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Veteran Reintegration and Compliance Strategies Used by Financial Services Industry Hiring Managers

Adriann R. Wolfe
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Adriann R. Wolfe

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Veteran Reintegration and Compliance Strategies Used by Financial Services Industry

Hiring Managers

by

Adriann R. Wolfe

MEd, Northcentral University, 2011

MBA, University of Phoenix, 2003

BA, Michigan State University, 1990

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

July 2022

Abstract

Hiring managers in the private sector have limited experience applying veterans' preference policies in hiring decisions. Veterans and their advocates care about the ongoing challenges they face seeking employment because they desire to continue contributing to their local community and gain gainful employment while doing so. Grounded in the modified disability model, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies used by hiring managers at financial service organizations to apply veterans' preference policies in hiring decisions. The participants were five hiring managers in a southwest Texas financial services organization who successfully used veterans' preference policies in hiring decisions. Data were collected through semistructured interviews; organizational website content about veteran hiring programs, marketing, and public relations information about veteran hiring participants shared. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Three themes emerged: training and education for hiring managers; veteran job preparation; and diversity, equity, and inclusion. A key recommendation for hiring managers in the financial services industry is to educate hiring managers to understand military language and job descriptions. The implications for positive social change include the potential to assist veterans' transition into the civilian workplace, reduce veteran unemployment, decrease the veteran homeless population, and increase veterans' purchasing power that supports local communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this accomplishment to my family and friends. To my wife, Patricia Francois, thank you for your love and support throughout my doctoral journey, for holding me up and letting me stand. I could not have finished without you. Also, to my Pastors, Dr. Fredricc Gerard and Kan'Dace L. Brock, your prayers, encouragement, and unending love and support have truly motivated me. I am forever grateful to my deceased mother, Bertha M. Wolfe, who could not start this journey with me but watched over me as I traveled the doctoral road. To my deceased dad and brother, Ray M. Wolfe Sr, and Ray M. Wolfe Jr, who started the journey but could not see it to the end, it is finished. To my sister April Wolfe, I am glad you are here. This accomplishment belongs to all of us. Most importantly, to God, my Creator and Savior, His divine guidance throughout my doctoral journey helped me stay the course. I am my ancestors' wildest dreams.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Reducing or mitigating veteran unemployment is essential to the veteran community and bolsters organizational cohesiveness (Perkins et al., 2020). A review of veterans' hiring practices can influence an organization's growth and performance over an extended period (Minnis, 2017). The effectiveness of veterans in an organization is a critical factor that hiring managers can rely on to meet the company's goals and accomplish the organization's mission, vision, and values (Pollak et al., 2019). Hiring managers are responsible for selecting the most qualified personnel for the job. Veterans are frequently overlooked because of negative ideas regarding military and wartime experiences (Minnis, 2017). However, research shows veterans have many leadership skills, take initiative, have discipline, and are great mentors (Minnis, 2017). Exploring and analyzing strategies hiring managers use concerning veteran preference policies may lead to operational improvements, a positive impact on organizational climate, and a decrease in veteran unemployment.

Background of the Problem

While some hiring managers may recognize the value that military veterans contribute to an organization, many hiring managers may not know how to engage with qualified veterans (Pollak et al., 2019). Transitioning service members find obtaining employment the most significant challenge when entering or reentering the civilian environment (Roy et al., 2020). However, hiring managers who take advantage of veterans' skill sets have gained dedicated employees, experienced leaders, team builders, critical thinkers, and problem solvers (Minnis, 2017). Minnis (2017) continued that hiring

managers who are not acquainted with the military are unfamiliar with the skills, knowledge, and experience gained in the military environment. Additionally, Minnis asserted that this lack of familiarity could create a cultural obstacle that obscures the value of the comprehensive skills and experience employers can utilize by hiring veterans.

Gaining a keen understanding of veterans' comprehensive skills allows hiring managers to hire the most qualified individual and quality team members (Perkins et al., 2020). Perkins et al. (2020) contend that training hiring managers to recognize the skills of veterans enable them to hire individuals with characteristics that are vital to an organization's success, such as supervisory, management, team building, and problem solving. For the hiring manager, evaluating veterans' skills and knowledge provides insight into the quality of candidates found in the military veteran (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

Problem Statement

While public sector employers have traditionally given veterans preferential treatment in some employment decisions, more states are passing laws that embolden businesses to implement veterans' preference programs to increase the hiring of veterans (Hunter-Johnson et al., 2020). Veterans currently experience an unemployment rate of 3.8% (U.S Department of Labor [DoL], 2020), a percentage that over the last 2 decades has remained on average higher than the country's unemployment rate of 3.5%, which considering the veteran population stands at less than 7%, is quite significant (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2020a). The general business problem is that hiring managers in

the private sector have limited experience in applying veterans' preference policies (VPP) in hiring decisions. The specific business problem is that some hiring managers in financial service organizations lack strategies to apply veterans' preference policies in hiring decisions.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies used by hiring managers at financial services organizations to apply VPP in hiring decisions. The targeted population consisted of five hiring managers at financial services organizations in southwest Texas. The hiring managers interviewed had successfully applied VPP in hiring decisions. In 2015, Texas legislators passed a law that would benefit businesses implementing veterans' preference programs to increase veterans' hiring (Voluntary Veterans' Employment Preference for Private Employers, 2015). The implications for social change include reducing the veteran population's unemployment rate, making a difference in the veteran homeless population, and possibly increasing their purchasing power to support the local community.

Nature of the Study

I used the qualitative method for this study. The qualitative method is the systematic inquiry into a social phenomenon that enables researchers to concentrate on experiences and outcomes of those experiences from the perspective of those involved (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Stake (2010), the qualitative researcher utilizes the open-ended question to learn what is happening or has happened. The qualitative method is interpretative, meaning human affairs as seen from different views is

appropriate because I examined the phenomenon of the hiring managers as they applied VPP in hiring decisions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As a qualitative researcher, I developed multiple meanings. Therefore, using qualitative method was most appropriate for my study. To explore the lived experiences of hiring managers' strategies to apply veteran's preference policies in hiring, I did not test a hypothesis or consider variables. Therefore, I did not use a quantitative study. The mixed methods research incorporates qualitative and quantitative research components in the same study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Since I did not conduct a quantitative study, mixed methods research was also inappropriate for this study.

Researchers use the following designs in qualitative studies: phenomenology, ethnography, and case study. Stake's (2010) guidance for using the phenomenological design was described as the reality recognized through a sensory experience. I did not use this design as I did not use this information to help understand the experience of the strategies hiring managers use, which eliminated the use of this design for my research. Researchers use the ethnographic research design to collect and analyze data from a population immersed in their social systems and cultural setting (Stake, 2010). The design was not suitable for this research because I did not study culture or similar concerns. Researchers use case study design to understand a real-world case when the phenomenon and the context are not evident (Yin, 2018). I chose the multiple case study design to explore hiring managers' strategies to understand the case in depth. Yin's (2017) suggestion for multiple case study design is for researchers to explore the contemporary phenomenon in the real-life context of strategic practices. Yin (2018)

explains how multiple case study researchers discuss *how and why* they try to explain a present situation. Therefore, I chose a multiple case study design to explore how and why to explain the present situation, get an in depth understanding of the case, and explore the real-life context of lived experiences.

Research Question

What strategies do hiring managers in financial services organizations use to apply veterans' preference policies in hiring decisions?

Interview Questions

1. What are your organization's veterans' preference policies?
2. What strategies do you use to apply veterans' preference policies in your hiring decisions?
3. What is the basis for the strategies you use to apply veterans' preference policies in your hiring decisions?
4. What strategies do you find work best to apply veterans' preference policies in hiring decisions?
5. How does your organization assist hiring managers in applying veterans' preference policies in hiring decisions?
6. What assessment do you use to evaluate the organizational effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the applied veterans' preference policies in hiring decisions?
7. What additional information would you like to add about your veterans' preference policies in hiring decisions?

