed models to test revenge and forgiveness and extended the literature to the enactment of restorative justice in organizations. The deployment of models by Aquino and Bradfield tested attributional theories of injustice and recent theories on revenge in organizations. The social exchange theory is a family conceptual model that consists of features that treat social life as a series of sequential transactions between two or more parties (Anthony et al., 2017). Anthony et al. (2017) and Gouldner (1960) used the social exchange theory to describe reciprocal exchanges whereby one party repays another party with either good or bad deeds.

In 1963, Bandura and Walters' book, *Social Learning and Personality Development*, gave way to the development of the social learning theory (Bandura, 1963). Although current literature has associated the social learning theory with criminal or deviant behavior, this theory might be used to highlight deviant behavior that may be the root cause of bad behavior in the workplace. Brauer and Tittle (2012) concluded that individuals learn counterproductive behavior in the same way they learn nondeviant behaviors. The social learning theory or the social cognitive theory can be used to support this plan because people learn and reciprocate deviant behaviors in the same way they mimic and reciprocate nondeviant behaviors (Brauer & Tittle, 2012). The use of reciprocal acts of revenge, negative social exchange, or inequity responses to the perception of unfairness as well as the need to restore order, fairness, and power between the perpetrator and victim may motivate individuals to use the ADR process for revenge.

Dollard et al.'s (1939) frustration-aggression theory was used to support the conceptual scheme of this study because frustration could result from the negative perception of performance and valued work-related goal constraints. Role stressors such as ambiguity, conflict, and work overload interfere with task completion and hinder the pursuit of personal and organizational goals (Dollard et al., 1939). The frustration-aggression theory was used to support this study because minor annoyances or irritations might trigger retaliatory behaviors that may escalate into intense, aggressive workplace behaviors (Gross & Meier, 2015). SimanTov-Nachlieli and Shnabel's (2014) needs-based model was used in this study because, in the context of interpersonal transgressions between the victims of revenge and the perpetrators, both sides might serve as victims in certain situations and as the perpetrator in other situations. SimanTov-Nachlieli and Shnabel validated that transgressions impaired the victims' sense of agency and heightened the victims' experience, the need for empowerment, and motivation to restore their agency and strength. The scholars also assessed that perpetrators, in contrast, are motivated to restore their positive moral identity because they experience impairment to their moral identity. The model applied to this study because the perpetrator's perceived transgressions, experience, motivation to restore the moral identity, and reacceptance into the community might influence the need for empowerment to regain power and strength.

Literature Review

The literature review consists of Title VII law, EEOC regulations, ADR policies, and themes drawn from six theoretical fields: (a) equity theory, (b) fairness theory, (c) retaliation theory, (d) theory of revenge, (e) social exchange theory, and (f) social

learning theory. The review entails the ADR process and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. Two models, the D-M model or frustration-aggression theory, and the needs-based model, are also included in the literature review. To further support the research and explore the process of ADR and the protection of government organizational leaders, the study addresses historical factors that have led to the creation of ADR.

History of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Hersch and Shinall (2015) assessed the legacy of the Civil Rights Act over the past 50 years and reviewed the history, scope, and influence on employment, segregation, and wage outcomes of the Act's five protected classes. The effects of the Act on Title VII and its passing expanded civil rights legislation developed a framework allowing coverage through judicial interpretation without requiring the passage of new laws. The applications of the Act included prohibiting sexual harassment as a form of discrimination and protection against color discrimination separately from race discrimination. Hersch and Shinall identified civil rights legislation and constitutional amendments and reviewed the literature, both positive and negative, to assess the legacy of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Practitioners have focused on outcomes after the passage of the law, and the time it took to pass the Act (Hersch & Shinall, 2015). Hersch and Shinall provided a descriptive account of the legislative wrangling to pass the Act and how it has shaped what is known today. Theoretical and methodological challenges have made it difficult for scholars and practitioners to measure whether Title VII is effective in reducing employment discrimination (Hersch & Shinall, 2015).

The conceptual framework consisted of civil rights legislation, constitutional amendments, and events that led to the establishment of the EEOC, Title VII, and ADR. Hersch and Shinall (2015) assessed the legacy of the Civil Rights Act over the past 50 years and its influence on employment; they did not use participants in the study. The researcher's assessment is essential to protection from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation because scholars and practitioners have defended that Title VII and the EEOC protects claimants who use the ADR process from retaliation (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-e). Title VII law prohibits retaliation against individuals who have complained about a discriminatory act, reprisal, or revenge (Nichols et al., 2014). Retaliation is not mentioned in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 because the EEOC provides protections against retaliation through Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Government Publishing Office, 2014; Veirs, 2017). The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII law, and the EEOC policy enforcement guidance do not contain a false claim or malicious claim provision to protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation (Becton et al., 2017; U.S. EEOC, n.d.-a). Becton et al. (2017) explained that policies should not contain a false claims provision because it is difficult to prove that claims are false and might discourage employees from filing complaints. Hersch and Shinall used a qualitative narrative approach to assess the legacy of the Civil Rights Act over the past 50 years to review the history, scope, and influence on employment, segregation, and wage outcomes of five protected classes under the Act. Hersch and Shinall concluded that the passage and the repercussions of the Act altered the legal environment, and retaliation charges under Title VII outpaced the growth rate

for other types of charges. The limitation of data regarding the influence of the Act, specifically retaliation, has potential social implications for the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retribution.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

The U.S. EEOC (n.d.-a, n.d.-f) provided online information on the history of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the EEOC, which has been shaped by numerous laws and amendments enacted by Congress. The Commission uses its website to establish enforcement guidance on retaliation, related issues, and the statutes enforced by the EEOC to communicate their position. The Commission also uses their website to fill inconsistencies in lower court law and outlines their position and interpretation of the laws it enforces. The EEOC staff and other federal agencies use the guidance as a reference for investigations, adjudications, litigations, and outreach on EEO retaliation issues. Employers, employees, and practitioners also use the Commission's guidance for information about the EEOC's position on retaliation issues and employment practices. Although the EEOC has provided enforcement guidance on retaliation and problems related to U.S. Federal government agencies, there is no literature about the use of ADR for revenge.

The conceptual framework consisted of information about the history of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the EEOC, the Commission's policy enforcement guidance, and policy statements. The framework also consisted of information about EEO and ADR, and the Commission's authority, role, and statements that prohibit U.S.

Federal government organizational leaders from retaliating against claimants who have engaged in protected activity. The U.S. EEOC (n.d.-a, n.d.-f) website is used to provide U.S. Federal government organizational leaders an overview of historical events that led to the creation of Title VII, the EEOC, and enforcement guidance on retaliation. Veirs (2017) explained that a wide variety of employer practices might trigger workplace retaliation. Workplace retaliation is the most reported complaint by employees in all U.S. sectors of employment, and Veirs justified the assessment based on retaliation cases filed in 2016, the EEOC enforcement guidance, and the Strategic Enforcement Plan. Although the EEOC uses its website to establish enforcement guidance on retaliation, the Commission might update the site to include the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and the use of ADR for retaliation.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

Ballard and Easteal (2016) explored both the formal and informal use of ADR processes in Australia and the perceptions and experience of the targets of workplace abuse toward justice. The scholars also examined workers who sought legal or other redresses in response to workplace abuse and participated in an ADR process. There are strengths and weaknesses in the scholar's research. The parties in the process might engage cooperatively in mediation negotiations, which may enhance the chances of a mutually satisfactory outcome. The respondents identified potential benefits from cooperative engagement in ADR, such as empowerment and accountability. The targets might be disappointed or satisfied with the ADR outcomes.

The conceptual framework consisted of four categories of ADR that included an assessment of outcome quality, community perspectives, economy and cost, and interpersonal climate. The framework also comprised cases of workplace abuse brought under the Fair Work Act of 2009 and questionnaires. The literature was selected because Ballard and Eastal (2016) explored both the formal and informal use of ADR processes in Australia and the perceptions and experience of the targets of workplace abuse toward justice. The researcher's approach is vital to understand how retaliation in the workplace manifests because transgressions, perceptions, and experiences of the targets of workplace abuse might increase the need for empowerment to regain power and strength. Therefore, it is essential to compare both processes to develop strategies to prevent ADR use for retaliation and protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims.

Ballard and Eastal (2016) used a qualitative narrative approach to explore the formal and informal use of ADR processes in Australia and examine the perceptions and experiences of the targets of abuse and workers who participated in the process. The select 20 participants who experienced bullying participated in the study. Ten or 50% of the 20 participants completed five survey questions designed to identify demographic factors such as age and occupation, type of ADR process, and had legal representation or other support. Ballard and Eastal asked the participants two open-ended questions about their experiences with the ADR process and whether they would do it again. The participants expressed concerns about ADR in the context of bullying, such as concerns about mediator impartiality, insufficient opportunity to be heard, unequal bargaining

power in negotiating a settlement, and unjust outcomes. There is evidence that employees reciprocate retaliatory behavior to disrupt, degrade, or inflict harm on coworkers, supervisors, groups, an organization, or entity (Ambrose & Mitchell, 2007; Folger & Skarlicki, 1997; Molm et al., 1994). Adams' (1963) equity theory is evidence that the perception of an unequal balance might motivate an individual's perceived inequity and the need to restore order, fairness, and power and use the ADR process for revenge.

In the U.S., the EEOC cannot mandate the use of ADR because the Act requires the voluntary participation of disputants (Nabatchi & Stanger, 2013). Lawyers in Australia might initiate mediation to resolve informal ADR cases before the initiation of a formal application. After the start of formal proceedings or a hearing, a court or tribunal could make the use of ADR mandatory. The scholars validated that ADR enhanced settlement rates, efficiently resourced, and eliminated the need for court hearings and tribunals. Despite these findings, Ballard and Eastal (2016) assessed that the targets of workplace abuse might not perceive that their grievances are resolved justly or in a cooperative and respectful way. An implication of Ballard and Eastal's study for future research is the examination of the potential outcome comparisons between the U.S. and Australian ADR processes.

ADR Advantages

U.S. Federal government agencies use ADR because it is cost-effective, timely, informative, and confidential. The participants in the process retain control over the outcome because the process is non-binding, and they may be able to develop creative, innovative solutions. The mediators are perceived to be qualified, professional, and

neutral. Bennett (2014) concluded that mediation serves as an ADR in the universities in the U.K., which justified the change in the dispute resolution law in 2009. Ambrose and Mitchell (2007) and Gouldner (1960), and Molm et al. (1994) assessed individuals might attempt to resolve imbalances by using quid pro quo methods to retaliate with the intent to inflict harm against individuals, supervisors, or the organization and to balance the exchange. The mediators in Bennett's study determined that the strength of the mediation process is the ability to address power imbalances between disputants.

ADR Disadvantages

The current system does not protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from employees using ADR to get even. Blancero et al. (2010) assessed that there had been a fair amount of speculation and hypothesizing about the characteristics of the ADR process that lead to fairness with little evidence of success. According to Blancero et al., unfavorable outcomes that are reached by fair ADR processes generated higher distributive justice ratings than favorable results with unfair procedures. Blancero et al. (2010) explained that employees might not be satisfied with the ADR process or use a system that they perceive as unfair. Lind et al. (1980) provided unambiguous evidence that the outcome effects of procedural justice and distributive justice can affect the perception of fairness. Employees may not be satisfied with the ADR process when they perceive procedural justice, distributive justice, organizational decisions, and managerial actions are unfair. The perception of unfairness might trigger emotions and motivate individuals to respond to perceptions of inequity or the need to restore order and power. Distributive justice and procedural justice are rooted in the equity theory (Blancero et al.,

2010). According to Adams (1963, 1965), individuals examined or compared their input or outcome ratio to others. Adam's assessment might provide evidence that employees who perceive organizational decisions or managerial actions as unfair or unjust may experience feelings of anger, outrage, or resentment leading to acts of retribution or retaliation (Folger & Skarlicki, 1997; Greenberg, 1989; Lewicki et al., 1992).

Equity Theory

Adams (1963, 1965) examined the theory of inequity and based the study on Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance and variables involved in the employee-employer exchange before formally defining inequity. The scholar analyzed the effects of inequity, established the theory to understand motivation, and the notion that individuals compare the ratio of their output to the perception and ratio of others within the organization. Emphasis was placed on the aspects of inequity as the researcher refrained from speculating about engaging in complex relationships between inequity, other phenomena, and higher-order inequities. Adams stated that if the proportions are not balanced, an individual might experience a level of distress with the imbalance of equity (1963, 1965). The researcher also tested the imbalance to determine the degree of motivation an individual generated to correct the imbalance.

Although Adams' (1963) equity theory is straightforward, it has been subject to criticism. Adams' theory only marginally justified excessive behavior because addressing a specific grievance may not solve other issues (Cosier & Dalton, 1983). Berscheid et al. (1973) found that Adams did not address the issue of multiple inequities and their effects. Employees who experienced a history of injustice may react violently by ranting, raving,

or threatening to file a grievance (Cosier & Dalton, 1983). When there is an exchange between two individuals, there is the possibility that one or both might perceive that the exchange was inequitable (Adams, 1963). Homans (1961) referred to exchange as an investment, and individuals expect a just return for their contribution. Individuals who benefited from inequity are more tolerant of injustice than are those who suffered from it (Adams, 1965; Homans, 1961; Lawler, 1968). Employees who suffered from unfairness are quicker to demand a fair distribution and a reallocation of resources than those that do not (Anderson & Leventhal, 1970; Andrews, 1967; Leventhal et al., 1969).

The conceptual framework consisted of equity or inequity that may exist between employer-employee, employee-employee, or employee-group. Festinger's (1957) theory that inequity or injustice exists when a perceived input or outcome stands psychologically in an obverse relation to the perception of equity. Adams' (1963) theory is an explicit and rigorously developed model of how individuals evaluate social exchange relationships and underscore the continuing interest inequity theory in the workplace (Lawler, 1968; Mowday et al., 1979). According to Adams, when two individuals exchange anything, one or both might assess if the exchange is inequitable. Adams (1963, 1965) defended the notion that individuals strive to seek a balance relative to what they perceive and might be referent to a coworker, supervisor, group, an organization, entity, or the policy of an organization. An achievement of equity is when an individual's perceived contributions–inducements ratio is equal to their perception of referents, and an unequal balance might result in dissonance or perceived inequity (Adams, 1963, 1965). A high level of unfairness may occur when an individual perceives that their high effort for low pay

might be small compared to a referent's ratio of less output for a higher salary. An individual with a higher wage with less effort could be motivated to restore an equitable balance. An imbalance between inputs and outcomes might motivate individuals to take steps to reduce the discrepancy by adjusting their attitudes, contributions, or output to restore the balance between the two ratios (Adams, 1963, 1965).

Adams (1963) questioned how a person might reduce inequity and used a qualitative case study approach to understand motivation and the notion that individuals compare the ratio of their output to the perception and ratio of others within the organization. The participants in Adams' research consisted of two groups of 11 male university students hired through the college employment office, used as subjects to test the theory of social inequity, with consideration to wage inequities. Adams referred to Festinger's cognitive dissonance to assess conditions of perceived unfairness that might arise and how they may be reduced or eliminated. Distinguishing between the findings of his research and Festinger's (1957) theory, Adams based interpretations on the data used to determine the degree of motivation that the participants generated to correct imbalances. The generalizations that Adams used were warranted and defended. There are limitations to Adams' research because scholars criticized that the theory is too broad and should be limited to discussions about outcomes, deservingness, and justice between individuals (Romer, 1977).

The equity theory is related to fairness theory because perceptions are susceptible to social-comparison-based information, and individuals compare their outcomes with the most superior or inferior results (Fehr & Schmidt, 1999; Lind et al., 1997). Employees,

either consciously or unconsciously, make comparisons regarding equitably relative to others. Brown et al. (2018) recommended that one way to alleviate the aversive feeling of unfair treatment is to engage in actions to get even by retaliating against the harm-doer to restore justice and affirm the perception that perpetrators get what they deserve. The assessment of Brown et al. (2018) justified Adams' theory that injustice is similar to aversive dissonance and psychological tension. An individual who experiences inequity might be motivated to take action to restore justice to reduce the aversive state. Cosier and Dalton (1983) concluded that an appeal process or a way for employees to express and address equity concerns might provide an outlet to reduce tensions. Adams (1963) recommended additional research to test and assess variables that might influence individuals to choose others to compare inequity in terms of behavior that may result from these discrepancies. The scholar developed the inequity theory based on the notion that employees may become demotivated if they perceive that their inputs are higher than their outputs. Adams' approach has implications for future research on equity and conditions that might lead to reactions to inequity, such as disruptive behavior by using quid pro quo methods to retaliate with the intent to inflict harm and restore order (Ambrose & Mitchell, 2007).

Fairness Theory

Nandan and Azim (2015) examined the effect of the psychological relationship between organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior. The advantage of using a cross-sectional approach study is it might be faster and less inexpensive compared to cohort studies. Researchers conduct cross-sectional studies before planning

a cohort study or a baseline when using a cohort study. The disadvantage of the approach is it is challenging to derive causal relationships because it is a 1-time measurement of exposure and outcome from a cross-sectional analysis. The cross-sectional design also is prone to certain biases when interpreting associations and directions based on the results of cross-sectional surveys (Antonakis, 2017).

The conceptual framework consisted of the equity theory and the social exchange theory. Organ (1990) (as cited in Nandan & Azim, 2015) recommended using the equity theory to assess the relationship between distributive justice and organizational citizenship behavior. According to equity theory (Adams, 1965), the perception of unfair distribution of work rewards might create tension within an individual and motivate the desire to resolve the tension. Che and Spector (2014) and Konovsky and Pugh (1994) used the social exchange theory to describe the process of organizational citizenship behavior when an employee reciprocates behavior based on the perception of the organizational treatment of others. Researchers refer to the social exchange theory to assess the effect of justice perceptions on an individual's behavior (Nandan & Azim, 2015).

Nandan and Azim (2015) used a qualitative case study approach to test the mediation effect of psychological capital between organizational justice and citizenship behavior and referenced 10 hypotheses to guide their research. The employment of a cluster sampling that consisted of 350 employees by Nandan and Azim from six multimedia organizations located in Malaysia using questionnaires. Using a structural equation model by Nandan and Azim, a statistical technique for testing and estimating

causal relations using statistical data and qualitative causal assumptions to test the mediation effect in the study. Nandan and Azim also examined the relationship between distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice. Nandan and Azim also assessed a positive relationship between the three dimensions of organizational justice and psychological capital and the psychological behavior towards organizational citizenship behavior.

Nandan and Azim (2015) defended that distributive justice influenced organizational citizenship behaviors. Chen et al. (2014) assessed a significant relationship between interactional justice and organizational citizenship behavior. Chen et al. concluded the perception of fair compensation and decision-making procedures might motivate employees to reciprocate organizational citizenship behavior. Nandan and Azim did not compare the sample group with other groups, which might provide information about the differences or similarities between groups for future research. The theoretical limitations of the study consist of factors outside the organization, such as culture, which could affect the psychological capital of the participants. Nandan and Azim recommended that researchers explore culture's effect on psychological capital because organizational leaders need to understand cultural variations when implementing policy and promoting fair treatment, which affects organizational citizenship behavior.

Retaliation Theory

Ambrose and Mitchell (2007) examined the relationship between abusive supervision and employee deviance in the workplace and the moderating effects of negative reciprocity beliefs. Ambrose and Mitchell explored the literature on retaliation

and direct and displaced aggression, which is the foundation for examining employees' reactions of employees toward abusive supervision. Hypothesizing that abusive supervision relates to interpersonal deviance, organizational deviance, and supervisor-directed deviance, Ambrose and Mitchell examined the moderating effects of negative reciprocity beliefs. The scholars also reviewed relevant literature on abusive supervision, employee deviance, and negative reciprocity beliefs, and distributed surveys to individuals called for jury duty by a county circuit court in the Southeastern United States. There are strengths and weaknesses with the researcher's approach. Ambrose and Mitchell reviewed relevant literature on abusive supervision, employee deviance, and negative reciprocity beliefs and distributed surveys to individuals called for jury duty by a county circuit court in the Southeastern United States. Ambrose and Mitchell could not assess causality because the data in the study was cross-sectional. The researchers could not justify why negative reciprocity moderates the relationship between employee supervisor-directed deviance and abusive supervision, and other types of deviant or abusive supervisory behavior.