Conceptual Framework

In 2015, Stone and Stone (2015) created a framework to explain employers' hiring decisions about veterans by modifying Stone and Colella's (1996) model of factors affecting the treatment of persons with disabilities in organizations. Stone and Stone (2015) posited that veterans are stigmatized like people with disabilities in their newer framework. The authors found that hiring managers presented concerns that would likely affect hiring decisions due to their circumstances, facts, and beliefs including (a) concentration on stereotypes associated with individuals with disabilities that also apply to many veterans, (b) recognition of several vital factors that are likely to affect hiring choices, and (c) lack of strategies that can be used by hiring managers and veterans to address veterans' challenges in the hiring process. Furthermore, Stone and Stone added two factors to the previous model to provide in-depth descriptions regarding veterans: understanding the degree to which military skills transfer to civilian jobs and differentiation between military and civilian role requirements and organizational structure.

Through their framework, Stone and Stone (2015) provided a succinct description of issues that affect hiring decisions concerning veterans and strategies that organizations can use to overcome challenges in hiring veterans. Stone and Stone suggested that organizations and hiring managers use the following strategies to make hiring decisions regarding veterans. The suggested strategies are as follows: (a) modify beliefs about veterans; (b) hire and train decision makers; (c) increase knowledge of military job-related tasks and knowledge, skills, and abilities; and (d) socialize veterans in the role

requirements or norms in civilian organizations. Stone and Stone's framework enabled me to understand my study's findings on strategies that hiring managers in financial services organizations used to apply VPP in hiring decisions. Stone and Stone's framework aligned with the purpose of this study: to explore the strategies that hiring managers in financial services organizations use to apply VPP in hiring decisions.

Operational Definitions

Financial services industry: Organizations in retail banking, commercial lending, insurance (other than health), credit cards, mortgage banking, investment advisory, and asset management, e.g., mutual funds, hedge funds (Baker & Dellaert, 2017).

Military veteran: A military veteran is an individual who served in the armed forces, was possibly deployed to a war zone, was honorably discharged and is eligible for services from the Veterans Administration (Bledsoe, 2022).

Veterans' preference: Veteran's preference, conceived by the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944, is the legalized practice of hiring qualified veterans (Perkins et al., 2020).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions are fundamental to a study as they reveal hidden biases (Adeleke, 2020). Circumstances outside the control of the researcher are limitations (Adeleke, 2020). A researcher's effort to avoid limitation reinforce a study (Adeleke, 2020). Delimitations decrease the study's scope by establishing the boundaries or limits of the study (Adeleke, 2020). Below are the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations acknowledged for this study.

Assumptions

Assumptions are statements that researchers consider to be accurate, often only temporarily or for a specific purpose, such as building a conceptual framework (Heckert et al., 2020). The first assumption of this study was that participants would provide honest responses to my interview questions. I assumed that hiring managers knew how to apply VPP and that knowledge of these policies would increase the hiring of veterans. Another assumption I made was that hiring managers would report their strategies within the organization to increase the veteran population. I also assumed the number of hiring managers meeting the research criteria would be willing to participate in the study.

Limitations

Limitations are inherent weaknesses that can affect research outcomes (Heckert et al., 2020). Limitations can be explained as potential weaknesses or deficits in studies that are out of the researchers' control. Studies are susceptible to limitations because of constraints such as bias toward a research design or a method that affects the conclusions of the study (Louick & Scanlon, 2019).

The first limitation of this study was the uncertainty of obtaining truthful and accurate interview answers from the participants. The volunteer participants might provide biased viewpoints more accurately than facts concerning the hiring processes used in their organizations to employ veterans. To address this limitation, I advised the participants of the study's objective and purpose and assured them that there were no right or wrong answers to the interview questions.

Second, as a Navy Veteran myself, I could have introduced my personal experience and bias pertaining to employment challenges faced by veterans. My partiality and bias could have jeopardized the validity of the study. To eliminate any bias that may have affected the findings, after collecting and transcribing the interview responses, I sent the participants a copy of their respective interview transcriptions for review to ensure that their responses were transcribed accurately and not altered.

Delimitations

Heckert et al. (2020) discuss how delimitations help researchers define the boundaries of their studies and limit the scope. The study's first delimitation was that only those with 5 years of experience who had hired veterans were eligible to participate in the study as hiring managers. Veterans employed by the selected organization were also eligible to participate. Hiring managers were necessary to provide awareness of the effectiveness of the hiring practices of their organization involving the employment of veterans. Employees hired as military veterans of the selected organization provided insight into their experience with the hiring processes.

Significance of the Study

In this qualitative multiple case study, I focused on exploring strategies that hiring managers use to engage VPP in hiring decisions. The results of this study could help hiring managers better understand and utilize veterans with a skill set that increases organizational productivity and climate and provide gainful sustainable employment for veterans.

Contribution to Business Practice

Several states have laws supporting businesses to implement veterans' preference programs for hiring (Perkins et al., 2020; Sutton, 2014). Hiring managers in financial services organizations have limited experience applying VPP in hiring decisions could expose their companies to legal liability and economic loss (Hicks et al., 2016). In this study, I expected to identify strategies that can enable hiring managers in financial services organizations to implement VPP in their hiring decisions. The results of this study may help hiring managers avoid mistakes that would be costly to their organizations.

Implications for Social Change

A qualitative multiple case study exploring the strategies and techniques used by hiring managers, and understanding how those strategies affect military veterans' hiring decisions, allows for decreasing disparities in hiring practices. The unemployment rate negatively impacts all aspects of the military veteran population, mentally, emotionally, and financially, including their families. As hiring managers learn the valuable attributes of military veterans and the positive benefits of having veterans as team members, many social changes begin to occur. As hiring managers employ military veterans, there is potential to reduce military veteran unemployment while increasing economic stability in the local community. Employed military veterans increase spending, thereby adding revenue to the community. Both the military veteran and the local community benefit from reduced veteran unemployment, reduced veteran homelessness, and possibly reduced veteran suicide, therefore encouraging positive social change.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that hiring managers in financial services organizations use to apply VPP in hiring decisions. The substance of the literature contained how other scholars have explored various veteran reintegration processes and provided ideas for potential research directives. First in this section, I summarize the scholarly literature related to hiring managers' practices and their understanding of the valuable skill sets brought to the organization. Specifically, in presenting the literature review, I aimed to provide an overview of all the background research related to this specific concept of compliance strategies for hiring veterans adhered to by hiring managers. An analysis of the information conveyed by the various researchers and authors made it easy for me to adopt a suitable approach to the different elements concerning the study's conceptual framework. Second, in this literature review, I present the restructuring of Stone and Colella's (1996) framework of factors influencing the treatment of persons with disabilities in organizations, which is applied here to veteran hiring practices as presented by Stone and Stone (2015). As such, I explore Stone and Stone's framework affecting veterans' treatment of employment candidates as people with disabilities in organizations. I show how I applied Stone and Stone's framework as the lens for examining the research question and identify areas of conflicting ideas within the framework. Third, I consider the literature on veterans existing treatment as candidates for employment as people with disabilities in organizations strategies as applied to similar studies. Fourth, I review various conceptual frameworks utilized in studying

hiring managers' strategies for hiring veterans as employees, considering practical compliance strategies.

Different research databases were used to retrieve information regarding the required literature review for this study. The aim was to explore the prior research on specific compliance strategies related to hiring managers employing veterans. Walden library's databases, including Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, and SAGE Premier, were used to retrieve the necessary information on the various concepts associated with this study. I also reviewed human resource journals, military and veteran journals, and books related to veteran hiring practices and veteran integration into the civilian workforce. I used keywords to obtain the required data: *Military Veteran*, *veteran hiring*, *veteran integration*, *veteran's preference*, *veterans' skill*, and *veteran transition*. The literature review had 79 sources, which included 86% (67) peer-reviewed articles. The total of my sources represented 85% of articles between the years 2018 and 2021. Table 1 shows the reference type explored in the literature review with a date range of 1978 through 2021; 52 peer-reviewed articles supported the literature review and had a publication date within 5 years of my anticipated completion date and CAO approval of 2022.