The conceptual framework of the study consisted of literature on the effects of negative reciprocity beliefs, abusive supervision, and employee deviance. Ambrose and Mitchell (2007, 2012) examined the literature on retaliation and sampled the reactions of employees to abusive supervision. The hypotheses that Ambrose and Mitchell employed was that the relationship between abusive supervision and supervisor-directed deviance is higher when individuals have increased negative reciprocity beliefs. A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to examine abusive supervision, employee

deviance, and negative reciprocity beliefs. The scholars distributed surveys to 427 individuals who called for jury duty in the Southeastern that agreed to participate in the study. After analyzing the findings, Ambrose and Mitchell assessed that negative reciprocity promotes retribution. The scholars validated that there is an increase in deviance among individuals with strong negative reciprocity beliefs. The results are consistent with Eisenberger et al. (2004) assessment that individuals with strong negative reciprocity beliefs may experience satisfaction from aggression against any target, whether guilty or innocent. Eisenberger et al. concluded negative reciprocity beliefs might indicate a propensity toward workplace deviance, such as retaliation. Ambrose and Mitchell referred to Brehm's (1966) reactance theory to understand individual reactions to abusive supervision and the need to maintain personal control. The reaction theory is used in social psychology to emphasize situational factors that affect reactance and the assumption that frustrated individuals engage in behaviors to restore power (Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Duffy et al., 2002). Dollard et al. (1939) explained that there is a link between anger and the theories of frustration-aggression and deviance.

Adams' (1963) equity theory is evidence that the perception of an unequal balance might motivate an individual's perceived inequity and the need to restore order, fairness, and power and use the ADR process for revenge. There is evidence that justifies Ambrose and Mitchell's (2007) assertion that employees reciprocate retaliatory behavior to disrupt, degrade, or inflict harm on coworkers, supervisors, groups, an organization, or entity (Folger & Skarlicki, 1997; Piotrowski & Vodanovich, 2014). Previous researchers validated that abusive supervision negatively affected employee attitudes and their

willingness to engage in positive behavior (Duffy et al., 2002, 2004). The results of the study showed that abusive supervision influenced the willingness of employees to engage in negative behavior, such as retaliation. Abusive supervision is positively related to a variety of deviant behaviors, and the relationship between abusive supervisors and supervisor-directed deviance is higher for employees with strong negative reciprocity beliefs. Retaliation is a deliberate act or action against a perceived harm doer, and the results of the research indicate that individuals might direct their deviant behaviors toward others or at the organization (Ambrose & Mitchell, 2007).

Theory of Revenge

Alarcon et al. (2018) examined the mediating and moderation effects of workplace harassment intensity and revenge among employed students at a medium-sized Midwestern U.S. university and full-time employees from various industries in Shanghai, China. The approach used by Alarcon et al. consisted of a variety of theories, such as the social exchange theory, retaliation theory, and the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) for workplace aggression. Combined with Flanagan's (1954) critical incident technique (CIT) to collect data on observations reported from memory, Alarcon et al. used a questionnaire to test the conceptual model. The scholars also drew from the social exchange theory to investigate the association between workplace harassment and revenge. Alarcon et al. enacted a variety of approaches from multiple studies and descriptions to examine the mediating role of blame attribution, rumination, state anger, and trait of forgiveness in the relationships between workplace harassment intensity and revenge.

The conceptual model consisted of various theories, such as the social exchange theory, retaliation theory, and the ELM for workplace aggression (Bies & Tripp, 1996, 1998, 2005; Chun et al., 2008; Gouldner, 1960). Alarcon et al. (2018) used ELM to assess the mediating roles of anger, blame attribution, rumination, and the dynamics of workplace harassment and revenge. Alarcon et al. used a qualitative case study approach and referenced six hypotheses to assess the effects of workplace harassment and revenge. The hypotheses consisted of two independent samples: an American sample and a Chinese sample. The participants in both samples completed an informed consent form before the study began. The participants in the American sample consisted of 310 (215 females and 95 males) employed students from introductory psychology classes at a medium-sized Midwestern university. The average age of the participants was 19.52 years old, worked an average of 21.33 hours per week, and had a mean job tenure of 23.67 months. The respondents in the Chinese sample were 251 (152 females and 99 males) Chinese workers from various industries, including sales, information technology, technology research, and the service industry. The sample restriction consisted of full-time employees only, and the average participant was 29 years old, worked an average of 44 hours per week, and had 3 years of job tenure in his/her current position (Alarcon et al., 2018).

Alarcon et al. (2018) concluded that harassment intensity was related to revenge. The application of multiple mediation tests justified the findings that anger and blame attribution mediated the relationships between workplace harassment intensity and both types of revenge behavior. Alarcon et al. evidence justified previous research on the

underlying process of revenge and highlighted cognitions and emotions that facilitated the development of retaliation in the workplace. Alarcon et al. assessed that the victim's retaliatory response to harassment might increase when there is a perception of mistreatment. Alarcon et al. also explained that the targets of abuse might externalize their anger and attribute blame to the perpetrator, which in turn promotes aggressive reactions such as revenge in the workplace. There are conflicting perspectives on whether subordinates will or will not retaliate against an abusive supervisor (Alarcon et al., 2018). The social exchange theory used by Alarcon et al. supported the study and justified Gouldner's (1960) workplace harassment–revenge association. Alarcon et al. accepted Bies and Tripp's (1998, 2005) conclusion that provocation may motivate an individual to seek revenge for perceived transgression. Researchers such as Ambrose and Mitchell (2007), Folger and Skarlicki (1997), and Molm et al. (1994) interpreted that reciprocity is central to the social exchange theory, which might motivate individuals to justify the use of quid pro quo methods to retaliate with the intent to inflict harm against individuals, supervisors, or the organization. Brown et al. (2014) and Gouldner (1960) concluded that 98% of U.S. employees who experienced uncivil behavior in the workplace are capable of reciprocating retaliatory acts, and 76% of employees engaged in at least one aggressive behavior. Gouldner assessed that negative reciprocity stimulates retaliation. Individuals seek revenge because they determine that others should suffer a similar fate.

Alarcon et al. (2018) and Aquino and Bradfield (1999) concluded that unfair treatment might trigger emotions and motivate claimants to respond to perceptions of inequity, deviant reciprocity, or the need to restore order and power against coworkers,

supervisors, groups, or an organization. Gong et al. (2013) assessed that rumination led to increased negative mood, and models of self-regulation are useful in identifying psychological factors such as emotion regulation. The patterns across samples indicated that victims with high trait forgiveness might grant decisional forgiveness to a perpetrator to repair a damaged relationship, eschewing revenge due to the strong moral principles of inherent equality and mounting forgiveness repertoire of behavioral scripts (Alarcon et al., 2018).

Bies and Tripp (2009) noted that the theory of revenge consisted of a unified range of aggressive behaviors, and perpetrators might remain salient after committing the work-related offense. Brown et al. (2014) and Haggard et al. (2015) accepted that the relationship between harassment and revenge is not understood. Andersson and Pearson (1999) found that aggression leads to counter-aggression, which results in escalated and entrenched conflict, and conflict is a common precursor to the exchange of aggressive actions. The more intense the harassment, the harder it is to suppress the desire to seek revenge, and the breaking point might be when an employee experience a threat to their identity (Alarcon et al., 2018). Alarcon et al. (2018) defended that the intensity of workplace harassment is associated with both major and minor acts of revenge. The targets of retaliation (as cited in Alarcon et al., 2018) might be cognitively burdened. When there is a perception of mistreatment, the victims might externalize their anger and attribute blame to the perpetrator, which could trigger an aggressive response such as revenge (Alarcon et al., 2018).

Aquino et al. (2001) examined the relationships between blame, offender and victim status, and the pursuit of revenge or reconciliation after a personal offense. The scholars also assessed that individuals who demonstrate forgiveness might avoid seeking revenge. Aquino et al. explored literature about extreme behaviors in the workplace, abusive supervisory behavior, and counter retaliatory acts that might result in an escalated or entrenched conflict. One-hundred and forty-one U.S. Federal agencies were surveyed by Aquino et al. to assess if blame is related to revenge, reconciliation, and if the targets of retaliation seek revenge more often when the perpetrators' status is lower than their own. The themes and the conclusions used by the researchers consisted of multiple studies, archival documents, and descriptions of the relationships between blame, offender and victim status, and the pursuit of revenge or reconciliation after a personal offense.

The conceptual framework consisted of literature about how revenge might motivate extreme behaviors in the workplace, deter abusive supervisory behavior, and lead to counterretaliation that results in escalating and entrenched conflict. The power asymmetry between the targets of retaliation and perpetrators influences the enactment of revenge (Heider, 1958). Aquino et al. (2001) used a qualitative case study approach to examine the relationships between blame, offender and victim status, and the pursuit of revenge or reconciliation after a personal offense and six hypotheses to guide their research. Aquino et al. administered a survey to 241 employees in a government service agency that attended the training classes. One hundred and eighty-three returned their questionnaires; 159 provided usable data on all study variables. The scholars eliminated

18 respondents, which resulted in a final sample size of 141, or a 59% response rate. Sixty-two percent of the respondents were male. Sixty-five percent were White; 28% were African American; 2% were Hispanic, and 5% did not report their race. The average age was 43.1 years old, and the average job tenure was 10.1 years. Fourteen percent were in management or supervisory positions, 23% in clerical or line staff positions, 16% in administrative support positions; 34% in technical support positions; and 15% held other appointments. Results from a sample of 41 government agency employees indicated that blame is positively related to revenge and negatively related to reconciliation. The victim-offender status moderated the relation between blame and retribution such that victims who were blamed sought revenge more often when the offender's status was lower than their own. The victims' absolute hierarchical status also moderated this relation such that lower, not higher, status employees who blamed sought revenge more often. Employees are willing to exact revenge against less powerful offenders. The use of retaliation decreased when would-be avengers considered the potential harm to valuable relationships with offenders on whom they depended. Aquino et al. concluded that such resource dependency weakened the victim's power, presuming the victim had no alternatives.

Aquino et al. (2001) assessed that the strength of the relationship between blame and revenge was weaker when the victim had a high-status rather than a low-status employee. The research results are consistent with the researcher's assessment of inhibiting high-status employees from seeking revenge by normative constraints associated with positions of authority and power. Employees offended by individuals of

higher relative status are less likely to seek revenge. Victims with low absolute status are more likely to seek revenge. Aquino et al. categorized victim-offender absolute and relative status as independent constructs. The findings indicated that the strength of the relationship between blame and revenge is weaker when the target's status is higher rather than a low-status employee (Aquino et al., 2001). Aquino et al. defended the notion that high-status employees may not seek revenge because of normative constraints associated with positions of authority and power. Aquino et al. found that victims who could not choose revenge, perhaps because the costs were too high, did not see reconciliation as an alternative and may have selected another option, such doing nothing. Adams (1965) (as cited in Aquino et al., 2001) identified revenge as a means of restoring a sense of justice in organizational justice.

Adams' (1963) equity theory is evidence that the perception of an unequal balance might motivate an individual's perceived inequity and the need to restore order, fairness, and power. Alarcon et al. (2018) examined the mediating and moderation effects of workplace harassment intensity and revenge among employed students at a medium-sized Midwestern U.S. university and full-time employees from various industries in Shanghai, China. Anthony et al. (2017) and Bies and Tripp (2005) assessed that revenge is a response to a perceived transgression to inflict harm on the transgressor. Anthony et al. explained that revenge might include aggressive behaviors that range from verbal to physical, from covert to overt, from indirect to direct, and from personally directed to organizationally directed. Berscheid et al. (1968) defended that the victims of retaliation restored equity by enacting revenge against the exploiter. Brown et al. (2018) assessed

that revenge may restore justice for victims. Choi et al. (2019) presented a comprehensive review of research on revenge from psychology and related fields and integrated their findings into a broad historical perspective with an emphasis on the potential distal and proximal functions of revenge.

Choi et al. (2019) examined why revenge evolved and persisted in humans, analyzed when individuals decide to take or the proximal causes of revenge and assessed that the two perspectives are closely intertwined. Revenge often leads to counterretaliation, resulting in escalated and entrenched conflict. Although perceived harm for wrongdoing might trigger retaliation, employees do not usually act out their impulse to seek revenge (Aquino et al., 2001). The results from the scholar's sample of 141 U.S. Federal agencies indicated that blame is related to revenge and is negatively related to reconciliation. The targets of retaliation seek revenge more often when the perpetrators' status is lower than theirs. Blame is positively associated with revenge and negatively with reconciliation (Aquino et al., 2001). When the victim's hierarchical status is lower and not higher, employees who are blamed seek revenge. The findings of Choi et al. (2019) research may have implications in the field of management and organizational leadership because offense episodes and the social context in which events occur might affect social exchanges and factors that influence trust and reciprocal acts of revenge.

Social Exchange Theory

Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) examined the conceptual difficulties of the social exchange theory, highlighted areas that required additional research, and addressed four issues that consisted of conceptual ambiguities and the norms and rules of the exchange.

Cropanzano and Mitchell explored the nature of the resources needed for exchange and social exchange relationships. Highlighting the various formulations of the social exchange theory, Cropanzano and Mitchell reviewed organizational behavior literature and specific models employed by researchers. Cropanzano and Mitchell shed light on the conceptual discrepancies of the theory, focused on the importance of reciprocal interdependence within the social exchange literature, and outlined future paths for discovery. Although each of these ideas is significant to the field of management and organizational leadership, Cropanzano and Mitchell stressed the importance of the rules and norms of exchange, the exchange of resources, and the emergence of relationships.

The conceptual framework consisted of various applications of the social exchange theory within the organizational behavior literature and specific models employed by researchers. The models included organizational support and leader-member exchange, support to commitment, team support to organizational support, supervisory support, and trust (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). A qualitative narrative approach was used to examine the conceptual difficulties of the social exchange theory, and Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) highlighted the uncertainties of the theory and provided recommendations for clarity. Cropanzano and Mitchell based their concept on the various applications of the theory and models because they determined that the framework for understanding workplace behavior either lacked a clear definition or has been the source of conceptual misunderstanding.

Blau (1964), Gouldner (1960), and Homans (1958) acknowledged that the social exchange theory is one of the most influential conceptual paradigms in organizational

behavior. Gouldner provided an interdisciplinary review of the social exchange theory and concluded that there is some ambiguity in the definition of reciprocity. Reciprocity or repayment in kind may be the best-known exchange rule (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). After reviewing social exchange literature, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) noted that Gouldner validated reciprocity as a folk belief involving the cultural expectation that people get what they deserve. Gouldner (1960) (as cited in Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003) explained that the fundamental principles of reciprocity lie in obligations created by exchanges of benefits or favors among individuals and raised the question of sentiments of retaliation. Blau maintained that the most crucial distinction of the social exchange entailed obligations because an exchange involves favors that create future commitments. According to Blau, only social exchange tends to engender feelings of personal obligations, gratitude, and trust. Almost half a century ago, Homans presented the concept of social behavior based on exchange. Essentially, Homans introduced the notion that exchanges are not limited to material goods and include symbolic values such as approval and prestige (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Homans also bridged a variety of disciplines and sparked differing theories of social exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The social exchange theory comprises actions that are contingent upon rewarding the reactions of others, which provides for mutually rewarding transactions and relationships over time. Cropanzano and Mitchell concluded that essential components of the theory were either overlooked or neglected that might shed light on organizational phenomena and at different levels of exchange.

Social Learning Theory

Bandura (1978) introduced the social learning theory and defended the notion that self-efficacy in explanatory model of human behavior influenced expected outcomes of individual actions and not vice versa. Bandura assessed massive threats to human welfare brought about by deliberate acts of principle rather than by unrestrained acts of impulse and stated that aggression is the most significant social concern and ignored in psychological theorizing and research. Bandura prescribed that a complete theory of aggression is needed to explain the development of aggressive patterns, what provoked individuals to behave aggressively, and what sustained such actions. Gurr (1970) (as cited in Bandura, 1978) examined the magnitude of civil disorder in Western nations. Gurr revealed that aggressive tactics are acceptable, aggressors possess coercive power, and perpetrators use fewer extreme forms of collective aggression without requiring much discontent. Geen and Stonner (1971) and Staples and Walters (1964) justified Bandura's assertion that when an individual behaves punitively, they become more aggressive, and display less aggression when their actions are not so praiseworthy. Geen and Pigg (1970) and Loew (1967) validated Bandura's position that the approval of adverse behavior increased the reinforcement of specific aggressive responses and enhanced other forms of aggression. There are strengths and weaknesses in Bandura's approach to the study. Bandura determined that a complete theory of aggression is needed to explain the development of aggressive patterns, what provoked individuals to behave aggressively, and what sustained such actions. Bandura's approach makes it easy to identify inconsistencies in behavior, provides an accurate picture of learned behavior, and offers a way to integrate

social and cognitive theories. The physical and mental changes of individuals were not considered by Bandura, nor an explanation about behavioral differences or the individual perceptions of punishment versus reward.

Bandura (1978) used a qualitative narrative approach to explain that massive threats to human welfare are brought about by deliberate acts of aggression and the role of cognitive expectations and the effect on behavior. The conceptual framework of the study consisted of the role of cognitive expectations and their influence on behavior. Bandura acknowledged the widely accepted frustration-aggression theory and criticized its limited explanatory value. Bandura agreed that frustration has a varied effect on behavior and defended the notion that aggression does not require frustration. There are two opposing views regarding displaced reactions to aggression: Bandura's (1973) learned inhibition view and Dollard et al.'s (1939) frustration-aggression view. Bandura (as cited in Ambrose & Mitchell, 2012) stated that the fear of retaliation influenced reactions to perceived aggression because of the victims' learned inhibitions. Individuals understood the consequences of their behavior based on past experiences or by watching what happened to others (Bandura, 1973). Dollard et al. concluded that when victims fear retaliation from an aggressor, displaced aggression allows victims to vent hostilities without fearing recourse from the harm doer. Bandura found that victims who fear reprisals from a harm doer believe aggressive responses will likely provoke further acts of aggression against them, particularly when the harm doer has higher power.

Bandura (1978) determined that individuals do not aggress in conspicuous direct ways that reveal causal responsibility and carry a high risk of retaliation. Bandura assessed

that people tend to harm and destroy in ways that diffused or obscured responsibility for detrimental actions to reduce self-reproof and social reprisals. Most of the harmful consequences of social concerns result from remote, devious, and impersonal actions through social practices perceived as aggressive by the victims and not by those who benefit from them (Bandura, 1978). According to Bandura, massive threats to human welfare are deliberate acts that result in aggression that is a social concern and most ignored in psychological theorizing and research. Bandura concluded that expected outcomes could not causally influence self-efficacy, and self-efficacy remained valid when causally influenced by expected outcomes.

Frustration Theory

Ambrose and Mitchell (2012) examined the behavioral reaction of employees to perceived supervisor aggression to understand their constructive or destructive response to aggressive behavior. The use of an experiment, two field studies, and various literature enabled Ambrose and Mitchell to validate Dollard et al.'s (1939) theory that retaliation is a primary response to aggression and aggression provokes retaliation. There are strengths and weaknesses to Ambrose and Mitchell's approach to their study. Using self-reported data in Studies 2 and 3 might influence method bias. The application of self-report data is appropriate when evaluating the perceptions of the victims and their reactions to aggression, and Ambrose and Mitchell took several steps to reduce biases in the study. Ambrose and Mitchell concluded that their efforts, in conjunction with the experimental design in Study 1, validated the results of their research. The researchers referenced theorists who validated their assessment that retaliation allowed victims to get back at the

transgressor and based on the principles of adverse reciprocity behavior of social exchange theory (Ambrose & Mitchell, 2007; Folger & Skarlicki, 2004; Gouldner, 1960). Ambrose and Mitchell hypothesized that the relationships between students raised concerns regarding the generalizability of the study.

Dollard et al.'s (1939) frustration-aggression theory is validated by Ambrose and Mitchell (2012) because the researchers examined the effects of one individual factor (locus of control) and situational factors such as the fear of retaliation and behavioral modeling between perceived supervisor aggression and employee behaviors. The use of previous literature enabled Ambrose and Mitchell to validate their hypotheses that retaliation allowed victims to get back at the transgressor. Folger and Skarlicki (2004) and Gouldner (1960) also referenced the reciprocity principles of social exchange theory in the conclusion of their research. Ambrose and Mitchell used a qualitative case study approach and five hypotheses to explore the constructive or destructive behavioral reactions of employees and based their study on the evidence presented in prior research. The participants of the study consisted of 273 undergraduate students from a large southeastern university. Two-hundred and forty-two of the students who initially consented participated in the study, and the remaining 31 students were either absent or late to class the day of the experiment. Participants were, on average, 23.3 years old; 43.2% were female, 61.2% were White, 10.6% were Black, and 13.9% were Hispanic.

Ambrose and Mitchell's (2012) research showed that negative reciprocity is significantly related to quid pro quo behaviors targeted against an abuser. Ambrose and Mitchell also revealed that negative reciprocity behavior promoted retribution. The results

of Ambrose and Mitchell's study are consistent with Eisenberger et al. (2004), which concluded that individuals with strong negative reciprocity beliefs use a catharsis approach to aggression and get satisfaction from aggressive acts against any target whether they are guilty or innocent. Ambrose and Mitchell also found that trait anger is positively related to supervisor-directed and interpersonal deviance and not organizational deviance and linked anger to Dollard et al. (1939) frustration-aggression theory and other types of deviance.

Ambrose and Mitchell (2012) concluded that employees who have control over events in their lives fear retaliation from individuals that display aggressive behavior. The behavioral modeling of coworkers influences the degree to which victims engage in destructive or constructive reactions. The results of this study have important implications for scholars and practitioners because organizations might lessen destructive reactions and enhance constructive behavior by selecting employees with control over situations and experiences that affect their lives (Ambrose & Mitchell, 2012). Organizational leaders could develop productive ways for employees to respond to aggression, integrate behavioral controls that hold employees accountable for and punish destructive behavior, and foster effective rather than aggressive behavior among organizational members (Ambrose & Mitchell, 2012).

Needs-Based Model

Nadler and Shnabel (2015) explored relevant literature on the needs-based model, conflicts between parties that transgressed against each other and competed over the victim status in the context of structural inequality. The conceptual framework consisted of relevant literature on the needs-based model in the context of structural inequality to

investigate the dynamics between perpetrators and their targets and assess transgressions that threaten the identities of victims and perpetrators asymmetrically. The model is referred to by Nadler and Shnabel to justify that when there is a perception of inequality, victims and perpetrators might experience a heightened need for empowerment and acceptance. Nadler and Shnabel used a qualitative narrative approach to explore the needs-based model of reconciliation and transgressions that might threaten a victim's sense of agency and the moral image of the perpetrator. Previous studies are also used by Nadler and Shnabel to test the model in the context of an intergroup and referenced the use of participants to support the hypotheses of the model in the context of interpersonal transgressions. The interpretation that victimhood is more psychologically profound, and adversaries engage in competitive victimhood is defended by Nadler and Shnabel as a need to satisfy a positive moral image such as innocence and entitlement to forms of empowerment, such as reparations or third-party support.

Frijda (1994) assessed victims sometimes behave vengefully to regain power, which justified Nadler and Shnabel's (2015) assessment of conflicts between parties. According to SimanTov-Nachlieli and Shnabel (2014), the needs-based model's original formulation referred to victims and perpetrators as mutually exclusive roles. In many conflicts, both parties simultaneously serve as the victim and perpetrator. Victims might seek revenge to regain power (Bandura, 1999). Perpetrators may engage in moral disengagement to minimize the severity of harm and culpability (Frijda, 1994). Nadler and Shnabel accepted that, unlike the study of conflict resolution, the scientific research of reconciliation requires additional research to understand the psychology of

victimization and competition over the victim status, reconciliation, and the development of practical interventions.

Link Between ADR and Retaliation

Retaliation in the workplace is the fastest-growing discrimination claim in the U.S., and most employment disputes involve an ADR process (Ballard & Easteal, 2018; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.-a). The use of retaliation in the workplace is a nontraditional form of bullying and the most common issue alleged by U.S. federal employees (Becton et al., 2017; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.-c). Ballard and Easteal (2016) examined the perceptions and experiences of the targets of abuse and the ADR process. The participants expressed concerns about ADR, and there is evidence that employees reciprocate retaliatory behavior to degrade, disrupt, and inflict harm (Ambrose & Mitchell, 2007; Folger & Skarlicki, 1997; Molm et al., 1994). Title VII law and the EEOC policy enforcement guidance do not contain a false claim or malicious claim provision to protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-e). Becton et al. (2017) and the Commission (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.-a) concluded that it is difficult to prove that claims are false, and the initiation and enforcement of a false claim or malicious claim provision may discourage employees from filing complaints. Because Title VII and the EEOC prohibit retaliation, reprisal, or revenge against individuals for participating in protected activity, perpetrators could use the ADR process to retaliate against a perceived threat with the intent to inflict harm, discomfort, or punishment (Nichols et al., 2014).

Ballard and Easteal (2018) assessed that fear is the leading reason individuals stay silent instead of voicing their concerns. The use of ADR for retaliation might silence targets, undermine attempts to resolve grievances, and conceal potential future and ongoing harm to the target (Ballard & Easteal, 2018). When perpetrators use the ADR for retaliation (as cited in Ballard & Easteal, 2018), the target might experience apathy, chronic fatigue, depression, despair, disbelief, disgust, fear, guilt, and helplessness. The target could also experience insomnia, phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), powerlessness, sadness, shame, shock, and various cardiac and musculoskeletal problems (Ballard & Easteal, 2018).

Gap in the Literature

The EEOC defended the notion that Title VII and the Commission served as an umbrella that protects claimants who use the ADR process from retaliation (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-e). Title VII law and EEOC policy enforcement guidance referenced employers and supervisors who retaliated against employees and did not include employees or claimants who retaliated against U.S. Federal organizational leaders (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.-b). Title VII law and the Commission's policy enforcement guidance do not contain a false or malicious claim provision to protect U.S. Federal organizational leaders (Becton et al., 2017; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.-a). Becton et al. (2017) explained that current policies should not include a false claims provision since it is difficult to prove that unjustified or unreasonable claims are false, so individuals may be discouraged from filing complaints.

The inconsistencies in the law and the gaps in the Commission's policy enforcement guidelines are inconsistent with the purpose of ADR. There are conflicting perspectives on whether subordinates will or will not retaliate against coworkers, supervisors, groups, or an organization (Alarcon et al., 2018). Organizational leaders and the Commission accepted that mediation is sufficient, the participants agree with outcomes, and subordinates are unable to retaliate (Aquino et al., 2006; Eigen & Litwin, 2014). Brown et al. (2014) Bies and Tripp (1996), and Bunk and Magley (2013) found that employees can reciprocate retaliatory acts, engage in at least one aggressive behavior, and use revenge tactics against individuals, supervisors, or the organization to get even. Bies and Tripp (2009) concluded that employees might seek revenge when organizational systems, such as ADR, do not operate effectively and could retaliate against the organization or a specific individual.

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 2 included an overview of the literature regarding the origins of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII, EEOC, and ADR literature and theory relevant to retaliation. Included in Chapter 2 is a summary of the literature on the equity theory, fairness theory, frustration-aggression theory, retaliation theory, theory of revenge, social exchange theory, social learning theory, and the needs-based model. The enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 altered the legal environment, and retaliation charges under Title VII outpaced the growth rate for other types of charges. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII law, and the EEOC policy enforcement guidance do not contain a false or malicious claim provision to protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from

unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation (Becton et al., 2017; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.-a). Becton et al. (2017) recommended that current policies should not include a false claims provision since it is difficult to prove that unjustified or unreasonable claims are false and might discourage employees from filing complaints. Aquino et al. (2006) and Eigen and Litwin (2014) verified the assessment of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders and EEOC facilitators that mediation is sufficient based on subordinates agreeing with results and not being capable of retaliating. Antiretaliation policies and litigation programs are a win-win solution in the workplace (Aquino et al., 2006; Eigen & Litwin, 2014). The use of this study might fill inconsistencies in the law and gaps in EEOC policy enforcement guidance about the use of ADR for unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The EEOC and organizational leaders could use this study to extend knowledge about the ADR process and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders.

Individuals are susceptible to social-comparison-based information and compare their outcomes with the most superior or inferior results (Fehr & Schmidt, 1999; Lind et al., 1997). Individuals' decisions influence the counterfactual thinking of others and frame their perception of fairness (Folger & Ganegoda, 2015). Ambrose and Mitchell (2007) validated that there is an increase in deviance among individuals with strong negative reciprocity beliefs. The conclusion of Ambrose and Mitchell's assessment is consistent with Eisenberger et al. (2004) assessment that individuals with strong negative reciprocity beliefs may experience satisfaction from aggression against any target, whether guilty or innocent. Employees might reciprocate behavior based on the

perception of others' organizational treatment and use bullying, counterproductive work behavior, incivility, and revenge for retaliating and targeting individuals indirectly (Anthony et al., 2017; Che & Spector, 2014; Konovsky & Pugh, 1994). Threats to human welfare are brought about by deliberate acts of aggression, the role of cognitive expectations, and transgressions that might drive the need for empowerment to regain power and strength (Bandura, 1978; Nadler & Shnabel, 2015).

The Commission uses its website to provide enforcement guidance and communicate its position. The Commissioners of the EEOC and the General Counsel that support the EEOC could use this study to fill inconsistencies in the law and gaps in the guidance on information about the use of ADR and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders. Scholars and practitioners might use this study to update existing policies and procedures to restore the social norms and promote positive social change. Chapter 3 consists of a discussion about the research design and rationale, research justification, role of the researcher, and the study's focus. Included in Chapter 3 is a description of the methodology, participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, and data analysis plan. Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion on the issues of trustworthiness and a summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the process of ADR and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. Chapter 3 consists of the research design and rationale, including the researcher's role, methodology, and participant selection logic. The chapter includes a description of the instrumentation, pilot study, and recruitment and data analysis plan procedures. Included in the chapter is a discussion on trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability. The chapter also includes the study's dependability, confirmability, and ethical approach. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the main points of the study.

Research Design and Rationale

The overarching RQ was how the ADR process protected U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The RQ was the following:

RQ: What protection does the process of ADR provide to U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation?

The EEOC asserted that employees have been satisfied with the EEOC and ADR results, mediation was enough, participants agreed with outcomes, and the current process protected individuals from retaliation (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-e). However, Title VII law and EEOC policy enforcement guidance does not address employees or claimants who used abusive tactics to retaliate against U.S. Federal government organizational

leaders for asserting their rights (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-b). The qualitative design was the best method for expanding into human behavior areas important to organizational case studies. The qualitative approach is suitable for navigating complex ethical and methodological issues that involve sensitive topics, such as ADR for revenge against federal organizational leaders (Ambrose & Mitchell, 2007; Fahie, 2014). The method consists of words, images, and written and spoken language to represent data (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Yilmaz, 2013). The holistic interpretive approach of the method admits discovery and comprises a wide variety of theoretical paradigms, methodologies, research strategies, and processes that make sense of the participants' inner experience (Rahman, 2016; Yilmaz, 2013). The qualitative approach is not quantifiable (Yilmaz, 2013). The flexible structure of the method provided the respondents with sufficient freedom for consistency and a platform to understand unjustified or unreasonable claims and the use of ADR for retaliation.

The quantitative approach was not suitable for the study. Researchers usually use this method to take snapshots of a phenomenon and numbers for data (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Rahman, 2016). Quantitative research is not contextually in-depth, might overlook the participants' experiences, and is used to test theories and the relationship among variables (Rahman, 2016). Mixed method research is appropriate for combining qualitative and quantitative research methods into the same inquiry to develop insights into phenomena that cannot be understood using one method (Bala et al., 2013). Wilkins and Woodgate (2008) explained that mixed methodology differs from traditional triangulation. Researchers usually use qualitative and quantitative methods to determine

whether the findings are reinforcing or irreconcilable. The mixed-method was not appropriate for the study because the process involved the unique relationship between qualitative and quantitative research (see Guetterman, 2020).

The multiple case study approach was the best method for this study because the design involved an extensive collection of carefully selected forms of data and processes, and the research required more than one case study (see Baxter & Jack, 2008; Durepos et al., 2010). Baxter and Jack (2008) and Yin (2017) explained that the evidence from using a multiple case approach is compelling, reliable, and robust. A single-case design was unsuitable because the research required more than one case and was applied to unique, extreme studies involving an individual or single group (see Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Ethnography did not apply to the study because it is the method of anthropology and consists of interpersonal and intercultural relationships within a specific culture or subculture (see Goulding, 2005). The ethnography study includes social life and culture and observing and interacting with individuals within their culture, language, and terms (Simmons-Mackie & Damico, 1999). Goulding (2005) described ethnography as a full or partial description of a group's ordinary activities using unstructured and flexible methods to explore common threads such as religion, social relationships, or management style. Marshall and Rossman (2014) explained that ethnography applies to understanding how human groups collectively form and maintain a culture. The collection and analysis of ethnography data differs from multiple case studies because ethnography is a direct observation, description, and evaluation of a social group's activity (Drew et al., 2009). Drew et al. (2009) found that case studies may provide data that are not easy to obtain.

Grounded theory was not suitable for the study because the method applies to the generation of theoretical approaches with an outcome that generates hypotheses (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hallberg, 2006). Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Yin (2003) determined that grounded theory is a systemic process used to explain or theorize an event. Glaser and Strauss (1965) and Anells (1996) concluded that grounded theory applies to how social life patterns relate to confirm or disconfirm using theoretical constructs for further hypotheses. Multiple cases are used for an in-depth understanding of one or more individuals, an activity, an event, or a program. Narrative research did not apply to the study because the design consists of stories that include materials, such as photographic self-portraits, day-by-day journals, or a sequence of events, usually weaved together from one or two individuals (see Andrews et al., 2014; Wertz, 2011). Polkinghorne (2007) expressed concerns about threats to validity because storied descriptions do not reflect the respondents' experiences. Lieblich et al. (1998) criticized that a narrative study is more art than research. The design relies on intuition and does not have a clear order systemization. Moen (2006) defined narrative research as studying how humans experience the world and assigning meaning to experiences through storytelling. The multiple case study approach includes credible evidence, such as case descriptions and cross-case themes from more than one respondent (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Phenomenology did not align with the study because the approach involves describing and bracketing the embodied perception of lived experiences to capture common meanings or events (see Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Moustakas (1994) stated that researchers use phenomenology to write about contextual factors that shape

the researcher and individuals' experiences. Phenomenology did not apply to the study because the method applies to understanding the individuals' emotional or subjective experiences.

Role of the Researcher

Maxwell (2013) and Yin (2017) explained that the researcher is the primary data collection instrument to protect the respondents. I collected and analyzed the data, controlled the research process, provided meaning to the study, and entered the participant's experience. Data collection from various sources and access to the respondents' thoughts and experiences required interviews, letters, memoranda and correspondence, observations, and prewritten questionnaires and surveys to open-ended surveys. Self-awareness and agency of emotions, biases, and assumptions require reflexivity. Rennie (1994, 2004) defined reflexivity as self-awareness and a horizon of understanding to frame experiences. Morrow (2005) referenced the term agency to highlight reflexivity when making moral evaluations. The employment of a self-reflective journal captures emerging awareness, experiences, and reactions to assumptions, biases, and perspectives that may influence the data collection and interpretation (Durepos et al., 2010). The weighted evidence of reliability, validity and development of a holistic approach may help organizational leaders understand and learn about the participants' experiences. In this study, the research journal included details about the respondents' reactions, reflections, and insights. I used a self-reflective journal for reflexivity and transparency and to reflect upon assumptions, goals, and the research process.

Establishing a researcher-participant relationship was critical to evoke stories and memories while collecting and analyzing data. Miller-Day and Pitts (2007) stressed the importance of researcher-participant relationships built on trust to increase validity and trustworthiness, manage impressions, and establish rapport. Ethical issues might arise when the researcher-participant exchange is personal or involves an instructor or supervisor. Despite prevailing discourses on researcher-participant relationships, Venkateswar (2001) and Wood (2001) critiqued and questioned the necessity of building rapport. Venkateswar questioned the legitimacy of building rapport and concluded that the inability to establish relationships leads to increased self-reflection and decreased the participants' understanding. Wood determined that rapport is overrated and criticized for establishing and maintaining traditional relationships. Interpersonal researcher-participant relationships were necessary for collecting and analyzing data. The researcher-participant relationship included boundaries to reduced power differences and increased authenticity and disclosure; I also adhered to the Code of Ethics.

Bias in research is any influence that might distort reality and affect the validity and reliability (Polit & Beck, 2014). Yin (2017) concluded that avoiding bias falls under the rubric of ethics in qualitative research. The triangulation of multiple data sources, methods, and techniques reduce biases and inconsistencies, threats to validity, and flaws in the research method, data analysis, research results, and conclusion (Abdalla et al., 2018). The RQ was open-ended and framed to guide the participants, avoid biases, and accept truthful and honest responses. The continued analysis and reevaluation of data with a clear and unbiased mind reduced researcher bias. Snelgrove (2014) concluded that

researchers use bracketing to mitigate potential preconceptions throughout the research process. I used bracketing when conducting interviews to prevent misconceptions. Before asking specific or sensitive subjects, I asked general questions to avoid leading inquiries.

The research process influences power relationships between the respondents and the researcher, such as participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis and report, and validation. Researchers manage power relationships by describing the research goals and disclosing institutional affiliations to maximize cooperation (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). I shared the process with the respondents and determined additional knowledge from their participation. After completing the data collection and analysis, reengaging the participants strengthened the accuracy, trustworthiness, and validity of the findings and empowered the interviewees (see Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). The emergence of unexpected ethical issues, such as conflict of interest, power differentials, or the work environment, did not influence the study. Participants in the research were not vulnerable due to susceptibility to the breach of confidentiality, coercion, invasion of privacy, or undue influence in the work environment. The study did not include financial incentives to recruit participants, increase participation, motivation, or retention (see Kumanyika et al., 2006). Bonuses, incentives, and finder's fees in exchange for potential participants did not apply to this study. The potential benefit of research participation is the incentive for participating in the study.

Methodology

The methodology was multiple case studies to explore the process of ADR and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or

unreasonable claims and retaliation. The data collection instruments for interviews included audiovisual materials, such as MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, and Zoom, consent agreement documents, contact summary forms, field notes, and prewritten questionnaires with organizational leaders and employees. The recruitment for participants consisted of email messages, Facebook, Grindr, Instagram, LinkedIn, Signal, Twitter, and word of mouth. I mailed invitations to reliable sources, and participants used social media and snowball sampling to identify and recruit potential participants who met the inclusion criteria (see Appendix A). I obtained mailing addresses from reliable sources and used snowball sampling to recruit potential participants. I used reliable sources to ask others to share my invitation with participants who might meet inclusion criteria. I asked my sources not to ask individuals to share the invitation with coworkers at work or provide nonpublic contact information for coworkers because the invitation required prior organizational approval. The invitation instructed volunteers to contact me by email or phone. I did not use Walden University's research participant pool system when recruiting potential participants. The screening process consisted of a description of the study, including the title and reason for the research. The selected participants received a preliminary overview of the study by email and a consent form to participate. The consent form served as a document of record for the participants to participate in the study. Communication with the participants included email, telephone, and other mediums to ensure adherence to meeting times for interviews and follow-ups and updates on the next steps in the research process to complete the study.