Table 1*Sources in Review of Academic Literature*

Reference Type	Percentage	Total
Peer-reviewed Journals	85%	61
Non-peer-reviewed Journals	15%	9
Less than 5 years (2017-2021)	86%	67
More than 5 years (<2017)	14%	12

Application to the Applied Business Problem

Notable initiatives are designed to facilitate veteran employment outside of government. Many programs designed to ease the transition from military to civilian life focus on specific occupation areas where veteran skills overlap with civilian requirements (Schulker, 2017). Harrell and Berglass (2012) conducted a qualitative study in 2012 in which 69 companies with 87 participants consisting of human resource officers and chief executive officers were interviewed. Harrell and Berglass focused on the relationship developed between chambers of commerce and thousands of businesses across the country to facilitate veteran hiring. The authors further noted collaboration efforts within the private industry to focus on veteran employment. Parker (2012) contended that Veterans on Wall Street (VOWS) is one such collaboration. Parker discussed the case of VOWS, financial industry organizations offering mentorship, education opportunities, and other career assistance programs to veterans in the financial sector. Hiring veterans is good business because of leadership and teamwork skills, character, and discipline (Harrell & Berglass, 2012).

Occupations and industries in which veterans tend to seek civilian careers often align closely where specific military experiences may apply, and become areas of veteran

overrepresentation, like echo technical military functions (Schulker, 2017). Programs designed to assist transitioning military members in securing a civilian occupation similar to their military experience might better assist those in military professions with precise civilian applications (Schulker, 2017). Schulker (2017) conducted a quantitative study in 2017 in which the occupations and industries that veterans tend to work in were analyzed. Schulker noted that veterans did not trend toward the financial sector; additionally, veterans in fields with limited or no clear military forerunning skills, such as sales occupations and retail, wholesale trade, and finance/insurance industries, verified this thought. The finance industry had the least amount of veteran representation, as identified in Schulker's study. One of the most substantial challenges for employers was that veterans did not always identify themselves as veterans, which prevented any research results from being accurate without this voluntary information (Harrell & Berglass, 2012). Some military skill sets may translate well to private sector employment in certain areas, but further research is required to address veteran employment in conjunction with occupations and industries (Schulker, 2017).

Employment levels for rural veterans were higher in industries like manufacturing, transportation and utilities, professional and business services (including information and financial sectors), and public administration; education and skill levels required for jobs in these industries were higher than skilled labor positions (Farrigan & Cromartie, 2013). Schulker (2017) contended that veterans' trends toward the manufacturing, information technology, transportation and logistics, health care, and emergency medical services industries, where veterans' skills were more aligned with

civilian services and should apply to a civilian employer. The number of veterans working in the financial sector was included with information and financial services (Farrigan & Cromartie, 2013).

While there may appear to be a great deal of research information on veterans, significant areas still require attention. After much research, I noted that information on veterans and the financial industry is sparse. There was little information on this narrowed field. For this reason, additional research on this topic is necessary.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Stone and Stone's (2015) altered framework to explain employers' hiring decisions concerning veterans. Stone and Stone (2015) restructured Stone and Colella's (1996) framework of factors affecting the treatment of persons with disabilities in organizations into a conceptual framework to explain employers' hiring decisions about veterans. Stone and Stone did not provide a name for their framework. However, the name of Stone and Colella's framework is the disability model. In their newer framework, Stone and Stone posited that veterans have difficulty finding employment because veterans are a stigmatized group like people with disabilities.

Through their framework, Stone and Stone (2015) provided a succinct description of issues that affect hiring decisions concerning veterans and strategies that organizations can use to overcome challenges in hiring veterans. Stone and Stone suggested that organizations and hiring managers use the following strategies to make hiring decisions regarding veterans: (a) modify beliefs about veterans, (b) hire and train decision-makers,

(c) increase knowledge of military job-related tasks and knowledge, skills, and abilities, (d) socialize veterans, (e) understand the degree to which military skills transfer to civilian jobs, and (f) differentiate between military and civilian role requirements and organizational structure in the role requirements or norms in the financial services organizations. Stone and Stone's framework aligned with this study's purpose: to explore the strategies hiring managers in financial services organizations use to apply VPP in hiring decisions. For my research, I used Stone and Stone's framework to explore the strategies hiring managers at financial services organizations use to apply VPP in hiring decisions.

Gonzalez and Simpson (2021) utilized Stone and Stone's (2015) framework to discuss organizations' reluctance to hire veterans. Gonzalez and Simpson further discussed organizational decisions to hire veterans, perceptions about veterans and stereotypes surrounding veterans as applied by Stone and Stone. Veterans facing similar employment barriers and struggles as disabled persons, and applying the framework, formed and informed how organizations think about veterans in the workplace (Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021). Their comparison of veterans and disabled persons followed that of Stone and Stone in that factors that affect human resource decisions related to hiring veterans include stigma, veteran attributes, fit, and perceived level of their skill transferability (Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021).

Lampka and Kowalewski (2017) used Stone and Stone's (2015) framework to address the challenge that military veterans encounter to gain meaningful employment in the civilian workforce. The authors posited that the challenge is connected to various

factors, including the stereotypes that hiring managers possess, the lack of understanding among professionals about recruiting and hiring veterans, and the vagueness of job duties in the military to the civilian work atmosphere. Lampka and Kowalewski, like Stone and Stone, employed Stone and Colella's (1996) framework and utilized the framework to explain why veterans were being hired into the workforce at a lower rate than their civilian counterparts; the reasoning was found in the damaging stereotypes associated with veterans. Lampka and Kowalewski discussed how this framework (a) emphasized the stereotypes that persons with disabilities have, (b) categorized critical attributes that are likely to influence hiring practices among professionals in employment settings, and (c) provided strategies that both veterans and organizations should utilize to ensure that the hiring process of veterans brings fewer challenges to hiring managers.

Critical Analysis of Stone and Stone's Framework

Stone and Colella (1996) provided seminal work that recognized various considerations that influence an individual with a disability's ability to secure gainful employment. Stone and Stone (2015) noticeably diverged from previous work on how others treat individuals with disabilities and indicated that the hiring manager's perspective on a disability is critical to understanding why veterans face employment challenges. Stone and Stone (2015) asserted that military veterans had held some of the most elite, challenging, and life-threatening occupations in the United States. However, nearly 70% of veterans stated that transitioning to a job within the civilian workforce is among their most significant challenges upon separating from the service. Stone and Stone (2015) contended that within the confines of their altered disability model

framework, despite the proficiencies veterans had to offer and the countless advantages associated with prior military service, these persons with combat experience often had higher unemployment rates than the civilian population. Dexter (2020) argued that this is due to an array of circumstances, including the perceived stereotypes connected to veterans (i.e., mental illness, addictions, post-traumatic stress syndrome), interpretation and translation of military duties from the military to the civilian workforce, and the role and limited knowledge that human resource professionals (HRP) had in recruiting, hiring, and retaining military veterans. According to Stone et al. (2017), HRPs had little experience or awareness of military veterans' skills from their military service and failed to acknowledge that veterans were a valuable resource for organizations. Stone and Stone (2015) argued that these misinterpretations have contributed to HRP not executing effective hiring strategies to bring more veterans into the civilian workforce, thus impacting veterans' inability to discover and secure employment after transitioning from the military. Stone and Stone's conceptual framework was effective because perceived stereotypes associated with veterans (i.e., mental illness, addictions, post-traumatic stress syndrome) were identified and acknowledged by HRP (Dexter, 2020).