Participant Selection Logic

The strategy to recruit participants included purposeful sampling to identify individuals and cases related to the study. Suri (2011) determined that reaching data saturation was higher using purposeful sampling during the data collection process. The plan consisted of randomly selected U.S. Federal government agency organizational leaders, who were full-time or part-time, 18 years or older, experienced or observed the use of Title VII, the EEOC or ADR for retaliation, and worked in Washington, D.C., Maryland, or Virginia. The respondents needed to speak and read English to reduce the loss of meaning, avoid potential limitations, and enhance validity when interpreting data. The criteria consisted of a prequalifying questionnaire and the respondent's ability to provide relevant information. I identified eligible participants with the most appropriate demographic, psychographic, and knowledge to participate in the research. Respondents who did not meet the criteria did not qualify. The participants filled out a brief questionnaire to confirm eligibility. Elo et al. (2014) and Gray (2013) explained that purposive sampling is when researchers select participants based on a population's predetermined conditions. Maximum variation is a purposeful sampling design that includes an in-depth selection of extreme cases under different conditions and identifies and documents common patterns across the study (Duan et al., 2015). Other samplings were not practical because the maximum variation required a detailed data representation (see Patton, 2002). I employed the maximum variation strategy to document the emergence of unique and shared patterns and to understand how the participants viewed the use of ADR and the protection of federal organizational leaders from unjustified or

unreasonable claims and retaliation. The selected methods helped triangulate the data, identify themes, and provide a cross-case analysis for consistency, dependability, and applicability.

In qualitative research, saturation is used to determine sample size and refers to the point in the data collection process when further data collection becomes redundant (Hennink et al., 2019). Saturation is a marker for data adequacy by ethical review boards, researchers, and funding agencies to identify parameters and estimate sample sizes (Hennink et al., 2019). Guassora et al. (2016) stated that the concept for sample size is saturation in qualitative studies. There is no assurance that an identified number of participants introduces new experiences or alternative perspectives. The sample size depends on the study's scope, the nature of the RQ, methodology, and the sufficiency of the data to coherently and adequately answer the RQ (Tai & Ajjawi, 2016). In this study, the sample comprised 20 participants until data saturation.

Instrumentation

The research instrument was a specific data collection mechanism for discovery, gathering, and recording information to assess or understand a phenomenon (Colton & Covert, 2007). The researcher was the primary instrument for data collection. The instruments consisted of face-to-face interviews using audiovisual materials, checklists, consent agreement documents, contact summary forms, and field notes. The research instruments included letters, memoranda and correspondence, official publications, personal diaries, public records, pilot study, prewritten questionnaires, and written responses to open-ended surveys (Patton, 2002). The instruments aligned with the study's

context, RQ, and research design and included open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews (Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2017). The instruments' components consisted of a title, directions, or instructions, selected items to provide choices for the respondents, demographics, open-ended questions, and a closing section. Face-to-face interviews have the highest response rate (Heerwegh & Loosveldt, 2008). I used audiovisual platforms, such as MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, and Zoom, to observe the respondents' verbal and nonverbal body language.

The application of field notes recorded the participants' non-verbal behavior, such as discomfort, eye contact, and the date and time of events or issues, to evaluate and reflect on the interview's success or failure. Field notes contained descriptions, details, or elements of a situation that the observer determined worth noting (Patton, 2002). The field notes included a self-reflective journal to document the reactions and experiences of the researcher and the participants during the interview sessions. I utilized field notes to capture biases, direct quotations, ideas, insights, inspirations, interpretations, and the verbal and non-verbal cues of the participants during the interviews. The EEOC's Federal Workforce Annual Report was a public document and included data on ADR activities and federal equal employment opportunity complaints. The EEOC collected and uploaded the data from federal agencies into a Federal Sector EEO Portal (FedSEP), which was not accessible to the public (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (n.d.-g)). The EEOC used the FedSEP data to compile a Federal Workforce Annual Report. I used a pilot study to pretest the quality of the protocol procedures, improve the data collection methods, and mitigate potential biases (Chenail, 2011;

Graham et al., 2001). A pre-screening survey was a start point for potential participants to participate in this study. The survey included qualifying and disqualifying criteria to participate in the research and a list of prequalifying questions. The researcher determined eligibility to participate in this study was determined based on the data from the survey.

A self-report questionnaire is a data collection method in which the participants respond to questions about their attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, or feelings about a subject or event. A questionnaire is a self-report method that consists of prewritten open and closed questions. The questionnaire enabled the participants to respond to questions about their life experiences. The deployment of questionnaires by email compared to face-to-face interviews decreased self-disclosure and increased the nonresponse rate (Colton & Covert, 2007). Audiovisual platforms, such as MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, and Zoom, using prewritten questionnaires increased self-disclosure and decreased the response rate (see Appendix B). I emailed the respondents questionnaires as an alternative data collection method when MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, or Zoom were unavailable. The questionnaire included a rating scale with clear and unambiguous wording to allow the respondents to answer the RQ (Drennan, 2003). NVivo was a qualitative data management software for categorizing, coding, and assembling unstructured data (Richardson et al., 2015). I used NVivo 12 to classify, code, pre-code, run queries, and organize and visualize themes and relationships into analyzable units. Hand coding augmented the software to demonstrate dependability and reflexivity and provide a detailed description of the interviews.

Pilot Study

The identification, contact, and recruitment of research participants began the informed consent process and shared responsibility between the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the researcher. I requested approval to recruit, interview, and collect data from participants for the pilot and final studies. The purpose of a pilot study was to pretest the quality of interview protocol procedures and the appropriateness of the RQ and methods (Graham et al., 2001). Chenail (2011) discovered that a pilot study helped improve data collection methods, developed an overt perspective that highlighted potential biases, increased awareness about the value of patience during the interviewing process, and identified the respondents' assumptions. A pilot study helped identify and address issues that influenced aligning the problem statement, purpose statement, research design, sample size, sample selection, data collection, and data analysis. A pilot study's employment identified barriers that could influence the time required for interviews, the instruments, and research completion. The pilot study consisted of open-ended interview questions to avoid bias and ensured that the study aligned with the problem statement and purpose statement. I used the pilot study to detect and prevent the potential escalation of problems before fully implementing collecting data. The IRB approval was essential, and I sought consent before the complete application of the study. The potential participants received a copy of the agreement, informed that personal information was kept confidential, and a pilot consent form to request and schedule an interview.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Informed consent from organizational gatekeepers for employees to participate in research is an ongoing process because approval requires reflexivity to navigate the power dynamics in organizations. The approval process did not guarantee cooperation from organizational gatekeepers. Organizations may have concerns about confidentiality and time (Altinay et al., 2007). I responded positively to the fears, questions, and reservations. I established cooperation and communicated about the opportunity to participate in the study. The leaders received an invitation and contact information to schedule an interview and the research's purpose. The respondents received a copy of the agreement to conduct the study and the final study consent form to request and schedule an interview. I informed the participants that their personal information would be kept confidential. I used snowball sampling to identify and recruit potential participants and did not use Walden University's online research participation system due to geographical specificity and narrow inclusion criteria of the study. The participant pool might have provided potential participants from federal agencies in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. The recruitment process consisted of email messages, Facebook, Grindr, Instagram, LinkedIn, Signal, Twitter, and word of mouth. The screening process included the title, a brief description of the research and questions about demographics and behaviors to assess suitable participants. I created a recruitment environment that complied with U.S. federal regulations, guidance, and ethical standards in identifying, contacting, screening, and recruiting potential participants.

The data collection instruments for recruitment consisted of a questionnaire to access potential participants' eligibility with appropriate demographics, psychographics, and knowledge to participate in a research study (see Appendix B). Participants completed and returned the questionnaire by email to the researcher. I used Appendix B after obtaining IRB approval to identify and confirm participants' eligibility to participate in the study. Respondents who did not meet inclusion criteria did not qualify. The pursuit of letters, memoranda and correspondence, personal diaries, prewritten questionnaires, and written responses to open-ended interview questions provided insights into the respondents' life experiences. Appendix C included a description of the study, definitions, and open-ended questions. I used MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, or Zoom to capture the respondents' verbal and nonverbal body language and questionnaires for telephone interviews when social media platforms were unavailable. The informed consent form provided potential participants with information about the study during the recruitment phase. The potential participants used the consent form to determine whether to participate and included essential information and an agreement to

- the purpose of this study
- whether to consent to participate or continue participation
- the protocols of the study
- voluntary participation
- the ability to withdraw consent or refuse to participate in the interview at any time without reprisal
- the opportunity to highlight concerns

- procedures to protect data confidentiality, the storage, security, and disposal of data

The contact summary form (see Appendix D) was a fast way to capture and condense impressions and reflections at the end of each interview without losing information. MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, or Zoom, and the contact summary form served as the data collection instrument when observing the respondents' body language, demeanor, mannerisms, and tone. The contact summary form's design included a questionnaire format to simplify and summarize the discussion's main points. When Skype or Zoom was unavailable, the data collection continued using telephone interviews and the contact summary form until data saturation or the data became redundant. The interviews were semi-structured, took up to 1 hour or until the data became redundant, and included a follow-up for a member check and updates to complete the research (Yin, 2017). Yin (2009) discovered the strength of case study research and data collection was using various evidence sources. The employment of audiovisual platforms, such as MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom, and a recorder to capture the data provided a secure record and storage in real-time. The application of social media platforms increased the study's reliability and validity. MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, and Zoom provided the participants with flexibility and the most comfortable platform. Ambagtsheer et al. (2019) concluded that the use of audiovisual materials protected sensitive data, including user-specific authentication and real-time encryption of meetings. Remote server networks, such as the cloud or local drives, backup recordings online.

I anticipated the recruitment of potential participants might be low due to practical or legitimate reasons. I developed a good rapport and maintained contact with the respondents to ensure commitment to the study. The application of various communication strategies, such as personal, written, or electronic messaging, kept the participant's contact information up to date and made the participants feel comfortable between assessments. I considered amending the protocol to ease procedures to maintain retention. The participants received calendar invites to remind them about upcoming interviews and schedule their next interview. The informed consent form included post-interview debriefing procedures. The participants received reminders about post-interview debriefing procedures upon completing the interview and scheduled a date and time for a follow-up interview. The informed consent form protected the researcher and participants. The consent form served as a reference to contact participants for future studies. Reminding the respondents about the value of participating in research decreased barriers to research participation and increased response rates. The participants did not receive payments for participating in this study. Participation was voluntary, and the respondents had the right to refuse or withdraw consent to participate without reprisal. The interviews were open-ended and followed a conversational protocol. The study occurred in a natural setting using MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, or Zoom to preserve the participants' privacy while collecting data. The data collection process did not result in others learning about the participants' identity, contact information, or demographics in the study. The data collection process remained confidential, and I used pseudonyms, encrypted emails, and demographic descriptors to prevent revealing the participants'

identities. I ensured that descriptions of the participants were not specific to avoid breaching the participants' identities. I kept my firewall and security programs updated to protect against external threats and used high-level passwords that were only accessible to the researcher. I stored written passwords in a secure safe that was not inaccessible to others. I did not ask the participants to provide information that contained dates, times, places, or the identities of individuals who used ADR for revenge or witnesses.

Data Analysis Plan

Qualitative data analysis includes examining and interpreting instruments to understand what the data represents. The data analysis began with reading interview transcripts, diaries, field notes, illustrations, personal documents, listening to interview tapes, or watching audio recordings from interview sessions before transcription. Data analysis involved creativity, critical thinking, and the examination, identification, and interpretation of themes and textual data patterns to answer RQs while reflecting on the study (Bondas et al., 2013). Content analysis was flexible and included an inductive and deductive approach when analyzing data. Qualitative researchers used inductive and deductive logic to build categories, themes, and patterns from the bottom up by organizing data into abstract units of information (Graneheim et al., 2017). Elo and Kyngäs (2008) stated that an inductive approach was suitable for research when prior knowledge about a phenomenon was limited or fragmented. The deductive approach started with preconceived categories or codes when the study's objective was to test an existing theory or retest existing data in a new context (Amundson et al., 2002; Cavanagh, 1997).

I applied Yin's (2017) five-step data analysis plan using an inductive approach because it aligned perfectly with conducting a case study. I also used Yin's approach to compile, disassemble, reassemble, interpret, and conclude data (Yin, 2017). I employed the inductive approach to analyze diaries, interview transcripts, field notes, illustrations, personal documents, and audio recordings to identify themes and patterns to answer the question. The process included a back-and-forth analysis between databases and themes that resulted in open coding, the formulation of preliminary codes, coding the data, revising the codes, and developing categories and patterns (Cho & Lee, 2014). An inductive content analysis approach enhanced the study's credibility, dependability, reliability, and trustworthiness. Qualitative data management software was available to code, group, link, manage, organize, sort, store, and visualize data into themes and categories. NVivo 12 was the best method for importing, capturing, categorizing, coding, pre-coding, running queries, sorting data, and visualizing themes and relationships graphically (Meyer & Lunnay, 2013). I used NVivo to organize data from articles, interviews, observations, open-ended interview questions, social media platforms, and website content. The software application enabled the researcher to hand-code unstructured data electronically, import, and organize the information into one database. The employment of NVivo to organize audiovisual materials, field notes, and participant responses into specific categories or themes allowed easy access to data. The application of NVivo saved time and identified consistencies and inconsistencies during the study's coding, analysis, and write-up phases.

NVivo was flexible and consisted of source classification modules to organize, categorize, and understand the participants' experiences. NVivo was used to capture relevant data, increase accuracy, credibility, and validity, decrease data distortion, and reduce redundant information. Discrepancies between data sets were inevitable, based on triangulation (Morrow, 2005). NVivo was not a solution to resolving discrepant cases. Discrepant findings may result from potential flaws in instruments, such as unintended ambiguity or a deficit in the respondent's responses. The employment of NVivo's software application synthesized interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials to search for patterns. NVivo's software also provided time to assess more data. Moffatt et al. (2006) recommended exploring the data sets' comparability and collecting additional data to make more comparisons. Moffatt et al.'s recommendations to use multiple sources to obtain data that applied to this study decreased confirmatory bias that led to discrepant cases (Morrow, 2005). The documentation and frequency of discrepant cases accurately reflected the participants' experiences. Qualitative research software did not analyze data for researchers. I used hand-coding and NVivo's illuminated pertinent themes and patterns to answer the RQ. The manual coding of data and the following coding guidelines ensured that the data was accurate, consistent, and reliable to avoid biases. The study included a pilot study using open-ended interview questions to validate that the data analysis plan aligned with the problem statement, purpose statement, RQ, data collection methodology, sampling strategy, and instrumentation.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a central concept that researchers use to appraise the authenticity, quality, rigor, and truthfulness of findings in qualitative research (Cypress, 2017). The trustworthiness of data is the ability to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and neutrality (Guba et al., 2007). Morrow (2005) concluded providing evidence to increase the trustworthiness and accuracy of research findings was a challenge and should be the creative focus of the researcher. Koch (1994) referred to trustworthiness as the rigor of a study when the reader can audit the actions and developments of the researcher. Pilkington (2002) found that because qualitative methods aim to understand the human experience and theory development, alternative methods were required to ensure the scientific merit of research findings. I used member checking to reinforce the credibility and trustworthiness of the data and to substantiate the results. The use of accurate descriptions and detailed records of the participant's experiences increased the research findings' credibility, transferability, dependability, and transparency.

Credibility

Credibility is central to research and confidence in how well the researcher collected relevant data for content analysis (Polit & Beck, 2014). Direct contact with participants, using multiple data sources, member checking, verification, and disconfirmation during data analysis increased the study's credibility (Morrow, 2005). Credibility is the authenticity, believability, generalizability, objectivity, reliability, and validity of a study (Durepos et al., 2010). The application of credibility in research is an

agreement between the participants and the researcher (Durepos et al., 2010). An important aspect of trustworthiness is credibility because the researcher links the study's outcome with reality to substantiate the findings. The triangulation of sources included collecting and comparing multiple data to enhance data quality based on the convergence of ideas to confirm findings (Ayres et al., 1993). Triangulation was a multiple operationalism for verifying and counteracting threats to the results (Fielding & Fielding, 1986). The application of triangulation reduced limitations, such as biases and misinformation in the data and findings. The use of triangulation identified data consistencies and inconsistencies when comparing interviews and observations to enhance data quality and confirm the research findings.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that researchers used member checks to ask respondents about hypothetical situations and a continuous process during data analysis to verify the results. Member checking is a qualitative method used to explore the results' credibility and ensure that the findings are accurate and honest. The member checking technique, also known as participant or respondent validation, involved returning the data to participants to check and validate the respondent's experiences (Birt et al., 2016). I used sampling strategies to increase data adequacy (Hennink et al., 2019). Data saturation indicated an optimal sample size and occurred within 15 interviews (Elo et al., 2014; Saunders et al., 2018). Barrett et al. (2002) explained saturation ensured replicating data into categories and the comprehension, completeness, and validation. The use of sampling strategies provided efficient and effective data saturation into categories (Barrett et al., 2002). Reflexivity is a self-assessment of subjectivity (Craig et al., 2007). I

demonstrated reflexivity to reduce bias and increased the study's dependability and transparency.

Transferability

Transferability is the replication of findings under conditions and in similar settings and data transfer (Elo et al., 2014; Watkins, 2012). Malterud (2001) explained that sampling is related to validity. Malterud determined that internal validity was whether the researcher examined what they meant to investigate, and external validity involved the applicability of the findings beyond the study's context. Transferability provided a detailed description of the data collection plan, participant selection logic, sample size and demographics, instrumentation, recruitment procedures, pilot study, and data analysis plan. I provided sufficient information about the context of the study, methodology, pilot study, participant selection logic, instrumentation, researcher–participant relationship, and data analysis plan to ensure that data was transferable beyond the study.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the reliability, stability, and consistency of data over time and under different conditions (Elo et al., 2014). Sandelowski (1986) and Polit and Beck (2006) determined that dependability was the consistency and reliability of the research findings and the documentation of procedures that allowed readers to audit, critique, and follow the research process. Dependability involved ensuring that the analytical soundness and logic used to select the participants, collect data, analyze data, and similar findings, interpretations, and conclusions were consistent and repeatable. The strategies I

used to strengthen dependability included describing the research methods and checking the results for similarities to ensure the findings were authentic, straightforward, and dependable. The procedures I used in this study were repeatable to minimize the influence of subjectivity on the process.

Confirmability

Confirmability is an objective representation and interpretation between two or more individuals about data accuracy, meaning, and relevance (Elo et al., 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Polit and Beck (2014) concluded that confirmability was an indication that the data was accurate and represented the participants' information. I established an audit trail to increase the confirmability of the data collection process, data analysis, and data interpretation based on the participants' narratives and words, not the researcher. I used MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom, and field notes to document and transcribe the participants' verbal and nonverbal body language. I used the respondents' exact words for self-reflection while capturing the challenges, observations, patterns, and personal experiences to ensure confirmability.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures included understanding the researcher-participant power relationship, adherence to protocols, confidentiality, informed consent, privacy, data security, and protecting the participants (Maxwell, 2013). Walden University's IRB team reviewed, approved, and provided ethical guidance and accountability before the recruitment and participation of human subjects (Corralejo et al., 2017). Walden's IRB team offered advice for ethical standards when researching human subjects and to ensure

that the study complied with Walden University's ethical standards and U.S. federal regulations. I submitted a request for IRB approval to recruit and collect data from potential participants. The informed consent request for IRB approval included a statement of compliance with ethical standards concerning human subjects' treatment and a commitment statement to avoid deception, sharing, or using data for purposes other than the study. The informed consent included a commitment to prevent invasiveness and adopt measures that honor the respondents' obligations. I employed the IRB process to build trust with the respondents by using disclosure statements to increase authenticity and credibility, guard against impropriety or misconduct, restrict the release of personal information, protect the integrity of the study, and report violations of the Code of Ethics. I used the IRB to mitigate ethical issues and ensure that the study complied with ethical standards and U.S. federal regulations before recruiting participants, collecting data, and accessing datasets.