HRPs in some organizations tended to perceive veterans as incompatible and unqualified to fill vacant positions because of unfamiliarity with military service and culture (Stone & Stone, 2015). Civilians lacked the general information regarding the military, and the skill sets acquired by veterans; some HRPs were unable to successfully assess, translate, and integrate veterans' skills into financial services organizations (Dexter, 2020). There has been limited research on employment and hiring processes

affecting veterans (Stone & Stone, 2015). The ongoing social issue such as veteran unemployment and homelessness necessitates productive recommendations to produce natural, sustainable solutions (Stone & Stone, 2015). Additional research is essential to evaluate veterans already in the workplace; these veterans are a significant information resource because they can speak about hiring processes from personal experience (Stone & Stone, 2015). Stone and Stone (2015) noted that although most military positions have equivalent positions in the civilian workforce, some HRPs fail to bridge and translate military skills to civilian settings because they lack knowledge of the military, culture, and occupations. Per Stone and Stone (2015), the inability of some HRPs to fully grasp veterans' skills and experience contributed significantly to veterans being viewed as unfit to fill vacant positions. To assist with reducing veterans' unemployment, HR hiring managers needed to understand better the military and the skills possessed by veterans (Dexter, 2020). Hiring managers needed to establish programs to facilitate better the hiring of veterans, such as establishing coaching programs to help HRP interpret veterans' skills (Davis & Minnis, 2017; Stone & Stone, 2015). The shortcomings of Stone and Stones' conceptual framework were that stereotypes are ambiguous and frequently false, preventing veterans from finding employment. For instance, some stereotypes were that veterans have PTSS, other mental illnesses, and stringent work ethics.

The original framework that Stone and Stone (2015) analyzed and modified was a framework application initially applied to disabled persons. The modification was applied to veterans and hiring within the civilian workforce, and interviewers would assign the

applicant into a category, such as Gulf War or post- 911 (Stone & Stone, 2015). The interviewer then categorized the candidate into stereotypes (e.g., veterans are mentally or physically disabled) based on the candidate. The interviewer then applied the stereotypes to expected job related performances (e.g., the veteran is mentally disabled and therefore unable to perform the jobs satisfactorily). If there were any adverse expectations regarding the job performance of the veteran, the interviewer would most likely not select the veteran as an employee since they were thought to be less suitable for the job (Stone & Stone, 2015). It should be observed that most stereotypes about veterans have proven to be ambiguous and contradictory (Stone et al., 2018). With a vast continuum categorization of veteran stereotypes and the scarce research available on these stereotypes and the work setting, additional research is needed to address employer-veteran relations that may influence hiring decisions (Stone & Stone, 2015). Also addressed were stereotypes and biases within this framework, including the notion that veterans would be strict and disciplined in their ways, difficult to work with, have lower or no education, and be older (Stone & Stone, 2015). According to Stone and Stone, although veterans may seem incensed or tense, they were also viewed as focused and had excellent leadership skills. The value of Stone and Stone's conceptual framework was that HRP provided an opportunity to see that perceived stereotypes are often false and contradictory and that veterans may be more than suitable to fill a position.

Contrasting Framework: Veteran Identity Theory

Cleary and Wozniak (2013) defined veteran identity as a veterans' self-concept derived from their military experience within a sociohistorical context. The authors

contended that veteran identity might vary by race and ethnicity because the military experience's sociohistorical context varies by race. This experience was analyzed and understood primarily through injury frameworks and a deficit approach instead of discovering the veterans' needs (Cleary & Wozniak, 2013).

Stone et al. (2018) drew attention to the possibility of misinterpretation of the veteran experience's social interpretation in one practical examination: not all veterans are veterans of combat. However, with an increased number of combat veterans returning to civilian life, particular focus, and concern for combat-related injuries such as post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) often encompassed the community as a whole, grouping all veterans into the injury based category. Maintaining the dialogue between care providers and a new generation of veteran patients is crucial to understanding and providing adequate treatment for these injuries; perceptions and treatment of non-injured veterans tend to occur from an injury-based approach (Stone & Colella, 1996).

The reintegration procedure for all veterans mirrors the perceived deficiencies of combat veterans in the veteran community; there are many reasons why disclosure of a veterans' experience is omitted from the social dialogue (Cleary & Wozniak, 2013). Stone and Stone (1996) modified the disability model framework to explain employers' hiring decisions concerning veterans and focus on veterans as a person, without disabilities, in organizations that apply veteran hiring practices. Frankfurt et al. (2019) debated that veteran are currently treated for PTSS, TBI, shame, and concern about the

adverse impact on hiring veterans. Repercussions prevented disclosure and formulated a compelling case for the lack of treatment of the moral injury.

The in-service literacy of the veteran experience was one of the most significant distinctions among veteran taxonomies and also was in the gap between combat veterans, those deployed overseas or served in a defined combat zone; non-combat veterans identified as those who served stateside/overseas but not in a designated combat zone (Ackerman et al., 2020). While combat experience did not override rank and job-related specialty, the experience provided an essential filter within the military ranks and changed veterans' sense of their military experience and post-military outcomes (Ackerman et al., 2020). Upon separation, disclosure of the veteran served capacity was similarly withheld due to the veterans' opinion of themselves as non-combat veterans, reflecting similar feelings of shame and concern experienced by a combat veteran (Ludewig, 2020).

Contrasting Framework: The Veteran Identity at War

Departing the military and entering the civilian workforce presented a series of challenges for the veteran. Cleary and Wozniak (2013) argued that as far as a warfighting agency, the *veteran identity at war* framework paradoxically symbolized the beginning of the separation the recruit would experience after induction, throughout active service, a departure from active service, and entrance into the veteran culture from the society not directly engaged in warfighting. Interaction with wartime rhetoric was experienced via various media, societal discourse, interaction with veterans, and prevalent cultural sentiment for the civilian (Cleary & Wozniak, 2013). The veteran identity at war

framework contrasted with Stone and Stone's (2015) framework. Younde (2020) explained that veterans learned to tailor their knowledge and write effectively to their audience and rhetorical contexts. If indirectly engaged with warfighting rhetoric and lacking intimate awareness of military culture, the civilian could not relate significantly other than direct experience and service within the armed forces. Stone and Stone focused their framework on hiring managers' interactions hiring veterans in the workplace, while Cleary and Wozniak (2013) focused on public interactions with veterans through media, social media, and societal discourse.

Veteran Identity in Institutions

In support of Stone and Stone's (2015) framework, Cleary and Wozniak (2013) examined how institutional violence inherent in a social body was classified as violent means by which social bodies either implied or carried out the use of force to secure particular interest, known as the veteran identity in institutions (VII). Social collectives in combat relied entirely upon modes of violence to protect, exert, or maintain themselves. One of the pivotal arguments for veteran identity in literature and composition (offered college courses) was the disconnection between the civilian and veteran experience and interpreting the inherent institutional violence differently (Frankfurt et al., 2019). However, VII did not necessarily mean direct engagement with violent acts themselves but rather the mode of accomplishing a mission. The inherent violence was the instrument by which a task was carried out and achieved or not (Frankfurt et al., 2019). Through their experience in the military, the veteran served in an institution dedicated to execution, while the civilian, it can be argued, remained compliant to the inherent

violence (Stanley & Larsen, 2019). Individual and collective calls for non-violence or dissention of the institution, by comparison, remained largely unpracticed when considering the breadth and scope of military engagement worldwide. The belief in and practice of non-violence might have been a more ethical methodology for matters of conflict dispute when considering humanity, yet, historically, massive executions of violence continued to occur on all levels (Ali et al., 2019). At the same time, in service to the institution, the veteran gained a basic understanding of how they served in the military in its totality than their civilian counterpart when engaged in various similar activities that did not involve violence specifically (Ali et al., 2019). Ali et al. 2019 further discussed that after leaving the military organization, the veteran had to reenter a society lacking a collective "mission" concept and began questioning the legitimacy of expertise gained through service (Ali et al., 2019).