Ethical issues might include deception, research participation without consent, and harm from the privacy invasion or a breach of confidentiality (Tracy, 2019). Ethical concerns may include using recruitment materials without IRB approval, the pressure to participate in research, and no accurate or precise description of the study. Ethical challenges could also include misconceptions. Participation in this study was voluntary, and the respondents had adequate time to consider participation. I provided the respondents with a clear, accurate, and unbiased study description. The participants' privacy remained confidential, and the recruitment methods included information about respect for the participant's privacy. The ethical procedures also included providing the

respondents' information about using materials and processes, such as audiovisual equipment, interview protocols, self-reflective journals, and field notes. The data did not include misleading words that contributed to misconceptions.

Ethical procedures for data collection included informing the participants about the right to refuse or withdraw from the study (Edwards, 2005). The respondents have a right to volunteer, refuse, or withdraw consent at any time without reprisal. Reporting possible adverse events, such as an accident, attempted or completed suicide, injury, problem, psychiatric hospitalization, or an unfortunate incident by a respondent or others during the research protocol, was an ethical requirement by the IRB (Peterson et al., 2013). I listed anticipated risks in the risk section of the protocol. I planned to immediately report unanticipated ethical issues to the IRB, including breaches of confidentiality, complaints, and incidents that involved physical, psychological, or social harm to the participants. The participant had the right to withdraw anytime during the interview process and was free from coercion or influence to continue participation in the study.

Scriven and Smith-Ferrier (2003) highlighted concerns about anonymity, confidentiality, respondents' privacy, and the perception of research invitations being spam, containing viruses, or data security influencing data quality and response rates. I emailed questionnaires to the participants and used encrypted emails to scramble messages or attachments. I forewarned the participants that the RQ might be sensitive and steps to protect confidential information, such as codes, demographic descriptors, passwords, and pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality, create a clean data set, and

decrease privacy concerns. Scriven and Smith-Ferrier concluded that the response rates with embedded email surveys significantly increased response rates. Simsek and Veiga (2001) recommended researchers establish trust with respondents by explaining the purpose of the study, the participant selection process, the protocol for data usage, and data access. I requested IRB approval to use letters to overcome reluctance to unsolicited emails, pre-notify and seek potential participants' permission, and appeal to the study's credibility and worthiness. I received Walden University's IRB approval number 06-28-21-0496530 to conduct research effective on June 28, 2021.

The consent form highlighted risks that potential participants might encounter daily, such as stress or revealing personal information. I kept consent forms separate from data to avoid linking participants' names to data to minimize risks and maintain confidentiality. I limited the personal information collected to answer the RQ and prevent unintentional confidentiality violations. I also planned to report unanticipated ethical issues to the IRB, including breaches of confidentiality, complaints, and incidents that involved physical, psychological, or social harm to the participants. The protection of confidential data required providing information to the respondents about the research and interview protocol process during the study's data collection and analysis phase to prevent bias. The participants received reminders about masking agencies and personnel and avoiding disclosing information about coworkers, groups, or organizational leaders. I intended to replace agency and organizational leaders' identities, whether advertently or inadvertently, with pseudonyms, demographic descriptors, or omitting the information. The participants received reminders about the importance of collecting and keeping

contact information up to date. I reassured respondents about the confidentiality, storage, and security of data information and electronic files using password-protected computers at the end of each interview. I secured and stored password-protected MS Excel spreadsheets, text files, and multimedia file formats that consisted of images and audio recordings in a locked container in the researcher's home for 5 years. I maintained access to the data and, upon completion of the study, disposed of the data by shredding the physical materials and deleting the electronic files.

Summary

Chapter 3 included the research design and rationale, justification, the researcher's role, and the study's focus. The section consisted of a synopsis of the methodology, participant selection logic, instrumentation, recruitment process, data analysis plan, and trustworthiness issues. The qualitative approach was the best method for examining human behavior toward using ADR for revenge and protecting federal organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The multiple case study method was suitable because the design required more than one case study. The methodology consisted of an outline and a justification for the sampling strategy. The strategy included criteria for selecting potential interviewees and a rationale for the number of participants. The chapter contained procedures for identifying, notifying, and recruiting potential participants. The instrumentation included audiovisual materials, consent agreement documents, contact summary forms, field notes, interviews, and a self-reflective journal. The methodology contained recruitment, participation, data collection, and a data analysis plan. The study's credibility was central to collecting data

for content analysis. The use of triangulation reduced biases and misinformation about the data and findings. The chapter concluded with a summary of ethical considerations, agreements to gain access to participants, a discussion about IRB documents, human participants' treatment, and data treatment description. Chapter 4 consisted of a discussion about the pilot study, research setting, and demographics. The chapter included a detailed conversation about the data collection process, analysis, and trustworthiness. The section contained categories for themes, patterns, and to find discrepant evidence. The chapter concluded with information about the study results and ended with a summary.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the process of ADR and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The ADR process does not protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The findings indicated a perceived inequity between the protection of claimants and U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from false claims or retaliation. Title VII was enforced through the EEOC and employed the ADR process to protect claimants from retaliation, reprisal, or revenge from organizational leaders. The participants perceived that the ADR process did not protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders and employees from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. Qualitative data were collected using purposive sampling and semistructured, in-depth interviews to acquire knowledge of gaps in the law, gaps in EEOC policy, and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders. The semistructured nature of the 15 interview questions was based on the experiences of the participants and the perception of unfairness that triggered emotions and motivated claimants to respond to perceptions of inequity, deviant reciprocity, or the need to restore order and power against coworkers, supervisors, groups, or an organization. The research design required interviews with U.S. Federal government organizational leaders who were 18 years or older, worked full-time or part-time for at least 6 months, and had experienced or observed the use of Title VII, the EEOC, or ADR for retaliation. The RQ guided the semistructured in-depth interviews.

RQ: What protection does the process of ADR provide to U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation? The data collection included emails to send the invitations and consent forms to the participants, face-to-face and telephone interviews, and social media platforms, such as MS Teams, to assess the participant's thoughts and experiences to check for evidence that validated the participant's report (see Patton, 2002). I employed field notes for member checking to enhance the data and record the participants' nonverbal behavior. The application of field notes helped document the environment, interactions, and reflections; identify biases; facilitate preliminary coding; increase rigor and trustworthiness. I also used field notes to provide context to the data analysis (see Lauderdale & Phillippi, 2018). The field notes included a self-reflective journal to document the reactions and experiences of the researcher and the verbal and nonverbal cues during the interviews.

Chapter 4 consists of an explanation of the pilot study and its influence on the main research. The chapter includes a description of the research settings, participant demographics, data collection, and data analysis, including themes that emerged from the data. I discuss trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The section concludes with the study results, including the major and minor themes that emerged during the data analysis.

Pilot Study

The pilot study's purpose was to pretest the quality of interview protocol procedures to identify problems before the final research began, improve data collection

methods, highlight barriers that might affect the instruments and the time required for the interviews, and complete the study. I employed the pilot study to ensure that the interview questions made sense to the participants and were relevant to the main study. The participants received a copy of the agreement, were informed that personal information would be kept confidential, and given a pilot consent form to request and schedule an interview. The pilot study consisted of 36 open-ended questions, the interviews were semistructured, and I employed audio recordings. I explained the purpose and interview format to the participants. During the pilot study, I did not ask the participants four interview questions to save time, reduce redundancy, share their experience, and describe what, where, when, and how the event occurred to avoid follow-up questions. I interviewed five U.S. Federal government agency organizational leaders who worked in Washington, D.C., Maryland, or Virginia. I provided the participants an opportunity to clarify and develop their thoughts, which validated the relevance of the RQ for the main study. I gave pseudonyms to the participants and demographic descriptors to protect their identity. I reminded the participants about masking agencies and personnel to avoid identifying or disclosing information about coworkers, groups, or organizational leaders. I employed field notes to document the participants' reactions to help guide the flow of the interview sessions.

The participants answered the questions and made valuable comments about the flow, quality of interview protocol procedures, and the appropriateness and consistency of the RQ and methods. I considered the participants' comments and determined that the results from the pilot study did not require altering the interview protocol. After each

session, I transcribed the interviews and saved the audio recordings in a password-protected locked container. I sent the participants a letter of appreciation after the conclusion of the pilot study.

Research Setting

After receiving IRB approval, I sent invitations to reliable sources and used social media and snowball sampling to identify potential participants. I informed the participants before the interview that I would use an audio recorder to transcribe and analyze the interview. The participants received an overview of the study and agreed to the informed consent form. I reminded the participants that their personal information would be kept confidential before the interview. The interviews were semistructured and lasted 13 to 45 minutes for each participant, including a follow-up for a member check.

The research setting included four (27%) participants who used audiovisual platforms, such as MS Teams for the interview and five (33%) who used WhatsApp. Three (20%) participants agreed to participate face-to-face in an outdoor setting in a quiet park. Three (20%) participants used telephone interviews because two experienced technical difficulties using audiovisual platforms, and one participant was unfamiliar with using social media. The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) presented a challenge when scheduling interviews because multiple participants' schedules consisted of cohorts, had shared arrangements, or had alternate or flexible work schedules. I employed stringent protocol procedures to schedule a date and time for interviews and reminded the participants about debriefing upon completing the interview. The participants did not report unanticipated adverse events, such as an accident, attempted suicide, injury,

problem, hospitalization, or general problems that involved risks or influenced the interpretation of the study results. At the beginning of each interview, I reminded the participants that participation in the study was voluntary and about their right to refuse or withdraw consent to participate without reprisal. The participants described the interview experience as highly satisfactory, and most preferred alternative interviewing mediums such as audiovisual platforms or telephone interviews above face-to-face.

Demographics

The demographic questionnaire consisted of 10 prequalifying questions designed to identify factors such as age, employment status with the U.S. Federal government, and working at least 6 months as a full-time or part-time organizational leader. The questionnaire also included questions such as years of service and if they worked in Washington, D.C., Maryland, or Virginia. I asked the respondents if they spoke and read English; experienced or observed the use of Title VII, the EEOC, or ADR for unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation; and had access to social media platforms, such as MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, or Zoom. Fifteen or 100% of the participants answered 15 open-ended questions about experiencing or observing the use of Title VII, the EEOC, or ADR for retaliation.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the process of ADR and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The sampling required comparing the demographics of selected participants, such as work location and average job tenure, supervisory role compared to the

nonsupervisory role, males compared to females, age, ethnicity, and education level. The sampling did not require comparing promotions, demotions, terminations, rewards, or incentives between culture-sharing groups because the data were not necessary to answer the RQ. I reevaluated my data collection plan to address unanticipated COVID-19 constraints, hesitancy among potential volunteers to meet face-to-face, and technology barriers. I adapted my data collection plan to increase the employment of social media platforms to provide a comfortable environment for the participants to interact equitably and reduce pandemic restrictions. I considered the practicality and feasibility of using the telephone at the participant's convenience to avoid unnecessary burdens, reduce the risk of exposure, increase communication, and ensure adherence to meeting times for interviews and follow-ups to complete the study.

Twenty-one invitations were emailed or hand-delivered to potential participants, and 16 responded, which resulted in a 76% response rate. I interviewed 16 participants, and 15 met the inclusion criteria. The target number of participants was 20 or until data saturation. Four potential participants did not respond to the invitation, and one respondent did not meet the inclusion criteria. The participants worked at least 6 months full-time or part-time as organizational leaders among 14 agencies in Washington, D.C., Maryland, or Virginia. The participant's experience ranged from 13 years to 38 years, and the average job tenure was 27.4 years. Three (20%) participants worked in Washington, D.C., four (27%) worked in Maryland, and eight (53%) worked in Virginia. Six (40%) worked in a supervisory position, and nine (60%) held a nonsupervisory position. Eleven participants (73%) were male, and four (27%) were female. The

participant's ages ranged from 40 years to 60 years, and the average medium was 52.3 years. The average age for male participants was 52 years, and the average age for female participants was 51 years. Five participants (33%) were White, five (33%) were African American, two (13%) were Hispanic, one (7%) was Asian, and two (13%) reported their race as Other. The education level included nine (60%) of the participants with a master's degree, four (27%) with a bachelor's degree, and two (13%) with a high school diploma. The participants were represented by codes P1 to P15 using demographic descriptors and pseudonyms to protect their privacy. Tables 1 to 5 include a summary of the participant demographics. I developed patterns based on the participant's responses to the interview questions for each category. I employed descriptive statistics to summarize the categorical variable count (n) and percentage to compare the sample visually. Table 1 illustrates the demographic information of the participant's codes, pseudonyms, ethnicity, gender, age, years of experience, and occupation. Pseudonyms and demographic descriptors represent the participants to protect their identity, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1*Demographics of Research Participants*

Participant code	Pseudonym	Work demographic	Experience (years)	Supervisory or nonsupervisory	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Education level
P1	BJ03	Maryland	21	Nonsupervisory	Male	40	Black	HS diploma
P2	BM05	Virginia	19	Supervisory	Male	48	Other	Master's
P3	CB11	Maryland	35	Supervisory	Male	53	Hispanic	Bachelor's
P4	CvG13	Washington, D.C.	20	Supervisory	Male	54	Black	Master's
P5	DR25	Virginia	34	Nonsupervisory	Male	53	White	Master's
P6	JR14	Virginia	30	Supervisory	Male	60	White	Bachelor's
P7	JS09	Virginia	33	Supervisory	Male	51	White	Master's
P8	JS20	Washington, D.C.	34	Nonsupervisory	Male	55	Black	Master's
P9	KN21	Maryland	12	Supervisory	Female	52	White	Bachelor's
P10	LJ01	Maryland	13	Nonsupervisory	Female	40	Asian	Bachelor's
P11	RM02	Virginia	30	Nonsupervisory	Male	46	Black	Master's
P12	RT10	Washington, D.C.	28	Nonsupervisory	Male	56	White	Master's
P13	TD04	Virginia	31	Nonsupervisory	Male	59	Other	HS diploma
P14	TM07	Virginia	34	Nonsupervisory	Female	57	Hispanic	Master's
P15	TP08	Virginia	38	Nonsupervisory	Female	60	Black	Master's

Table 2 depicts the participants by age group and gender. Eleven participants (73%) were male, and four (27%) were female. The average age for male participants was 52 and 51 for females. The data were significant to the study to understand how the use of ADR for retaliation influenced the specific age range and gender of the participants in the research.

Table 2*Participant by Age and Gender*

Gender	40-49	Percentage	50-59	Percentage	60+	Percentage	N	Percentage
Male	4	26.7	7	46.7	0	0	11	73.3
Female	1	6.7	2	13.3	1	6.7	4	26.7
Total	5	33.3	9	60	1	6.7	15	100

Table 3 presents the breakdown of participants by ethnic group. The sample required comparing the age of males compared to females. Four participants were White males (26.7%), and one was a White female (6.7%), for a total of five (33.3%) participants who were White. Five participants in the study were Black males (26.7%), and one was a Black female (6.7%), for a total of five (33.3%) participants who were

Black. Two (13.3%) were Hispanic males, one (7%) was an Asian female, and two (13.3%) reported their race as other.

Table 3

Participants by Ethnic Group

	White	Percentage	Black	Percentage	Hispanic	Percentage	Asian	Percentage	Other	Percentage
Male	4	26.7	4	26.7	2	13.3	0	0	2	13.3
Female	1	6.7	1	6.7	0	0	1	6.7	0	0
Total	5	33.3	5	33.3	2	13.3	1	6.7	2	13.3

Table 4 shows the education of the participants. The sample required comparing the education of males compared to females. The results also reflect the education of the participants by ethnic group. The education level included nine (60%) of the participants with a master's degree, four (26.7%) with a bachelor's degree, and two (13.3%) with a high school diploma. Male participants (46.7%) earned a master's degree compared to females (13.3%). Black participants (26.7%) obtained a master's degree compared to white participants (20%).

Table 4

Participants by Education

	HS diploma	Percentage	AA degree	Percentage	Bachelor's	Percentage	Master's	Percentage
Male	2	13.3	0	0	2	13.3	7	46.7
Female	0	0	0	0	2	13.3	2	13.3
Total	2	13.3	0	0	4	26.7	9	60

	White	Percentage	Black	Percentage	Hispanic	Percentage	Asian	Percentage	Other	Percentage
Master's	3	20	4	26.7	1	7	0	0	1	7
Bachelor's	2	13.3	0	0	1	7	1	7	0	0
AA degree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HS diploma	0	0	1	7	0	0	0	0	1	7
Total	5	33.3	5	33.3	2	13.3	1	7	2	13.3

Data Collection

I received Walden University's IRB approval number 06-28-21-0496530 to conduct research effective on June 28, 2021. The data collection plan, participant selection logic, sample size, instrumentation, recruitment procedures, and pilot study remained consistent with no variations and strengthened the transferability of data in the study. I used reliable sources, word of mouth, and social media to recruit potential participants. I did not anticipate that the recruitment of potential participants might be low due to anxieties about COVID-19, pandemic restrictions, or the unavailability of potential volunteers. I also did not anticipate the participants experiencing technology barriers or adaptability challenges with social media. My recruitment plan included emailing, telephone, and face-to-face meetings and asking reliable sources to invite others to share my invitation with participants who might meet inclusion criteria. I asked my sources not to share the invitation with coworkers or provide nonpublic contact information because the invitation would require prior organizational approval. My sources expressed challenges due to pandemic restrictions and the potential unavailability of volunteers due to cohort schedules, shared work arrangements, or alternate or flexible work schedules. My plan included handing out flyers for 2 to 3 hours in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. Partner organizations were not involved in recruiting potential participants or the data collection process, and there were no variations in data collection from my plan.

The screening process consisted of a description of the study, the title, and the reason for the research. I prescreened potential participants to identify and remove high-

risk respondents from the study. I acknowledged that professional implications might influence employability should a breach of confidentiality include disclosing negligence in disputes, perceptions about conflict resolution strategies, or revealing negative experiences or poor perceptions of coworkers, supervisors, or an agency. I took measures to provide as much information as possible to minimize potential high-risk participants and acknowledged that it was unclear what made a participant high-risk. The demographic questionnaire consisted of 10 prequalifying questions that took 5 minutes to complete. I provided the respondents adequate time to review the study information and ask questions before giving consent. I informed the selected participants that the consent form included a preliminary overview of the study and instructions to respond via email with "I consent" to participate in the study. I asked the participants if the RQs were understandable and comfortable. I did not recruit or interview vulnerable participants. I instructed the participants to contact the researcher by email or phone if they had questions. Once the volunteers consented to participate in the study, I confirmed the participant's contact information and coordinated a date and time to conduct the interviews. I ensured that the participants were aware that participation was voluntary, about the scope of the study, and their right to withdraw consent or refuse to participate in the interview at any time without reprisal. Communication with the participants included email and telephone to ensure adherence to meeting times for interviews, follow-ups, and updates on the next steps to complete the study. The challenge was scheduling interviews during the pandemic because of lockdown restrictions and safety concerns for the participants and researcher.

The data collection instruments included emails to send the invitations and consent forms to the participants, social media platforms, face-to-face, and telephone to conduct the interviews. The interviews were semi-structured and the primary means to collect the data. I used face-to-face, MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, or Zoom to conduct the interviews and collect the data from the participants. I completed three interviews by telephone. One participant experienced technical difficulties using social media platforms, and two participants experienced scheduling conflicts. One participant expressed technology challenges, anxiety about COVID-19, and low confidence in using social media. I interviewed the participant by telephone at the convenience of the participant. I asked the participants to describe negative and potentially contentious workplace experiences. I informed the participants that recalling such events might be stressful, depending on the participant's role in the event. I employed audio recordings to capture the participant's experiences and identify themes and patterns to answer the questions during the interviews. I did not use video recordings to conduct interviews. I applied an inductive approach to probe the participants to clarify expressions or meanings while sharing their experiences. The participants spoke freely without any concerns or reservations about their understanding of using ADR for retaliation. The interview questions were open-ended, so the participants may feel uncomfortable and speak freely about their experiences. The interview process lasted 11 weeks. I prepared codes, demographic descriptors, passwords, and pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality and decrease privacy concerns. The participants were asked not to provide information that contained dates, times, places, or the names of witnesses to an incident.

The respondents described the experience as thought-provoking and highly satisfactory. After the interviews, I employed MS Office Dictate to transcribe the audio recordings. I replayed the interviews for analysis and member checking and transcribed every word that did not transfer from speech to text through the online application. I ensured that the participants' descriptions were not specific to avoid breaching the participants' identities, kept my firewall and security programs updated to protect against external threats, and used high-level passwords. After each interview and transcription, I stored written passwords in a secure safe inaccessible to others. The data collection steps and protocol procedures used in the study were consistent with the steps outlined by the Walden University IRB. The interview duration ranged from 13 minutes to 45 minutes to conduct the research and the average interview time was 29 minutes. Table 5 consists of a summary of the code relationships between the participants and the RQ. I segmented the descriptions into themes that aligned with the RQ. Codes P1 to P15 represented the participants to protect their identity.

Table 5

Code Relationships to RQ

Code	Description	RQ	Participant
01	Retaliation meaning	5	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15
03	Supervisor abuse	7	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15
04	Title VII thoughts	8	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13, P14, P15
05	ADR satisfaction	9	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P13, P14, P15
06	ADR mediation perception	10	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15
07	Experienced coworker retaliating	11	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15
08	Reciprocal behavior perception	14	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15
09	Experience unfair exchange	15	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15
10	Proving retaliation	16	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13, P14, P15
11	Coworker retaliation capability	18	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15
12	Targets retaliating	19	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15
13	Motivation for revenge	20	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15
14	Protection from claimants	22	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15

Data Analysis

The primary components of this study's data analysis plan were data organization, data categorization, themes and patterns, and identifying discrepancies. Data organization was critical to increasing the study's audibility, credibility, dependability, reliability, and trustworthiness. Categorizing data was essential when developing and analyzing data to identify differences, similarities, and relationships into broader themes. Themes and patterns helped researchers capture the central concept or idea from the data and align it to the RQ. The employment of discrepant findings can help the researcher identify potential flaws in instruments, establish an audit trail, and accurately reflect the participants' experiences. The culmination of the components increased the trustworthiness of the data and the study's findings.

Data organization enhanced the study's credibility, dependability, reliability, and trustworthiness. Before transcription, data analysis began with reading interview transcripts, field notes, and audio recordings from interview sessions. The data analysis involved interpreting themes and patterns from textual data to make sense of the participants' inner experiences as the data emerged (Bondas et al., 2013; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Moser & Williams, 2019). I applied Yin's (2017) five-step data analysis plan using an inductive approach to compile, disassemble, reassemble, interpret, and conclude data, and a deductive approach to sort and organize the data into categories to align with the RQ. The process included a back-and-forth analysis between databases and themes that resulted in open coding, the formulation of preliminary codes, coding the

data, revising codes, and developing categories and patterns (Cho & Lee, 2014). I used NVivo to create a matrix to combine and compare data to align the analysis with the RQ.

Data Organization

Data organization enhanced the study's credibility, dependability, reliability, and trustworthiness. Moser and Korstjens (2018) and Moser and Williams (2019) recommended using NVivo to import, categorize, pre-code, code, link, manage, organize, run queries, sort, store, and visualize data into themes, make sense of the participants' inner experience as the data emerged. I employed NVivo to organize data from the audio-recorded interviews and transcripts that captured the participants' responses into specific categories or themes. The application of NVivo saved time and identified consistencies and inconsistencies during the coding, analysis, and transcription phase of the study. The employment of NVivo helped capture relevant data, increased accuracy, credibility, and validity, decreased distorted data, and reduced redundant information.

Code is a short, descriptive word or phrase related to data and was used to prime the data set to identify statements, experiences, and reflections (Cho et al., 2020). Coding involved transferring the data into nodes, central to gathering and categorizing data by topic, themes, or cases. I developed a codebook to help create the coding frames to represent an organizational structure of themes that emerged while organizing the data. I also used a hierarchical coding frame to manage and move the data from codes to categories and from categories to themes to visualize relationships between the data. Thirteen codes emerged that aligned with the RQ, while one code produced non-confirming results. The codes represented the earliest stage in the analytic process. I

employed NVivo to import the interview transcripts, organize the data, and create codes to identify work location, years of experience, supervisory role compared to the nonsupervisory role, males compared to females, age, ethnicity, and education level. I sorted the transcripts into nodes, identified data, and focused on the RQ to facilitate the inductive process. I developed a list of pseudonyms to protect and maintain participant confidentiality and used a reference to code and analyze the data. The application of nodes created a structure to manage demographics, and the transcripts revealed themes, patterns, and discrepant cases based on the participant responses to the interview questions. I conducted a cross-case analysis by re-listening to audio recordings and repeatedly reading the transcripts to capture concepts, main ideas, and participant experiences and identify similarities and themes. The process included a back-and-forth analysis of the data that resulted in open coding, developing preliminary codes, coding the data, revising codes, and developing categories, themes, and patterns (Cho & Lee, 2014). Once the coding process was complete, I began categorizing the data to create common themes.

Categories

The categorizing process included developing and analyzing data to identify differences, similarities, and conceptual relationships into broader themes. I applied an inductive approach that included interpreting data, identifying themes and patterns, coding the text to create categories, and reducing overlap and redundancy. The inductive approach included identifying the most important categories, making sense of the data by discovering the relationships among the categories until saturation, and identifying

discrepant cases. In each category, I developed themes and patterns based on the participant responses to the interview questions until saturation or when no new themes or codes emerged from the analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Guest et al., 2012). The categories included equity, fairness, retaliation, and social exchange to reflect participants' experiences.

Themes and Patterns

Themes are phrases or sentences that encompass discernments organized to highlight a central concept or idea and identify data units and abstract constructs that link expressions in texts, images, sounds, and objects (Bernard & Ryan, 2003; Saldaña, 2009). I demonstrated an unstructured approach to exploring and probing the participants' experiences to identify themes and patterns. I employed NVivo to explore themes, patterns, meaningful categories, and new ideas to understand the data. NVivo captured relevant data and increased accuracy, credibility, and validity. I conducted 15 semi-structured interviews, transcribed 39,944 words, created theme nodes from the transcripts, and organized and managed the demographic data using case classifications to identify descriptive information about participants. I interpreted, compared, and categorized the data into categories to identify differences, similarities, and themes and sorted the data into 90 tentative subthemes. I combined and condensed the data, reduced redundant information during the data analysis process, and repeated the process until no new codes emerged. Data saturation reached a point when the data became redundant. Forty-one themes appeared that aligned with the interview questions. Seven major themes

emerged 50% of the time and were considered vital to the study. One code, Code 04, included two participants who produced non-confirming results.

The participants described their experiences and what retaliation meant to them, including emotions such as fear, feeling hurt, or wronged. Participants defined retaliation as a desire to get back, hold a grudge against an employer, or sabotage the workplace. The participants determined that retaliation meant punishment for an act or actions against an employee or someone under a supervisor or a superior position based on the perception that the event was real. Other participants defined retaliation as war, a grudge against an employer, the denial of opportunities such as promotion or training, or the use of adverse administrative actions to restore fairness, order, power, and strength. I segmented the themes according to the RQ and the participant's comments.

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant case analysis is a deliberate search for disconfirming evidence to establish an audit trail of discrepant evidence and confirm preliminary or emerging findings (Morrow, 2007). The employment of discrepant data provided rival explanations resulting from triangulation (Morrow, 2005; Yin, 2009). I analyzed, coded, and categorized data for themes, patterns, and relationships to find discrepant evidence to seek alternative explanations, understand the findings, and challenge preconceived notions and preliminary results (Inman & Yeh, 2007). The discrepant cases in this study were essential to avoid bias and the overly simplistic interpretation of data. I utilized NVivo to capture the frequency of discrepant cases to accurately reflect the participants'

experiences and used hand-coding to illuminate pertinent themes and patterns to answer the RQ.

Scholars and practitioners discovered comparing discrepant cases with confirming cases to determine which features of the disconfirming data were the same or different from the analysis and confirmed that cases might reveal flaws in the original assertion (Hess et al., 2005). Morrow (2005) explained that discrepant evidence or negative cases could help understand the complexity of the study and challenge preconceived notions or preliminary findings. Inman and Yeh (2007) discovered that cross-analysis and repeated comparisons might help identify discrepant or disconfirming evidence and revise categories that might evolve to reflect the participants' experience. After identifying discrepant cases, I factored the evidence into the analysis using Inman and Yeh's (2007) discover-oriented approach to refine and revise the categories, reflect the participants' experience, and identify themes for consistency, dependability, and applicability. Table 6 depicts the data's code, description, category, and theme. The codes from the interview transcripts and categories could help understand why individuals make interpersonal comparisons to determine whether outcomes are equitable or inequitable. The participant's thoughts about ADR satisfaction, perceptions about mediation, and experience with coworker retaliation are important because equity theory is related to fairness theory. The categories of social exchange and retaliation are interrelated and vital because adverse reciprocal behavior could result when individuals compare their outcomes with superior or inferior results. Categorizing the remaining codes was essential to understanding the interrelationships between the codes and the categories.

The themes and patterns helped capture the central concept aligned with the RQ and provided in-depth data supporting each category.

Table 6

Code, Description, Category, and Theme

Code	Description	Category	Themes
01	Retaliation meaning	Equity	Experienced a coworker or employee using ADR to retaliate against a supervisor
02	ADR understanding		
03	Supervisor abuse		
04	Title VII thoughts	Fairness	Reciprocal retaliatory behavior happens in the workplace
05	ADR satisfaction		
06	ADR mediation perception		
07	Experienced coworker retaliating	Social exchange	Proving a claim was retaliation was challenging and discourages employees from filing complaints
08	Reciprocal behavior perception		
09	Experience unfair exchange		
10	Proving retaliation	Retaliation	Coworkers were capable of retaliation
11	Coworker retaliation capability		
12	Targets retaliating		
13	Motivation for revenge		
14	Protection from claimants		Witnessed both sides using the ADR for revenge or determined that targets used the process for retaliation
			Protected from claimants using the ADR process for retaliation

Evidence of Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness encompasses confirmability, credibility, dependability, and the transferability of the findings (Graneheim et al., 2017).

Trustworthiness is used to appraise the findings' quality, rigor, and truthfulness and relates to the trust or confidence readers have in the study results (Cypress, 2017). The trustworthiness of a study increased when the reader was persuaded and allowed to judge and look for alternative interpretations of the results (Graneheim et al., 2017). Yin (2017) described trustworthiness as a criterion based on evidence and the quality of a research design. Seale (1999) concluded that reliability and validity determined the trustworthiness of a study.

Credibility

Qualitative content analysis involves analyzing and making sense of data by creating categories, concepts, or a conceptual map to find patterns that emerge in a text (Elo et al., 2014). Credibility is the confidence used in a study, including prolonged engagement with participants, peer-debriefing, member-checking, and reflective journaling (Polit & Beck, 2014). I validated the study's authenticity, believability, and reliability by encouraging the participants to provide examples to support their statements and follow-ups to the RQ (Durepos et al., 2010). I consistently read, reread, analyzed, and validated the data. I coded, recoded, and developed categories for broader interpretation (Cho et al., 2020). I created a node structure and studied the participant demographics and responses to identify emerging themes, differences, and similarities. During the in-depth interviews, I used triangulation to analyze and collect data to identify consistencies and inconsistencies to verify and counteract threats to the results (Fielding & Fielding, 1986). The triangulation of sources included collecting and comparing multiple data points to enhance validity and confirm the findings (Ayres et al., 1993). I conducted audio recordings and transcriptions to capture the participants' concepts, main ideas, and experiences. I used member checking to explore the credibility of results, ensure the findings were accurate and honest, and sampling strategies to increase data adequacy and credibility of the study (Hennink et al., 2019). Member checking involved providing the participants an interview transcript to confirm that their responses were accurate. The data saturation occurred within 15 interviews, and the validity of the sampling size and

strategy was optimal and sufficient for this study. I used reflexivity to reduce bias and increase the dependability and transparency of the study.

Transferability

Transferability means ensuring research findings that might have implications in other populations or settings are relevant (Baumgart et al., 2021). Transferability also means providing readers with evidence that the results applied to different contexts, situations, times, and populations (Elo et al., 2014). I provided descriptive data, such as sample size, sample strategy, demographics, interview protocols, and the research context. The process to ensure transferability included providing contextual information about the participants. I described the research setting, participant selection logic, and inclusion and exclusion criteria. I provided a detailed description of the data collection plan, instrumentation, recruitment process, pilot study, data analysis plan, and triangulation to ensure that data was transferable beyond the study (Elo et al., 2014). I made explicit connections between ADR and retaliation to enhance the findings' truthfulness, consistency, and transferability of the data. I employed internal consistency checking to ensure the descriptions were sufficient to advance the knowledge in organizational leadership management regarding retaliatory theory and the various forms of counterproductive workplace behavior. I used a systematic approach to ensure the details in this study were comparable to other studies to enable future researchers to make transferability judgments about whether the findings applied to their research.

Dependability

The application of dependability indicated the findings were consistent and replicable (Elo et al., 2014). Dependability also referred to data stability over time and included maintaining an audit trail process using logs and peer debriefings (Polit & Beck, 2014). I ensured the relationship between the methodology, methods, data, and findings were coherent and transparent. The main strategies to ensure dependability were the protocols during the interview process, data collection, analysis phase to prevent bias, data usage, and data access. I enhanced the transparency of the study by using audio recordings, transcribing the data, and using NVivo to organize the data and create auditable documentation of the research process to allow readers to audit, critique, and follow the research process (Sandelowski, 1986). I demonstrated the data's reflexivity, completeness, triangulation, hand-coding, and the ability to establish an audit trail strengthened the analysis outcome (Polit & Beck, 2006; Sandelowski, 1986). The application of dependability began and ended using a reflexive thought process throughout the study. I used audit trails to trace assertions and commentaries made by the participants. I established auditable processes after obtaining IRB approval to give the readers confidence about the research process. The strategy for dependability also included collecting interview and documentary data, member checking interview transcripts, and sharing a summary of key findings with research participants to validate the interpretation of the data.

Confirmability

Confirmability means assuring that predetermined assumptions did not influence the findings or the researcher's agenda (Baumgart et al., 2021). Confirmability reflects the respondents' opinions and experiences rather than the researchers' biases, motivations, or interests (Elo et al., 2014). I established an audit trail to ensure the confirmability of the study to allow other scholars to follow the process and logic, match the aim of the research, and link to the findings (Nguyen et al., 2021). The strategies used in this study included member-checking to ensure the results were accurate and comprehensively reflected the participants' perspectives to bolster the findings. I assured the transcriptions accurately depicted the participant's experiences or imposed researcher bias by providing the participants a transcript of the interview to confirm that their responses were accurate. The strategy also included an objective presentation and interpretation between multiple participants to enhance the data's accuracy, meaning, and relevance (Baumgart et al., 2021; Elo et al., 2014). The evidence was robust, and the tables supported the dependability and confirmability of the interpretations (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2021). I employed MS Office Dictate to transcribe the audio recordings, MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom, and field notes to document and transcribe the participants' verbal and nonverbal body language. I also used audio recordings to capture the respondents' exact words for self-reflection to ensure confirmability. I demonstrated an appreciation of the varied responses and the participant's values.

Study Results

Seven major themes emerged that aligned with the interview questions, and one code, Code 04, included two participants who produced non-confirming results. The themes that appeared 50% of the time or 50% of the 15 participants were considered significant to the study. The results indicated that coworkers were capable of retaliation and reciprocal retaliatory behavior happens in the workplace. The participants concluded they were protected from claimants using the ADR process for retaliation, reprisal, or revenge. The findings showed that the participants experienced a coworker or employee using ADR to retaliate against a supervisor, and proving that a claim was retaliation was challenging and discouraged employees from filing complaints. The evidence indicated that the participants witnessed both sides using the ADR for revenge and found that the intended targets of retaliation reciprocated retaliatory behavior. The experiences of the participants were captured verbatim and presented in this section.

The participants shared their thoughts and experiences about protection and the use of ADR for retaliation. Tables 6 to 12 included major themes that emerged from the data. The major themes were Theme 1: Witnessed coworker retaliating, Theme 2: Reciprocal behavior, Theme 3: Unfair exchange, Theme 4: Proving retaliation, Theme 5: Coworker retaliation, Theme 6: Targets retaliating, and Theme 7: Protection. As the data emerged, I based the themes and patterns on the participants' inner experiences. Tables 7 to 13 shows the results of the major emergent themes.

Table 7 illustrates the participant's experience with a coworker or employee using ADR protection to retaliate against a supervisor. The results showed the participants

(60%) experienced a coworker or employee using ADR to retaliate against a supervisor despite the EEOC's conclusion that Title VII and the Commission's policies and litigation program protects individuals who participate in opposition activity from retaliation. The data is essential because the EEOC and federal government agencies have dedicated resources to training, and retaliation is the leading reason for filing a claim. The fear of retaliation is why organizational leaders stay silent. The findings confirmed Veirs' (2017) conclusion that workplace retaliation is the most reported complaint to the EEOC. The study results validated Ambrose and Mitchell's findings that retaliation is an aggressive response and aggression provokes retaliation. The findings indicated the participants (27%) either did not experience or could not recount if they experienced retaliation against a supervisor. The study findings are significant because the targets of retaliation may not understand that retaliatory behavior could include adverse actions, such as advising potential employers not to hire the employee, isolating the employee, or spreading false rumors.

There was evidence that employees can reciprocate retaliatory behavior in the workplace (Aquino et al., 2013; Gouldner, 1960; Knutson, 2004). The data supported Nichols et al.'s (2014) conclusion that employees might retaliate against a perceived threat with the intent to inflict harm, discomfort, or punishment. The results aligned with Becton et al.'s (2017) assertion that employees used revenge tactics against individuals, supervisors, or organizations. The data was significant to the study because there was evidence that employees might use revenge tactics against individuals, supervisors, or organizations despite the notion that subordinates were not capable of retaliating.

Emergent Theme 1: Experienced Coworker or Employee Retaliating

Table 7

Interview Question 1 Data

Theme	Pattern	Frequency	Percentage
Coworker or employee used ADR to retaliate against supervisor	Experienced a coworker or employee retaliating	9	60
	Did not experience a coworker retaliating	4	27
	Not sure if they experienced a coworker retaliating	2	13

Table 8 shows the participants' responses to reciprocal retaliatory behavior in the workplace. The study results revealed that the participants (73%) found that reciprocal retaliatory behavior happens against coworkers and supervisors. Retaliation in the workplace is costly to organizations because it slows down efficiency and influences morale and the work environment. The findings are significant because retaliation involves at least two people. After passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, scholars and practitioners focused on supervisory power, supervisor-directed reprisals, and adverse outcomes, not using ADR to retaliate against a supervisor. The results are significant to management and organizational leadership because it is essential to understand why the targets of workplace behavior respond to a provocation. The study results substantiated Adams' (1963) conclusion that employees could perceive an exchange as inequitable (Adams, 1963).

The participants expressed concerns about subjectivity and fair, unfair, and retaliatory behavior. One participant justified the use of reciprocal retaliatory behavior as an appropriate repercussion for a supervisor's actions or inactions. The findings may have implications for management and organizational leadership because subjective

perceptions of positive and negative social exchanges influence trust cycles. The perception of an unfair interaction between individuals damaged trust and made it challenging to develop a positive social change experience. The participant's responses were consistent with Aquino et al.'s (2006) findings that offenses differed and motivated employees to justify reasons to retaliate based on personality differences, empathetic emotions, or subjective perceptions of fair or unfair behavior. There was evidence that an individual who experienced distrust might develop a perception of inequality, experience anger or resentment, and elicit the desire for revenge to punish those responsible for their grievance (Cameron & Webster, 2011; Folger & Skarlicki, 1997). The findings were significant to management and organizational leadership because the determinants of reciprocal retaliatory behavior could potentially influence interpersonal aggression in the workplace.