Veterans' military effect on socioeconomic outcomes has varied across time and placed the need for continued research on this topic, as the choice spent in service to protect one's country resulted in a visible gap in their civilian life (Egdell et al., 2020). While these frameworks were pertinent to veterans with the challenges mentioned above, veterans seeking gainful employment without these challenges faced stigma from hiring managers (Stone & Stone, 2015). A similarity between Cleary and Wozniak (2013) and Stone and Stone fell within the institutions, be it an educational or business, how veterans were viewed indicated a need for understanding veterans. Younde (2020) considered understanding the disruption—and in addressing an adequate strategy for the assimilation of veterans into the academic discourse or the civilian workforce; it became evident that

today's veterans had the knowledge to share, such as real world experiences, facing challenges and team building, but were hindered by an academic setting in which the experiences were deemed inappropriate. The transition from military to civilian life was exceptionally arduous for the veteran, independent of combat exposure or lack thereof (Younde, 2020). Stanley and Larsen (2019) claimed that many of the literacies earned in service were often untranslatable to a civilian environment. However, veterans felt they had the knowledge to distribute; the veteran then began to triage, such as addressing least urgent to most urgent knowledge of expertise that would serve them in their transition (Stanley & Larsen, 2019). Stanley and Larsen indicated that in this case, a significant literacy gained through in-service training and experience was reinterpreted to identify an essential personal aspect of the individual reintegration process. Veterans gained many skills that undeniably transferred into the civilian workforce, and the primary challenge was translating those skills into terms for hiring managers to comprehend (Stone & Stone, 2015). Departing the military did not mean that the military person must wipe clean their identity, but rather that military experience and its attendant literacies were recognized as valuable influences on how the veteran thought and acted in new contexts (Cleary & Wozniak, 2013). Stone and Stone (2015) contended that veterans had learned sets of assessed skills embedded in action and responsibility practices.

A veteran's skillset is a situational adaptive quality (Egdell et al., 2020). The proficiency in the military literacies of action and responsibility that prepared veterans for any scenario seldom exhibited the perfect form for training that may have readied the service member for transition into the workplace. In combat situations, a person needed

to adapt or perish (Egdell et al., 2020). Veterans were often met with resistance in the professional and academic institutions finding it challenging to assimilate their literacy into a society ill-equipped to understand their experience, but that was not always the case (Stone & Stone, 2015). Many veterans seamlessly assimilated or transitioned into the civilian workforce when provided the opportunity (Stone & Stone, 2015). Stanley and Larsen (2019) posited that the veteran learned that their connection to the inherent violence was not a valuable asset and was forced the veteran to keep matters of this nature to themselves. Outlets to share a once collective experience became limited, and the veteran was left to cope based on previously established hierarchies that may have become convoluted through the transition process (Stanley & Larsen, 2019).

Veterans learned to negotiate multiple expectations when translating their service knowledge to the academic institution; this negotiation was frequently lost in translation when conveyed in resumes (Stone & Stone, 2015). Jenner (2017) documented that understandability was an important feature that crosses academic and military discourse communities. Jenner also explored how educational institutions adapted to the needs of the incoming veteran population. Stone and Stone (2015) asserted that the time had come for a lens by which veterans could use their experiences within the military institution and begin to interpret and create meaning in the arts and humanities within the civilian culture to broaden the understanding of civilian social regard. The possibility of a universal goal within institutions to shift from deficit-based approaches toward the veteran community and focus on how veterans can contribute to a positive perception of veterans (Stone & Stone, 2015).

Experiences and attitudes developed while in service were exclusive to the veteran community, yet an engaged civilian society often lacked in sharing these experiences (Stone & Stone, 2015). Beyond the veteran community, articulating learning strategies to the civilian became problematic for the veteran, often resulting in silence when called upon to publicly defend skills, literacies, or any other asset gained through service (Stone & Stone, 2015). Egdell et al. (2020) posited that the veteran was often left out by appropriately articulating skills; the enhancement of military literacy involved lifelong learning. For instance, learning to act and taking responsibility for what happened was an ongoing lesson rather than bounded approaches contained strictly within the induction phase or the residence time container known as basic training (Egdell et al., 2020). Stone and Stone argued that veterans trained for clarity throughout their time in service, so transparency was often expected from the civilian world. Specified expectations for the writing that faculty expected students to generate were symbiotic to the student veterans' positive perceptions of composition faculty (Younde, 2020). In contrast, ambiguity or subjectivity was often associated with negative perceptions (Younde, 2020).

Additionally, Younde (2020) claimed that the feedback most generally favored by the veteran participants was provided by the instructor rather than other students. Veterans who could identify and then translate previous learning and rhetorical experiences from the military into academic writing contexts reported positive perceptions about that writing (Younde, 2020). Stone and Stone (2015) agreed, claiming likewise in the civilian workforce. Conversely, Cleary and Wozniak (2013) and Younde

argued that by disregarding what veterans have learned in the military, our society effectively threw away the time and money invested into military training and experience to the civilian world.

Veterans have become proficient in specific discourse communities, which is essential for the civilian instructor and the hiring manager (Cleary & Wozniak, 2013). Given the veteran's proficiency through service, instructors can use veterans' collaborative tendency to sustain veterans in their courses and value veterans by letting them lead teamwork in the classroom (Ludewig, 2020). Utilizing established modes of veteran literacy and recognizing their unique identity, veterans became valued contributors in higher education institutions and civilian workplaces (Ludewig, 2020).

Cleary and Wozniak's (2013) veteran identity theory was a way to communicate their experience to a social body trying to understand them and was undoubtedly worthy of further discussion. While identifying assets that veterans bring to the table and appreciating aspects of how veterans become distanced from the social collective, writing about them was imperative (Cleary & Wozniak, 2013). As mentioned throughout, further study is needed to open the discourse about the validity and usefulness of veteran identity in literature. However, submitted that transferable skills allow veterans to work and exercise their capabilities, whether those capabilities work within our understanding of academics has yet to be seen (Stone & Stone, 2015).

Many outlets that address veterans' issues upon transition from military to civilian life without engaging the veteran community's voice miss the target (Stone & Stone, 2015). After military service, education within the higher learning institution has become

a central place for veteran's transition. Veterans bring a great deal of knowledge to all areas and are left with few outlets to share, translate, or otherwise be understood by the civilian social body that wishes to interact with their experience in a meaningful way (Stone & Stone, 2015). Thus, it is time for the civilian social body to reevaluate how they operate or remain complicit in the violence inherent in social bodies and ask what assets and experiences veterans bring to the table (Stone & Stone, 2015). The more significant idea is that the conversation can begin and continue starting with the veteran identity theory in academic institutions and continuing to the civilian workplace (Cleary & Wozniak, 2013).

Military Transition Theory

A theory that built upon Stone and Stone's (2015) framework was the military transition theory. Kintzle and Castro (2018) supported Stone and Stone (2015) by proposing that military transition theory (MTT) was the evolution through which a service member transitioned out of the military and rationalized how certain elements created vulnerability to negative transition results. In 2018 the authors posited that MTT consisted of three overlapping phases: a veteran's approach to the military transition, managing the transition, and an indication phase in which the veteran assessed the transition, all of which were delivered in Stone and Stone's framework focusing on how the veteran and the hiring managers interacted during possible hiring encounters. During the managing the transition phase of the theory, in which the veteran was attempting to manage the transition into the civilian sector, several factors were suggested to influence the transition, namely, individual adjustment factors and the strength of the individual's

functional, social, and community support systems as recommended by Stone and Stone. In the assessment of the transition phase, how well the veteran acclimated to their new environment was assessed against several variables such as the attainment of work, adjustment to the family unit, assessment of individual health factors including the use of drugs or alcohol, general well-being, and the level of the veteran's integration into the community. While Stone and Stone (2015) presented a framework that hiring managers used to view veterans, MTT placed some of the onus on veterans. The connection of the thoughts created a teamwork effect that enabled hiring managers and veterans to work together to create employment possibilities.

A review of the literature revealed several transitional challenges faced by newly separated veterans. Challenges included minimal transitional training opportunities, employer discrimination because of social stigmas, issues with workplace integration resulting from a mismatch or misconception about a veteran's skill set, and a general clash that significantly influenced a veteran's ability to obtain and retain employment (Stone & Stone, 2015). Kintzle and Castro (2018) provided a foundation for understanding those elements related to a significant transition to the civilian workplace after a military career. Transitional challenges specific to veterans' obstacles to employment and successful integration into the civilian sector were arduous journeys. I selected Stone and Stone's (2015) conceptual framework to address the hiring managers' perspective on selecting veterans for employment. Cleary and Wozniak (2013) discussed veteran literacy in terms of literacy and composition; interpretation of veteran identity occurs in various ways. Kintzle and Castro (2018) captured significant challenges for

veterans to attain and maintain employment. The authors discussed veteran experiences of the 21st century globally; they studied and interpreted experiences primarily through injury frameworks and deficit approaches. Stone and Stone (2015) assessed that *the ask* constituted what a veteran was missing and what they needed when the question should be what the hiring manager was missing and what they needed.

Veterans in the Workforce

Thousands of military persons leave the military with skills and counseling that equip them to transition smoothly into civilian jobs; however, both resources and barriers can affect their actual transition and employment in the civilian workforce (Goulart, 2021). Some veterans strived to transition into civilian careers after a successful post serving their country; still, statistics have shown that not all got the job they desired in the current economic environment (Goulart, 2021). Specifically, in 2019, recorded numbers revealed that 581,000 military veterans were not getting the job they wanted (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2020b).

There are persistent misconceptions held by hiring managers about what military veterans can and cannot do or contribute to a civilian workplace or organization (Adeleke, 2020; Delbourg-Delphis, 2014; Gonzalez and Simpson, 2021). Through their research, Gonzalez and Simpson (2021) found that being part of the military served as a training ground for effectiveness in a civilian workplace, especially in terms of leadership. In reviewing the U.S. military practices, Gonzalez and Simpson claimed that the military acted as a prominent force in the nation's workforce development. The world's largest employer, the Department of Defense, provided its employees with

extensive training and was considered a unique employer because it anticipated and trained its employees for future employment when veterans eventually left the military (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014). As such, Gonzalez and Simpson asserted that military veterans had undergone adequate training programs designed for them to close educational and work experience gaps.

Elements of ineffectiveness that closely link to the hiring of veterans in financial services organizations in a study of the relational approach to recruiting veterans three years after policymakers signed the Veterans Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act into law in November 2011 (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014). Delbourg-Delphis (2014) provided a systematic review of completed studies on how effective employee-veterans were in the workplace because of their leadership skills, learn-and-grow ethos, and teamwork competencies. Most companies were not aware of what it took to get familiar with the accustomed world of veterans and what methods could optimize their efforts (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014). Delbourg-Delphis opined that most human resource administrators had questions regarding ways to reach out to veterans, connect with them, and make sure veterans could apply their military experiences to their civilian positions. Hiring managers usually believed that veterans' military talents contrasted with the organizational needs and requirements for specific job positions (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014).

Information regarding the veterans' skills and abilities was crucial to identifying and comprehending effective hiring decisions (Yanchus et al., 2018). Without a clear understanding of the veterans' core skills, it became impossible for organizations to

connect the veterans' services to the organizational needs and standards (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Goulart (2021) claimed that military veterans had valuable skills from which civilian workplaces could significantly benefit. The problem was that not all hiring managers had the tools and education to comprehend or appreciate the value offered by military veterans in the workforce (Morris, 2019). For example, in the research study by Morris (2019), one of the significant tools consisted of holistic and broader success metrics. More comprehensive success metrics could benefit the organization and veteran employees (Morris, 2019). However, Goulart reported that most companies had not dedicated as many resources to gather, monitor veteran employee performance, and progress evidence. Thus, companies needed to focus not only on identifying, attracting, and hiring veterans but also on providing the tools necessary to understand and appreciate the value offered by military veterans in the workforce. Further, most hiring managers in financial services organizations needed to know ways to support, develop, and foster veteran employees within the organization (Ward, 2020).

Business owners were often unaware of the skills and training of military veterans. Several authors delved into this topic, noting that business owners often believed that military veterans had capacities unrelated to the jobs they were applying for or knowledge too technical to be implemented in the financial services organization (Stone et al., 2018; Ward, 2020). Ward (2020) aimed to explore this further and identify strategies to recruit and hire military veterans. The author conducted a qualitative multiple case study with the lens of human capital theory and recruitment theory (Ward, 2020). After interviewing six small business owners, the study's findings showed that

information barriers concerning hiring procedures prevented effective communication between small business owners and military veterans (Ward, 2020).

Business owners were often unaware of how military veterans' skills could be relevant to their businesses (Ward, 2020). This understanding was in line with that of Delbourg-Delphis (2014), wherein the author added that most hiring managers did not know of hiring processes for veterans. In Delbourg-Delphis's study, hiring manager participants were often unaware that recruiting veterans within 6 months of military separation could lead to \$5,600 in incentives to the organization. This hiring process for veterans was applicable for each hired veteran and could go as high as \$9,600 for each veteran with disabilities (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014). As a result of the lack of knowledge on hiring veterans' benefits, business owners looking for qualified candidates to fill jobs did not consider military veterans readily available with their skills and expertise (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014; Ward, 2020; Yanchus et al., 2018).

Business owners did not know strategies to hire military veterans to provide the organizations with the qualifications sought (Ward, 2020). Thus, Ward's findings provided empirical knowledge regarding the lack of knowledge about processes and strategies to hire military veterans (Ward, 2020). Providing sufficient and necessary knowledge to small business owners regarding the hiring of military veterans enhanced employment outcomes for this population group, as business owners achieved targeted profitability through increased understanding of the value of military veterans, as well as cultivating strategies for the hiring and recruitment process (Ward, 2020).

Despite their skills and capacities, there was insufficient recruitment of military veterans in organizational settings (Greer, 2017; Ward, 2020). Small business employers hired around half of the military veterans, making up 19 million of the American population in 2020 (Ward, 2020). The unemployment rate for this population was consistently higher compared to the civilian workforce. Veterans presently encounter an unemployment rate of 3.8% (US Department of Labor, 2020), a percentage that, over the last decade, has lingered on average higher than the country's unemployment rate of 3.5% (BLS, 2020a). Approximately 581,000 military veterans remained unemployed that year, despite the findings that military veterans could be significant assets to business organizations, mainly due to their level of discipline and focus as learned during their military service (BLS, 2020b).

The Value of Hiring Veterans

The hiring of employees is one of the crucial facets of the leaders of organizations. Human resource management practices, including hiring and recruitment, have been increasingly linked to profitability (Brewster, 2017; Ford, 2017). These decisions in hiring practices tie to gaining the optimum level of profitability (Ford, 2017), more so in financial services organizations (Cummings et al., 2020; Koch, 2017). As such, human resource managers strive to employ only those deemed suitable for the organization's goals, directions, and values (Ford, 2017; Jenner, 2017). The objective is to align the proficiencies of the workers with the organizational objectives and goals. As a result, the human resource managers engage in different recruiting initiatives such as

RecruitMilitary, Hire a Veteran, and Hiring Heroes to gain maximum benefits from hiring the workers (Ford, 2017; Jenner, 2017).

Recruiting initiatives are critical to providing employment opportunities to veterans. Recruiting initiatives include job fairs, recommendations from other veterans, and various online resources (Ford, 2017). Other initiatives include programs aiming to debunk stereotypes and personally meet with veterans (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014). These recruiting initiatives enable hiring managers to understand the transitioning military veterans first-hand and more effectively than traditional interviewing processes (Jenner, 2017).