Emergent Theme 2: Reciprocal Behavior

Table 8

Interview Question 2 Data

Theme	Pattern	Frequency	Percentage
Reciprocal retaliatory behavior happens in the workplace	Reciprocal retaliatory behavior happens in the workplace	11	73
	Concerned about reciprocal retaliatory behavior or subjectivity	2	13
	No experience with reciprocal retaliatory behavior	1	7
	Reciprocal retaliatory behavior was justified against supervisors	1	7

Table 9 represents the participants' experience with an unfair exchange between coworkers and supervisors that resulted in retaliation. The participants (60%) experienced an unfair exchange in the workplace. The findings confirmed Aquino et al.'s (2006) conclusion that employees justify retaliating based on subjective perceptions of fair or

unfair behavior. The results substantiate Cameron and Webster's (2011) and Folger and Skarlicki's (1997) assessment that individuals who develop a perception of inequality or unfairness could elicit the desire for revenge to punish those responsible for their grievance. The perception of unfairness might reduce the performance of employees, damage trust, and influence the positive social change experience between individuals. The detrimental effects of retaliatory behavior may affect uncivil interactions, lead to negative consequences, weaken relationships, and increase social isolation (Carroll & Lauzier, 2014). The data was vital to understanding conflict management, conflict resolution, and organizational psychology because perceptions of unfair exchanges and responses to fairness and treatment differed and influenced reasons to retaliate. The results were significant for organizational leaders because individuals might use the outcome of a perceived unfair exchange to justify the need to restore order, fairness, and power against the provocateur.

Emergent Theme 3: Unfair Exchange

Table 9

Interview Question 3 Data

Theme	Pattern	Frequency	Percentage
Experienced an unfair exchange between a coworker and supervisor that led to retaliation	Experienced an unfair exchange	9	60
	Did not experience an unfair exchange	5	33
	Not sure if experienced an unfair exchange	1	7

Table 10 illustrates whether the ADR process made proving a false claim difficult and discouraged employees from filing complaints. The findings revealed the participants (53%) found that using ADR to prove a false claim was a challenge and discouraged employees from filing complaints. The results showed that the ADR process was easy for

claimants to file a claim against supervisors, but it was difficult for supervisors to counter false allegations. Title VII law and the EEOC policy enforcement guidance did not contain a false claim or malicious claim provision to protect organizational leaders from retaliation (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-e). The standard for proving a false retaliation claim requires proving that the action or act might deter a reasonable person from opposing or participating in protected activity or the complaint process. Individuals retaliate when they perceive that a perpetrator is behaving intentionally or maliciously. Employees could seek revenge against those responsible for their grievance or when they feel the workplace is unfair and cannot depend on formal channels for fair or just treatment. Individuals might feel compelled to use ADR for revenge when organizational systems designed to redress unfairness do not operate effectively. The data coincided with Becton et al.'s (2017) conclusion that policies should not contain a false claims provision because it was difficult to prove that claims were false and might discourage employees from filing complaints. The data was significant for organizational leaders because proving a false claim may be difficult and deter employees from filing complaints, making it difficult for supervisors to do their job after a false allegation. The study results are essential for organizational leaders to recognize and understand the potential for retaliation and the characteristics that might contribute to retaliation.

Emergent Theme 4: Proving Retaliation

Table 10

Interview Question 4 Data

Theme	Pattern	Frequency	Percentage
Proving a claim was retaliation was challenging and discourages employees from filing complaints	Difficult to prove false claims and discourage employees from filing complaints	8	53
	Not difficult to prove false claims and discourage employees from filing complaints	7	47

Table 11 depicts the participant's response to the capability of coworkers using ADR to retaliate against a supervisor. The participants (86%) concluded that coworkers were capable of retaliation. Although one participant stressed that the current process was a problem because individuals might use the ADR to plot and get back at a supervisor, the participants expressed confidence that the process would work. The results supported previous findings that coworkers retaliated and engaged in at least one aggressive behavior. Coworkers could use counterproductive behavior to retaliate against a supervisor, such as extreme criticism, undermining decisions or initiatives, or filing unsubstantiated or false claims. Employees might not include the supervisor in meetings, and avoid informing the supervisor of work-related decisions or other communications. Individuals could use ADR to retaliate based on fear, insecurity, an incident outside the workplace, personality disagreements, or personal reasons. The results substantiated Ballard and Eastal's (2018) conclusion that coworkers could use retaliatory behavior because of anger, anxiety, depression, despair, disbelief, or distrust. The evidence was consistent with Aquino et al. (2013), Gouldner (1960), and Knutson's (2004) findings that employees were capable of reciprocating retaliatory behavior to restore order. The results

did not support Chang et al.'s (2010) assessment that victims cannot retaliate to restore fairness. The findings were significant because although scholars and practitioners defended the notion that Title VII and the EEOC protect claimants from retaliation, there was evidence that claimants could use ADR for revenge and know how to use the process against supervisors. The results are essential for scholars and practitioners to learn and understand the best way to prevent employee retaliation is not to engage in counterproductive work behavior, incivility, revenge, or reciprocal behavior.

Emergent Theme 5: Coworker Retaliating

Table 11

Interview Question 5 Data

Theme	Pattern	Frequency	Percentage
	Capable of retaliation	12	86
Coworkers were capable of retaliation	Individuals could use ADR to retaliate but confident that the system worked	2	14
	Claimants could abuse the ADR process to retaliate against a supervisor	1	7

Table 12 illustrates the participants' perception of the targets of retaliation using the ADR process for revenge. The findings revealed that the participants witnessed both claimants and the targets of retaliation using ADR for revenge or perceived that they might use the process to retaliate. The participants (53%) witnessed claimants and the targets of retaliation using the ADR process for revenge. Although the participants were against targets using ADR for revenge and scholars and practitioners defended the notion that ADR mediation was enough, one participant supported targets using the ADR process for revenge against supervisors. The study results were similar to Ballard and Easteal's (2018) conclusion that abused coworkers retaliate against their supervisors and

Bies and Tripp's (1996) findings that employees used reciprocal retaliatory behavior for moral and personal reasons to get even. Also, some participants perceived that they might use the ADR process to retaliate against wrongdoers. The findings did not support Aquino et al.'s (2006) conclusion that the targets of revenge cannot retaliate. There was evidence that motivating factors contributed to revenge (Aquino et al., 2006; Black et al., 2018; Strelan et al., 2014). The findings of this study were essential for organizational leaders because specific individual characteristics triggered behavioral, cognitive, and emotional reactions and other forms of harmful workplace acts of aggression. Coworkers are crucial to creating a work environment free from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The evidence highlighted the importance of examining and comparing supervisor and employee abuse in the workplace and developing strategies to prevent retaliation and unjustified or unreasonable claims in the field of management and organizational leadership. The results are vital for organizational leaders to understand what motivates the targets of retaliation to use ADR for revenge and what to do to prevent and protect the targets of retaliation from using the ADR process for revenge. The study results could help scholars and practitioners learn and understand perceptions about the targets of retaliation using the ADR process for retaliation.

Emergent Theme 6: Targets Retaliating

Table 12

Interview Question 6 Data

Theme	Pattern	Frequency	Percentage
Witnessed both sides using the ADR for revenge or perceived individuals would try to use the process for revenge	Witnessed both sides or would try to use the process for revenge	8	53
	Against targets using ADR for revenge	4	27
	Did not witness targets using ADR for revenge and perceived using the process for retaliation was possible	2	13
	Support targets using ADR for revenge	1	7

Table 13 indicates the participants' perception of protection from claimants using the ADR process for retaliation, reprisal, or revenge. The data showed that 10 participants (67%) felt protected, one participant was unsure, and one participant stated that protection depended on the organization or leadership. The intent of Title VII law and the antiretaliation policies and litigation programs enacted by the EEOC leadership is to deter employers from punishing employees for exercising their rights and protect organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and the use of ADR for retaliation. Retaliation is the most common discrimination suit filed with the EEOC in the federal sector. Title VII law and the antiretaliation policies and litigation programs do not restore fairness or deter deviant behavior against coworkers or the organization. Title VII and antiretaliation policies and programs do not prevent future harm, inequity responses to the perception of unfairness, reciprocal acts of revenge, negative social exchange, the need to restore order, or individuals motivated to use the ADR process for retaliation. Although scholars and practitioners determined that Title VII and the EEOC served as an umbrella to protect claimants, there are conflicting perspectives on whether subordinates

will or will not retaliate against coworkers, supervisors, groups, or an organization. The participants expressed concerns about subjectivity and the difficulty of proving false claims. Participants (67%) felt protected, and the results were consistent with Eigen and Litwin's (2014) assessment that most employees were confident with protection. Although the Civil Rights Act did not provide literature about the use of ADR for revenge, the result of the study is vital to understanding why organizational leaders felt protected dispute conflicting perspectives about protection from claimants using the ADR process for retaliation.

Emergent Theme 7: Protection

Table 13

Interview Question 7 Data

Theme	Pattern	Frequency	Percentage
Protected from claimants using the ADR process for retaliation	Protected from claimants using the ADR process for retaliation, reprisal, or revenge	10	67
	Did not feel protected	3	20
	Unsure about protection from retaliation	1	7
	Depends on the command or leadership	1	7

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases include nonconforming data that did not align with the findings and strengthen the study's trustworthiness and validity. I asked the participants the same question about their understanding of using ADR for retaliation. The discrepant evidence was analyzed and compared against the RQ and participant responses. The participants shared their thoughts about protected rights under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII, EEOC, and ADR and retaliation. Thirteen participants (87%) provided data aligned with the RQ. The responses from two participants (13%) did not align with the findings of this

study. Participant P6 stressed the importance of civil rights and progress related to people of color in the United States and not getting a fair shake compared to most. Participant P12 emphasized the need for Title VII enforcement and expressed concerns about racism and a process to address discrimination in the workplace.

Summary

The participant defined retaliation as payback or to get back at a perceived transgressor. The data showed that they were satisfied with the ADR process. The study results were similar to Eigen and Litwin's (2014) and Government Publishing Office's (2014) assertion that employees were satisfied with EEOC and ADR. The participants (47%) determined that mediation was not enough. The data was contrary to the Government Publishing Office's (2014) interpretation that mediation was enough. The data indicated supervisors, employees, and the targets of retaliation could use ADR for revenge and disconfirmed Aquino et al. (2006) and Eigen and Litwin's assessment that subordinates were incapable of retaliating. Sixty percent of the participants experienced a coworker or employee using the ADR process to retaliate against a supervisor and perceived that reciprocal retaliatory behavior happens in the workplace.

The results indicated that 60% of the participants experienced an unfair exchange between coworkers and supervisors, which led to retaliation. The participants stated that the ADR process made proving false claims challenging and discouraged employees from filing complaints. The data confirmed that claimants retaliated because they perceived they were not getting what they deserved regarding promotions, bonuses, or step increases, which motivated individuals to use the ADR process to disrupt, degrade,

or harm others. Claimants retaliated because they felt hurt, wronged, wrongfully accused, or wanted to take the focus from their wrongdoing and portray themselves as the victim. The data confirmed that individuals were motivated to use ADR for retaliation because they did not like their supervisor and lashed out to cause hurt and inflict an equal amount of emotional pain on their targets. The results showed that individuals were motivated to use ADR for personal gain. Claimants also used ADR to cause stress and discomfort, deflect attention, disrupt the professional environment, or make minor infractions look like significant infractions. Sixty-seven percent of the participants determined that they were protected from claimants using the ADR process for retaliation, reprisal, or revenge.

I presented the study's results and described the pilot study, research setting, and demographics. I also provided a detailed conversation about the data collection process, analysis, and organization. I developed four categories for themes and patterns to find discrepant evidence. The chapter concludes with information about the study results and ends with a summary. Chapter 5 included a discussion and interpretation of the findings and limitations of the study. The section contained recommendations for further research and potential implications to influence positive social change. The chapter concluded with the study's significance and importance of practice, theory, and relevance to social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the process of ADR and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The qualitative research method provided various ways to explore the ADR process. The method was appropriate because it expanded into areas of human behavior that were important to organizational case studies. The methodology for this study aligned with the conceptual framework because the qualitative method produced a detailed description of the participants' personal experiences, feelings, and opinions and might assist in interpreting the meanings of their actions.

The findings indicated that overall organizational leaders were satisfied with the ADR and assessed that the process provided protection from retaliation, reprisal, or revenge, but mediation was not enough. Supervisors, employees, and the targets of retaliation used ADR to retaliate against claimants, and reciprocal retaliatory behavior did occur in the workplace. The ADR process made proving false claims challenging and discouraged employees from filing a complaint. Claimants retaliated because they perceived they were not getting what they deserved, which motivated individuals to use ADR to disrupt, degrade, or harm supervisors or coworkers. Employees retaliated because they felt hurt, wronged, wrongfully accused, or wanted to take the focus from their wrongdoing and portray themselves as the victim. Unfair exchanges between coworkers and supervisors did occur and led to retaliation. Individuals were motivated to use ADR to lash out to cause hurt and inflict what they perceived as an equal amount of

emotional pain on their targets. Individuals retaliated because they were unhappy with their organization and used ADR for personal gain. Claimants also used ADR to cause stress and discomfort, deflect attention, disrupt the professional environment, or make minor infractions look like significant infractions. Complainants should not use the ADR process for retaliation, and the ADR process did not protect organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation.

Interpretation of Findings

The results indicated that retaliation means accusing a perceived transgressor of wrongfully doing something. The findings paralleled Folger and Skarlicki's (2004) reference to retaliation as making wrongdoers or transgressors pay. The evidence confirmed Ambrose and Mitchell (2007), Folger and Skarlicki (2004), and Gouldner's (1960) assessment that retaliation allows victims to get back at transgressors or makes wrongdoers pay based on the principles of adverse reciprocity behavior of the social exchange theory. Scholars and practitioners should use the results of this study to extend knowledge in the field of management and organizational leadership about accountability, fairness, counterfactual thinking, and reciprocal behavior to get back at transgressors to pay for perceived wrongdoings.

Scholars and practitioners have discovered that abusive supervision is associated with subordinates' organizational deviance (Breux et al., 2009). The participants in my study disclosed that they witnessed or experienced supervisors and employees using abusive tactics in the workplace. The study results confirmed Ballard and Easteal's (2018) findings that abused workers were known to retaliate against their supervisors and Bies

and Tripp's (1996) conclusion that employees used retaliation for moral and personal reasons to get even. The evidence highlighted the importance of examining and comparing supervisor and employee abuse in the workplace and developing strategies to prevent retaliation and unjustified or unreasonable claims in the field of management and organizational leadership.

The participant's understanding about the use of ADR for retaliation aligned with the EEOC's definition and confirmed the purpose of ADR to assist organizational leaders in resolving work-related grievances and protecting complainants and witnesses aggressive behavior, abusive tactics, and the destructive nature of supervisor-directed retaliation. The study results confirmed that Title VII, EEOC, and ADR served as an umbrella to protect claimants. The findings also showed a perception that supervisors, individuals accused of a work-related grievance, or the targets of retaliation received less protection. The study results confirmed the EEOC's conclusion that Title VII and the EEOC prohibited retaliation against individuals who participated in protected activity.

The EEOC found that participants rated satisfaction with procedural elements of the mediation process higher regarding fairness than the program's distributive aspects. The study's outcome showed that the participants were satisfied with the ADR process, similar to the Government Publishing Office's (2014) assertion that most employees were confident with EEOC and ADR. The results indicated that participants were satisfied with the ADR process, and the results disconfirmed the Government Publishing Office's (2014) assertion that mediation was enough. There was no evidence that participants agreed with the outcomes.

The results confirmed Ambrose and Mitchell (2007), Gouldner (1960), and Molm et al.'s (1994) findings that individuals might attempt to resolve imbalances to retaliate with the intent to inflict harm against individuals, supervisors, or organizations. The findings aligned with Becton et al.'s (2017) discovery that employees used revenge tactics against individuals, supervisors, or organizations and Nichols et al.'s (2014) conclusion that employees might retaliate against perceived threats to inflict harm, discomfort, or punishment. The study's outcome confirmed that reciprocal retaliatory behavior did occur in the workplace. Although the participants expressed concerns about subjectivity, the findings were consistent with Aquino et al.'s (2006) assertion that offenses differed and motivated employees to justify reasons to retaliate based on subjective perceptions of fair or unfair behavior.

The data indicated that unfair exchanges between coworkers and supervisors led to retaliation. Cameron and Webster (2011) found that individuals who experienced an unfair exchange developed an interpersonal distrust that influenced the perception of inequality by unbalanced exchanges that damaged and destroyed trust. The study results indicated that the ADR process made a retaliation claim difficult for claimants to prove and discouraged employees from filing a complaint. Becton et al. (2017) and the Commission (U.S. EEOC, n.d.-a) defended the notion that proving a claim was false was challenging to prove, and the initiation and enforcement of a false claim provision might discourage employees from filing a complaint. There was a perception that the ADR process was easier for claimants to file a claim but difficult for supervisors after a false accusation and to do their job. The findings confirmed Nichols et al.'s (2014) conclusion

that since Title VII and the EEOC prohibited retaliation, reprisal, or revenge against individuals for participating in protected activity, perpetrators might use ADR for retaliation with the intent to inflict harm, discomfort, or punishment. The study's outcome also substantiated Ballard and Easteal's (2018) assessment that fear was the leading reason individuals stay silent instead of voicing their concerns, silencing targets, undermining attempts to resolve grievances, and concealing potential future or ongoing harm to the target.

The results were similar to Aquino et al. (2013), Gouldner (1960), and Knutson's (2004) findings that coworkers were capable of retaliation and disconfirmed Chang et al. (2010) conclusion that victims were not capable of retaliating to restore fairness. The study's outcome also confirmed Brown et al. (2014) and Gouldner's conclusion that employees engaged in at least one aggressive behavior and can reciprocate retaliatory behavior. The findings proved that victims of retaliation could demonstrate reciprocal behavior against perceived aggressors. The results substantiated McKenzie's (2015) assessment that the targets of retaliation might experience fear, which motivated them to use ADR for revenge. The study results also aligned with Ambrose and Mitchell's (2012), Bandura's (1973), and Dollard et al.'s (1939) findings that the fear of retaliation from a harm doer influenced the victims' reactions to perceived aggression. Based on the results, the study's outcome supported Brown et al.'s (2018) conclusion that perpetrators perceived retaliation as one way to alleviate unfair treatment to get even and restore justice. The study results also confirmed Brown et al.'s (2018) discovery that, although unfair treatment might thwart an individual's sense of justice, retaliating against a

perceived harm-doer restored the perpetrator's sense of justice and affirmed the perception that those that do wrong get what they deserved.

The study results disconfirmed Aquino et al.'s (2006) findings that the targets of revenge cannot retaliate. The results indicated that claimants were motivated to use ADR when they were in trouble, wanted to cause harm, wanted to hurt the organization, resisted change, or did not like outcomes. The findings substantiated Aquino et al., Black et al. (2018), and Strelan et al.'s (2014) discovery that motivating factors contributed to revenge and reasons to retaliate. The study's outcome also confirmed Adams' (1963) conclusion that the perception of an unequal balance motivated an individual's need to restore order based on the perception of inequity. The study's findings indicated that participants perceived they were protected from claimants using the ADR process for retaliation, reprisal, or revenge. The study results were similar to Eigen and Litwin's (2014) findings that most employees were satisfied with protection from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation, and mediation was effective. The study's outcome confirmed Ballard and Eastal (2018) and Breaux et al.'s (2009) conclusion that individuals who used retaliation perceived their actions as justifiable and justified revenge and utilized quid pro quo methods to inflict harm against individuals, supervisors, or the organization because they had nothing to lose. The study's findings confirmed Becton et al.'s (2017) conclusion that it was difficult to prove that claims were false or counter false accusations because such provisions discouraged employees from filing a complaint. The target could also experience insomnia, powerlessness, PTSD, sadness, shame, shock, and various cardiac and musculoskeletal problems. The results

substantiated Ballard and Easteal's findings that retaliatory behavior contributed to anger, apathy, anxiety, depression, despair, disbelief, distrust, fatigue, fear, or guilt. The study results also confirmed Ballard and Easteal's assessment that retaliatory behavior contributed to helplessness, insomnia, loss of self-esteem, phobias, powerlessness, and PTSD.