Distinctive Capabilities and Skills of Veterans

Hiring managers are challenged with understanding and translating skill sets and competencies. In their study of human resource department practitioners' dilemmas in hiring military veterans, Davis and Minnis (2017) highlighted several skills and competencies of a veteran that human resources usually overlook or misunderstand. These skills included leadership competencies, strong work ethics, discipline, and strong communication skills (Davis & Minnis, 2017). The researchers stated that military veterans often face several employment challenges as they transition into civilian employment because they cannot articulate these skills so that human resources in the financial services industry would understand them easily; as a result, these skills are often not observed (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Goulart (2021) noted that even as the American workforce has become more diverse, a lack of understanding and misperceptions about

veterans' skill sets and experiences persists. Civilian sector organizations do not fully understand transitioning military members' skills and experiences (Goulart, 2021).

Misunderstandings and misperceptions prevented the successful recruitment of military veterans. The lack of understanding of the skills and experiences that transitioning military members possess is vital to address when in reality, hired military veterans offer many benefits to organizations (Kintzle & Castro, 2018). According to Davis and Minnis (2017), veterans served as a vast pool of talented and competent civilian employers because they possess distinctive capabilities and valuable skills developed in real-world, high-pressure events and experiences. As indicated, leadership competencies, strong work ethics such as discipline, and strong communication skills are among veterans' valuable skills (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Military veterans regarding their experiences and skillsets developed in the military world (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

HRP may not be aware of these skills and training that the veterans went through, which ultimately means the organization is losing chances of bringing a group of people to the workplace, owning admirable supervisory and management skills acquired during their time serving in the military. The solution to the dilemma of recruiting veterans is to start with understanding the distinctive proficiencies of veterans that make them assets in the civilian workforce and doing away with stereotypes that lead recruiters to believe that veterans transitioning into the civilian world is only going to be problematic (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Davis and Minnis (2017) examined the human resources department's (HRD) crucial role in recognizing the value of hiring veterans within private employment settings. It may seem as though military work experience is not comparable with civilian

sector organizations, leading to difficulties for those attempting to transition; more often than not, service members are assigned to or selected for their military jobs and specialties because they have the right aptitudes and skills, which veteran can apply in the civilian workforce (Kintzle & Castro, 2018). As the researchers found, the military trained its people with technical proficiencies that can be handy in any designation or occupation (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

More than these skills, trained military veterans can effectively engage in teamwork, perseverance, leadership, and other skills and attitudes widely applicable in the civilian workforce (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Moreover, most service members were given additional training after their fundamental training. Veterans were given many learning opportunities in job training schools before, between, and after developments to gain new skills and experience to become more productive as soldiers and as employees as humans (Minnis, 2017).

Many have evaluated the benefits of veteran employees; veterans bring critical skill assets to the civilian workforce. These skills include strong communication, teamwork, and discipline, which are proven marketable technical and leadership skills to improve the workforce they would be allowed to join (Kintzle & Castro, 2018). With the need to help provide employment counseling services to military veterans, the veteran community also has desirable attributes, such as loyalty, reliability, integrity, and teamwork (Minnis, 2017). However, because most modern civilian sector organizations devalue teamwork and commitment, veteran workers experience a culture shock (Minnis, 2017).

Traits such as teamwork, dedication, and commitment are critical to organizational success. Ward (2020) researched the teamwork and commitment found in the armed forces. Military veterans offer the civilian workplace a range of skills, such as planning, leadership, risk mitigation, decision-making, communicating, and military intelligence capabilities developed in the military. Ward found this information through a program collaborated with the Defense Department, the Labor Department, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Through this program (a days-long course that helps veterans prepare resumes and apply for jobs), military soldiers were trained and ready for the rigors of life at home within civilian contexts (Ward, 2020). After training multiple military members transitioning to civilian home and work settings, the author found that military skills and intelligence capabilities developed in the military could be employed to make the organizations where they worked successfully and their employers satisfied (Ward, 2020). The writer concluded that by hiring military veterans, a workforce is likely to become innovative, creative, and leadership-ready (Ward, 2020).

Veterans have frequently been assessed only by their combat experiences. Davis and Minnis (2017) found that civilians' inclination or tendency to interpret military veterans' training as combat-only skills; not only was this interpretation incorrect, but it was also unfortunate because the firms were losing the opportunity to hire a competent workforce. Veterans have crucial soft skills that benefit employers who hire them, including but not limited to flexibility, decision making, leadership, persistence, and attention to detail, which often get overlooked when the focus is on their technical skills (Ford, 2017).

Roy et al. (2020) research covered the benefits of hiring and retaining military veterans in a corporate workforce. The researchers analyzed the relationship between having military service and Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) managerial competencies (Roy et al., 2020). A correlational research study evaluated how administrative decisions, financial policies enacted, and corporate outcomes were affected by having a military experience (Roy et al., 2020). Roy et al. (2020) research revealed that having military service was significantly related to conservative corporate policies and ethical behavior. Chief executive officers (CEO) who were military veterans were less likely to be involved in fraudulent corporate activity and perform better during industry downturns (Ford, 2017). Hiring and retaining military veterans who would eventually become CEOs would enhance managerial decisions and firm outcomes (Roy et al., 2020).

The existence of different military skills such as leadership competencies, planning, leadership, risk mitigation, decision-making, communication, and strong work ethics can be an excellent opportunity for the organizations and the hiring managers to select a diverse type of workforce with consideration of the aspect of the unemployed level of veterans. Hiring managers might find the required workforce with an effective and efficient balance to the organizational goals (Cooper et al., 2018; Davis & Minnis, 2017; Stern, 2017).

Veterans Role in Financial Services Organizations

Identifying veterans' skills that benefit the organization is critical for hiring managers. Hiring managers and the overall organizational management must create a shielding pattern between the specific military skills to the employees' academic

qualifications in the case of veterans (Cooper et al., 2018; Davis and Minnis, 2017). In their study, Cooper et al. (2018) employed the concepts of *habitus*, *capital*, and *field* of Pierre Bourdieu to examine veterans' transition to the civilian workforce. Cooper et al. used Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, and field to highlight fundamental differences between military and civilian life, enabling the researchers to describe the cultural legacy of military life and how this could affect veterans' performance and adjustment to civilian life. Results showed that hiring managers must understand that the rules and norms are different in military environments than in civilian ones (Cooper et al., 2018). That service personnel could undergo a difficult and complicated cultural transition when moving between environments, which hiring managers should strive to understand (Cooper et al., 2018).

Consideration of the veteran as a potential civilian workforce member was a viable option for increasing organizational productivity. Roy et al. (2020) explained the veteran's role in the civilian sector organization by including the organizational change theory. Organizational change theory refers to implementing changes within an organization as facilitated by a specific set of rules (Ward, 2020). The researchers claimed that organizational change theory could be a fundamental approach to developing the veterans' active role in the proper functioning of business organizations (Ward, 2020).

Researchers who utilize organizational change theory as a framework can change the overall spectrum of the organization's first functioning (Ward, 2020). A significant level of organizational change leads the organizations to recruit managers who can

effectively align their potential with their exact needs and approach (Ward, 2020). The organization's performance can improve if hiring managers adopt the aspect of the organizational change and hire individuals who can accept the transformation and align their potential with the organization (Roy et al., 2020). Pollak et al. (2019) found this in their study, conducting a business case for hiring military veterans. The influence of hiring veterans/reservists on a firm's financial performance using the veteran's job list of 2016 Top 100 Military Friendly Firms (Pollak et al., 2019). Considering 64 military-friendly firms, Pollak et al. (2019) showed that those identified as military-friendly had significantly higher financial performance (5.18 percentage points higher) than firms not identified as military-friendly (Pollak et al., 2019). As such, civilian sector organizations need to consider hiring veterans/reservists carefully, given its impact on financial performance (Pollak et al., 2019; Roy et al., 2020).