Limitations of the Study

The study's limitations included the inability to conduct face-to-face interviews in a natural setting due to COVID-19. Data collection using face-to-face interviews in a natural setting has the highest response rate and is considered the golden standard in qualitative research (El-Awaisi et al., 2020; Heerwegh & Loosveldt, 2008). COVID-19 presented a challenge when scheduling interviews because of pandemic restrictions, multiple participants working in cohorts, shared arrangements, and alternate or flexible work schedules. Potential volunteers were hesitant to meet face-to-face and expressed fear of exposure to others that were COVID-19 positive and did not show symptoms. I anticipated that the recruitment of potential participants might take time, even before the pandemic. Still, I did not anticipate challenges due to anxieties about COVID-19 and participants experiencing technology barriers or adaptability challenges with social media.

Chisnall et al. (2020) discovered that research in the context of a pandemic influences the credibility, delivery, and timeliness of findings because of social distancing protocols and the risk for infection. Despite these challenges, I reevaluated my data collection plan and reduced the challenge of scheduling interviews and safety

concerns for the participants and researcher. I considered the practicality and feasibility of using social media platforms, face-to-face, and telephone. I adhered to protocol procedures outlined by the IRB, sought alternative methods to collect the data, reduced anxiety and hesitancy to participate in the study, and built trust with the participants. I established rapport with the participants to increase the credibility and reliability of the data. I employed stringent protocol procedures and scheduled the interviews at the convenience of the participants. The interview process lasted 11 weeks. I conducted the interviews using face-to-face, MS Teams, and WhatsApp to collect the data from the participants. I employed audio recordings to quickly capture the participants' exact words for self-reflection and MS Office Dictate to transcribe the audio recordings, MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, and field notes. I interviewed three participants by telephone to avoid unnecessary burden on the participants and relieved the participants and researcher from the risk of exposure. I also used audio recordings to capture the respondents' experiences and ensure confirmability. Three participants agreed to participate face-to-face and adhere to social distancing protocols in an outdoor setting in a quiet park.

Recommendations

Retaliation is an aggressive act in response to a perceived threat (Cohen et al., 2015). The legacy of the Civil Rights Act shaped what is known today. The results revealed that organizational leaders perceived they were protected from employees using the ADR process for retaliation, reprisal, or revenge. The participants conveyed concerns about fair, unfair, or retaliatory behavior subjectivity. The findings indicated that individuals who experienced distrust might develop perceptions about inequality and

experience anger or resentment and the desire to seek revenge against those responsible for their grievance. The results were consistent with Aquino et al.'s (2006) findings that perceived that offenses motivated employees to justify reasons to retaliate based on subjective perceptions of what they perceived as fair or unfair behavior. The results showed that subjective perceptions influenced trust cycles and triggered unfairness, the need to restore order, and reciprocal behavior between the provocateur and the victim (see Chang et al., 2010).

Title VII prohibits retaliation against individuals who file complaints or participate in protected activity. However, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII law, and the EEOC policy enforcement guidance did not contain a false claim provision to protect organizational leaders from retaliation because a false claim is difficult to prove and discourages employees from filing a complaint (Becton et al., 2017). The findings showed that employees could reciprocate retaliatory acts and engage in at least one aggressive behavior against individuals, supervisors, or the organization to get even. The results revealed that the participants experienced a coworker or employee using ADR to retaliate against a supervisor despite the EEOC's conclusion that Title VII and EEOC policies protect employees from retaliation. One participant justified using reciprocal retaliatory behavior as an appropriate repercussion against supervisors for actions or inactions. The findings revealed that the participants expressed concerns about ADR. The study results showed a perception that supervisors, individuals accused of a work-related grievance, and the targets of retaliation received less protection than claimants or their accusers. The study results indicated that the fear of retaliation was the leading reason

why organizational leaders stayed silent instead of voicing their concerns about false claims and retaliation (see Ballard & Easteal, 2018). The study findings revealed that the participants felt confident and protected from retaliation. The participants acknowledged the need to increase protection for organizational leaders and agencies because perpetrators could retaliate against individuals they perceive as a threat with the intent to degrade, disrupt, inflict harm, discomfort, or punish their target. I recommend that practitioners use the results from this study to develop solutions to protect organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation and to maximize awareness and educate and train future leaders about protection from false allegations in the workplace. I also recommend that the EEOC use the findings from this study to review their current policy enforcement guidance, policy guidance, policy statements, and the purpose of ADR.

Studies have shown that individuals who found vengeance satisfying and enjoyable were capable of retaliation and referred to revenge as sweet (Aquino et al., 2002; Breaux et al., 2009). The findings of this study revealed that claimants were not being held accountable for false claims. The participants recommended punishment for individuals who initiate false claims and use ADR for retaliation. The participants also recommended that mediators focus on future behavior rather than past behavior and commented that there was no process or mechanism to address false claims or retribution. I recommend future research to develop ways to respond to aggression, integrate behavioral controls to hold individuals accountable for their actions and create solutions

to hold individuals accountable for false claims and practical solutions to address aggressive and deviant behavior in the workplace.

The EEOC designed ADR to assist disputants in building trust, resolving conflict, reducing costs, strengthening relationships, and saving time. The EEOC explained that Title VII and the Commission served as an umbrella protecting claimants who used ADR from retaliation. The findings showed that employees retaliated when organizational systems, such as ADR, did not operate effectively. The study results revealed that literature is needed to protect organizational leaders from retaliation. Although the EEOC provided enforcement guidance on revenge, and the findings indicated employees were satisfied with EEOC and ADR results, there was no literature about the use of ADR for retaliation. Because the EEOC used its website to provide enforcement guidance on statutes enforced by the Commission to communicate their position, I recommend that the EEOC update its website to fill inconsistencies in the law, their role, and interpretation of ADR when used for retaliation. I recommend that the EEOC's staff and other federal agencies update their policies and procedures, train leaders, and address gaps in Title VII law and the EEOC policy. I also recommend that scholars and practitioners use the results of this study as a reference for adjudications, investigations, and litigations on retaliation issues. The results of this study require additional research to understand the psychology of victimization, equity, and conditions that might lead to retaliation, such as disruptive behavior and the use of quid pro quo methods to inflict harm and restore order against perceived wrongdoers.

Scholars and practitioners could use this study for future research to advance management and organizational leadership knowledge, the influence of counterproductive workplace behavior, and nontraditional forms of bullying, such as retaliation and targeting employees, internal and external organizations. I recommend this study to enhance understanding of learning patterns, how individuals mimic interpersonal behaviors, reciprocate retaliatory behavior, and factors that trigger emotions such as anger, rage, and retaliation. I also recommend this study to lay the foundation for future research to understand how a post-conflict environment efficiently restores professional working relationships and protects U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation. The application of this study might help organizational leaders develop skills to respond effectively to problems early, reconsider how to respond to false allegations, restore the social norms, and promote positive social change.

Implications

Change is predictable, and conflict is inevitable. Implementing positive social change processes begins with organizational leaders who understand the purpose of ADR, how retaliation in the workplace manifests, how to prevent it, and to provide creative outlets for emotion that might be destructive and influence change efforts. Alternative dispute resolution offers a perspective for open communication and shared understandings when scholars and practitioners look below the surface and ask the right questions. The study of U.S. Federal government employees and the use of the ADR process for retaliation may have potential implications for scholars and practitioners to

understand and learn about the participants' experiences and extend their knowledge of conflict management, conflict resolution, and organizational psychology. The application and potential social implications for organizational leaders for using this study were understanding how deviant reciprocity behavior, social exchange, inequity responses to the perception of unfairness, and the need to restore order, fairness, and power. Strategies to promote positive social change might range from organization-coercion to a participative-cooperative approach with ADR processes somewhere in the middle. The implication for positive social change included understanding how deviant behavior, inequity, perceptions of unfairness, the need to restore order, and power influence negative reciprocity beliefs.

Organizational leaders and EEOC facilitators should use the results of this study to initiate, define, design, develop, and implement the best solutions, policies, and procedures to promote positive social change in their organization. Scholars and practitioners could use this study to influence positive social change by improving antiretaliation policies to reduce fear and increase trust in the ADR process. The results of this study were vital for positive social change because scholars and practitioners could use the findings to develop a proactive approach to fill the inconsistencies in the law and gaps in the literature. The potential contribution of this study may help organizational leaders better understand the ADR process, how retaliation in the workplace manifests, how to prevent unfair work practices, the purpose of ADR, and how to protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation.

The implications for positive social change require scholars and practitioners to develop a more profound and long-lasting solution to address claimants who choose to use ADR for revenge. Organizational leaders could use this study to reassess their approach to reassess if the ethical climate in their organization was adaptable, flexible, and practical to decrease deviant behavior and counter the use of ADR for retaliation in the workplace. The application of this study might help organizational leaders reconsider how to respond to false allegations and toward employees after they perceive that an allegation was false and retaliatory. The implications for positive social change may require organizational leaders to avoid discussing the allegation with other managers, subordinates, or the public and not isolate the employee. Organizational leaders could use the results of this study to influence positive social change by avoiding reactive behavior such as denying claimants benefits, opportunities, punishment, or adverse actions and not interfering with the ADR process. Practitioners could use this study to provide clear and accurate information to ADR mediators and not threaten employees, witnesses, or individuals for participating in protected activity.

The potential implication of this study was knowledge of the factors that motivated individuals to use ADR for retaliation. The fear, anxiety, and insecurity about revenge were the leading reasons why organizational leaders stayed silent instead of voicing their concerns about false claims and using ADR for retaliation. The employment of this study is essential to understanding conflict management, perceptions of unfair exchanges and responses to fairness, and why perceptions motivate employees to justify reasons to retaliate. Organizational leaders could use the findings to facilitate discussions

about perceptions that damaged trust and respect for issues that trigger emotions and motivated claimants to respond to perceptions of inequity, deviant reciprocity, or the need to restore order and power against coworkers, supervisors, groups, or an organization.

The potential influence of this study was the development of proactive steps to avoid actual or perceived retaliation. Scholars and practitioners could use the results of this study to develop clear guidance on how organizational leaders should interact with employees who have lodged allegations and a clear explanation of why the use of ADR processes for revenge might be subject to discipline, up to and including termination. Employees who trust their leadership and feel safe in their organizational environment may be less likely to retaliate. The application of this study was more than a quick fix that deals with symptoms. Scholars and practitioners could use the results as a foundation to help organizational leaders develop skills to respond effectively to problems early, restore the social norms and promote positive social change.

Revenge is an overt, personal act and a threat multiplier. When revenge involves emotions or pleasure in the suffering of others, ordinary employees might feel compelled to seek revenge or retaliate when organizational systems designed to redress unfairness do not operate effectively. Scholars and practitioners should use the results of this study to develop strategies to improve how they communicate and share guidance with stakeholders to influence positive social change. The application of this study was essential for managing conflicts and understanding why shifts in organizational priorities, expectations, and decisions influence the counterfactual thinking of individuals and frame perceptions that motivate employees to justify reasons to retaliate, such as blame,

unfairness, or moral reasons. Title VII law, the antiretaliation policies, programs enacted by the EEOC, the ADR process, and the results of this study were significant to management and organizational leadership because revenge was the most common suit filed with the EEOC in the federal sector. Ordinary employees might feel compelled to use ADR to seek revenge when organizational systems designed to redress unfairness do not operate effectively. The results of this study may help organizational leaders design strategies to meet the needs of parties and develop solutions and antiretaliation policies that influence positive social change.

Conclusions

The EEOC established ADR to protect U.S. Federal government organizational leaders from retaliation against the perceived transgressors. The findings showed that employees were satisfied with the EEOC and ADR process. Employees perceived that mediation was not enough, as opposed to the Government Publishing Office's (2014) interpretation that mediation was enough. Supervisors, employees, and the targets of retaliation can demonstrate reciprocal behavior and use the ADR process to disrupt, degrade, or harm others and portray themselves as victims. Proving false claims is challenging, and employees are discouraged from filing a complaint. Individuals were motivated to lash out to inflict what they perceived as an equal amount of emotional pain on their targets. The fear of retaliation is the leading reason why organizational leaders stay silent.

The results of this study are significant for organizational leaders, the field of management and organizational leadership, and future research on ADR use for

retaliation because employees engage in at least one aggressive behavior, and revenge is the most common discrimination suit filed with the EEOC. The application of this study can help scholars and practitioners fill inconsistencies in Title VII law and update antiretaliation policies and programs enacted by the EEOC and the ADR process.

Mediators could use this study to design strategies to reduce deviant behaviors, restore the social norms, and promote trust and a safe work environment to counter the use of ADR for retaliation. Scholars and practitioners could use this study to understand the perception of inequality, and conflict management, develop future organizational leaders on how to identify and respond effectively to perceptions that motivate employees to justify reasons to retaliate, restore the social norms and promote positive social change.

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Appendix A: Invitation

Exploring Leadership Strategies to Mitigate Alternative Dispute Resolution Grievances, Retaliation, and Revenge

I am recruiting participants for a research study about What protection does the process of Alternative Dispute Resolution provide to U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation? The findings of this study might help organizational leaders understand how retaliation in the workplace manifests, how to prevent it, and the purpose of Alternative Dispute Resolution.

You are eligible to participate if you worked at least 6 months as a full-time or part-time U.S. Federal government agency organizational leader and 18 years or older. You are also eligible to participate if you have experienced or observed the use of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Alternative Dispute Resolution for retaliation, and work in Washington, D.C., Maryland, or Virginia. Respondents who do not meet inclusion criteria will not qualify.

The study will take place online in a natural setting using MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, or Zoom. Participants will not receive compensation for transportation, hotel accommodations, parking, or other expenses. Your participation may take up to 1 hour or until the data becomes redundant and includes a follow-up for a member check and updates to complete the research. You will not receive payments for participating in the study.

As part of participating, you will receive reminders about masking agencies and personnel and avoid identifying or disclosing information about coworkers, groups, or organizational leaders. The accidental disclosure or identification of an individual will be replaced with pseudonyms, demographic descriptors, or omitted from the data. Up-to-date contact information is essential throughout the study. The plan is to contact participants by email, telephone, or other mediums to schedule meetings, follow up for a member check, and provide updates to complete the research. I will maintain strict confidentiality, storage, and data security of paper and electronic files at the end of each interview. If you wish to participate in this study, please respond by _____ and contact.

Appendix B: Research Criteria and Prequalifying Interview Questions

Date: _____

Place: MS Teams WhatsApp Zoom Phone Face to Face Interview

Interviewer:

Interviewee: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

Description of the Study: The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify and confirm participants' eligibility to participate in the study. Respondents who do not meet inclusion criteria will not qualify. Please answer the following questions to confirm eligibility. Thank you.

Prequalifying Questions:

1. What is your first initial and last name?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your current work schedule? Part-time or full time?
4. Do you work for the U.S. Federal government?
5. How long or how many years have you worked as an employee for the government?
6. Have you worked for at least 6 months as a full-time or part-time U.S. Federal government agency organizational leader?
7. Do you work in Washington, D.C., Maryland, or Virginia?
8. Do you speak and read English?
9. Have you have experienced or observed the use of Title VII, the EEOC, or ADR for unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation?
10. Do you have access to social media platforms, such as MS Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, or Zoom? If not, can you get access? If so, which method do you prefer for a research interview?

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Exploring Leadership Strategies to Mitigate Alternative Dispute Resolution Grievances, Retaliation, and Revenge

Date: _____

Place: MS Teams WhatsApp Zoom Phone Face to Face Interview

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

Participant Demographics:

Description of the Study: The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to explore the process of ADR and the protection of U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation.

RQ 1: What protection does the process of ADR provide to U.S. Federal government organizational leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia from unjustified or unreasonable claims and retaliation?

Study Definitions:

Alternative dispute resolution: Alternative dispute resolution, also called the appropriate dispute resolution, or ADR is an umbrella term for a variety of conflict management techniques and processes instead of the traditional judicial and administrative dispute resolution methods such as litigation and adjudication.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: A Federal agency called the EEOC that is responsible for EEO complaints filed in the Federal sector and issues policy and regulations on the discrimination complaint system, conduct hearings, analyze findings, and final decisions regarding complaints.

Incivility: Low-intensity deviant or antisocial behavior in the workplace with an ambiguous intent to harm a target.

Mediation: The consensual process of resolving a dispute using a third, neutral party whose value stems from enhancing communication and encouraging reflection to assist in reaching a mutually agreed resolution.

Organizational conflict: The characterization of a state of social discord by negativity such as frustration, anger, or anxiety and the perception of interpersonal dissonance.

Procedural justice: A process to determine the outcome distribution and reflects policies and practices, such as employee participation and bias in decision making under the overall organization's control.

Quid pro quo: When a supervisor, employee or coworker engages in uncivil activities that fall into harassment occurs when a supervisor engages in activities that fall into two categories of sexual harassment, quid pro quo, and hostile work environment.

Interview Questions:

1. What is your ethnicity?
2. What your gender, or with which gender do you identify?
3. What is your highest degree or level of education?
4. What is your current field of occupation?
5. What does retaliation in the workplace mean to you?
6. What is your understanding about the use of ADR for retaliation?
7. What is your experience with working for the federal agency or a supervisor who used abusive tactics to retaliate against a coworker or employee who used ADR to assert their rights?
8. What are your thoughts about protected rights under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII, EEOC, and ADR and retaliation?
9. Are you satisfied with the ADR process and protection from false claims or retaliation?
10. What is your perception about ADR and the mediation process?
 - a. Do you perceive that mediation is enough?
11. What is your experience with a coworker or employee using ADR protection to retaliate against a supervisor?

- a. What did each person do or how did they respond?
 - b. Did anyone witness the incident?
 - c. After the incident, what did you do?
 - d. Did you say anything to the individuals involved in the incident?
 - e. How did the individuals involved in the incident react to you?
 - f. Did you report the incident to management? If so, to whom? When?
 - g. Did management say or do anything about the event?
 - h. Did you tell anyone else about the incident besides management? If so, whom did you inform about the event?
 - i. Do you know what caused the incident or behavior to occur?
 - j. Do you know anyone else that has information on this incident?
 - k. Did the event affect you emotionally? If so, how?
12. What are your concerns, if any, about impartiality when using ADR?
 13. Do you have any apprehensions about insufficient opportunity to be heard when using ADR?
 14. What is your perception about the use of ADR and reciprocal retaliatory behavior to disrupt, degrade, or inflict harm on coworkers, supervisors, groups, organizations, or entities?
 15. What is your experience with an unfair exchange between a coworker and supervisor that led to retaliation?
 16. Does the ADR process make it difficult to prove that a claim is false and discourage employees from filing complaints? If so, how?
 17. What is your familiarity with supervisors, coworkers, or an employee using quid pro quo methods, such as ADR to resolve imbalances and retaliate, to inflict harm?
 18. Are coworkers capable of using ADR to retaliate against a supervisor?

19. What is your perception about the targets of retaliation using the ADR process for revenge?
20. What might motivate individuals to use the ADR process to disrupt, degrade, or inflict harm on coworkers, supervisors, groups, or an organization?
21. What is your perception of claimants using ADR to retaliate against others?
22. Do you feel protected against claimants using the ADR process for retaliation, reprisal, or revenge for participating in protected activity?
23. What are your thoughts about claimants using ADR processes to retaliate for moral and personal reasons, or to get even?
24. Are U.S. Federal government agencies protected from employees using ADR to get even?
25. Are organizational leaders protected from employees using ADR for revenge or to get even?
26. Does the current system protect coworkers from employees using ADR to get even?
27. Are there any barriers preventing you from filing a complaint regarding retaliation? If so, what are they?
28. What are your thoughts about workplace retaliation?
29. Are coworkers in your organization protected against retaliation?
30. Who must prove retaliation?
31. Are employees protected from the consequences of poor performance or misconduct if they file a retaliation claim with an enforcement agency?
32. What is your exposure or experience regarding retaliation?
33. Are there any changes in the ADR process or program that you would like to see done differently to protect others from retaliation?
34. Are supervisors protected against retaliation?
35. Are there practices that may reduce retaliation?

36. Do you have any additional information that you would like to share that I have not asked you?