Transition

In Section 1, I identified that hiring managers lack veteran skills to apply to the hiring process. I also presented the background, problem statement, nature of the study, research question, and interview questions related to my research. I also introduced the conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and significance of the study. I further presented the professional and academic literature review, which described a modified framework of the disability model and applying hiring managers' strategies to apply veterans' preference policies in hiring decisions. The literature review also included the application of the applied business problem, conceptual framework, contrasting and supporting frameworks, veteran's identity theory,

veterans' identity at war, veterans' identity in institutions, and military transition theory. Additionally, I discussed factors that affect the veterans' workforce, veteran values, capabilities, veterans' skills, and veterans' role in a civilian sector organization.

Section 2 includes a restatement of the study purpose and the research methodology and identifies the role of the researcher, participants, and research method and design. I also provide the population and sampling, ethical obligations of the researcher, data collection instruments and techniques, and data organization and analysis. I further discuss data consistency, reliability, validity, dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability in qualitative analysis. In Section 3, I present the study results and apply the results to professional practice. I present social change implications that may result from my study and further research opportunities that may extend from this work.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies used by hiring managers at financial services organizations to apply VPP in hiring decisions. The targeted population consisted of five hiring managers at financial services organizations in southwest Texas. The hiring managers interviewed had successfully applied VPP in hiring decisions. In 2015, Texas legislators passed a law that would benefit businesses implementing veterans' preference programs to increase veterans' hiring (Voluntary Veterans' Employment Preference for Private Employers, 2015). The implications for social change included reducing the veteran population's unemployment rate, making a difference in the veteran homeless population, and possibly increasing their purchasing power to support the local community.

Role of the Researcher

A researcher's role is to identify participants, collect, organize, analyze data, and present findings (Yin, 2018). One of the essential elements of qualitative research is that the researcher is the main instrument of information gathering and data analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). One of the advantages of human instruments researchers is that the researcher can quickly adapt to any situation during the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, the researcher can further clarify and summarize the information gathered based on their understanding of the experience.

As a veteran, I have firsthand knowledge of extended unemployment, the challenge of translating military experience into civilian vernacular, and the effects of

being unemployed for an extended period. I have been a hiring manager, and I understand the trials of hiring the best person for the position; I know veteran experiences and understand military job descriptions. For this study, I sought to interview hiring managers that utilized veteran preference policies.

During the interview process, I followed the guidelines in The Belmont Report, which highlighted treating participants with respect, justice, and beneficence and securing the data for participants' confidentiality. As the study involved the use of human subjects, compliance with ethical principles was essential; for instance, I ensured all information was kept confidential by using it to classify, identify, and categorize participants (Lee et al., 1978). Before collecting data from participants, I applied for study approval from the Institution Review Board (IRB) of Walden University. The IRB process is critical to prevent study risk and promote research consistency (Harsch & Festing, 2020). For participants' confidentiality and data protection, I protected and secured data in a password protected cloud account and, on a password, protected an external hard drive in a locked file cabinet. Additionally, a researcher should adhere to ethical principles for the research trustworthiness and prevention of issues like participants' autonomy, anonymity, confidentiality, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice (Resnik, 2018).

I bracketed my biases by not permitting my beliefs to shape the data collection procedure and making a continual effort not to compel my comprehension and construction of the data. Bracketing is a method employed to mitigate preconceptions that may taint the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, mitigating biases is critical for demonstrating research credibility and dependability (Yin, 2018). For this

study, I increased my research consistency and credibility by using the member checking technique, which involves the solicitation of feedback from the participants on findings to ensure validity (Stake, 2010). Member checking was the most significant way to avoid misinterpretation of the participants' responses and mitigate biases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Interviews are the single most common method researchers use to gather information. One suggested way to conduct interviews is through an interview protocol (see Appendix). An interview protocol is a script of what the researcher will follow during the interview (Roberts, 2020). The interview protocol served as my guide to conduct interviews to interact with experienced subject matter experts to collect information about experiences (see Yin, 2018). I used seven questions to interview hiring managers who had successfully implemented hiring strategies using VPP. The interview protocol is a critical tool to gather data from the participants (Roberts, 2020).

Participants

In qualitative research, participant selection related to the research question and problem statement is critical for presenting a sound analysis. Selecting eligible participants is crucial for a researcher to collect information (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The participants in this study were hiring managers in financial services organizations in southwest Texas, recruited through social media. The topic of study should be the principal element prompting the selection of the participants (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I used a purposive sampling method to identify five hiring managers who had utilized strategies to apply veterans' preference policies in hiring decisions successfully. The

eligibility criteria were hiring managers with over 5 years of experience using VPP to make hiring decisions in southwest Texas.

I identified several organizations in the southwest Texas area by conducting a Google search using the terms *best financial companies for veteran employment*, *financial companies with veteran employment programs*, and *veteran employment programs*. I then randomly selected the top five financial organizations with relevant information on their websites and social media. I then used LinkedIn, a professional networking site, to search for hiring managers employed by the top five financial organizations identified. For instance, there was an option to locate most organizations' employees' names and titles on LinkedIn. I used this option to identify and locate potential participants currently working for the selected financial organizations to request connections. I identified five financial organizations to increase the likelihood of finding participants. Once connections were confirmed, I sent an introductory message and letter of invitation through LinkedIn to each participant to solicit participation in the study. I ensured that all potential participants met the criteria to be in the study and that they were currently hiring managers within the selected organizations.

Building a healthy relationship between researcher and participants to collect information using a qualitative methodology is essential to the effectiveness of the study (Yin, 2018). Developing trusting relationships with participants is a pathway to gaining access to interviews for the doctoral study (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Being open and honest built trust with interviewees and allowed me to collect reliable and credible information regarding employers' hiring decisions about veterans. Because I had not

established a previous relationship with potential participants, I offered a brief informational conversation or communication through email to allow the prospective participant to ask me questions about the study and me as a student to build rapport during participant recruitment. I did this by contacting the individuals through emails and following up with phone calls. After selecting the participants, I sent a letter of invitation and the informed consent form via email before arranging the interview with each participant. For my study's credibility, I scheduled and conducted the interviews within a video conferencing software and with permission from the participant to record, in adherence with IRB requirements.

Research Method and Design

Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are research methods used to develop theses or dissertations (Hughes & Scholtz, 2019). Case studies permit the researcher to investigate a design because there is a need to understand this real-world case (Yin, 2018). Such an understanding will likely involve critical circumstantial conditions pertinent to the topic. The chosen method and design were appropriate to help me achieve this study's goal: to explore strategies to apply VPP in hiring decisions.

Research Method

The three research methodologies are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Taguchi, 2018). Researchers use a quantitative methodology to measure variables, test hypotheses, analyze causal relationships between variables, generate value-free predictions, and generalize the research outcomes (Bell et al., 2018). In this study, I did not test a hypothesis or look for causal relationships; therefore, the quantitative

method was not appropriate for the study. In contrast, researchers use qualitative methodology to explore phenomena that impact the lived reality of individuals or groups in a particular social context (Bell et al., 2018). Qualitative methodology is appropriate to collect participants' shared hiring strategies; therefore, I used this method because it is suitable for this study. Bell et al. (2018) recommended that qualitative research is critical to reveal alternative concepts, including a real business problem, emphasizing the socially constructed nature of reality, holism, exploration, flexibility, and sense-making. I used qualitative research to explore strategies used by hiring managers at financial services organizations to apply VPP in hiring decisions. For instance, Yin (2018) suggested qualitative researchers use qualitative research to create awareness of realism and ferret out the world's nature as experienced, defined, and construed by people during their everyday lives. Some researchers use mixed methods research to combine qualitative and quantitative methodologies in the same study to address the research question (Wertz, 2018). Using a mixed methodology helps the researcher examine the problem instead of understanding the problem by using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. I did not choose a quantitative or a mixed methods approach to facilitate the current study because they were not suitable for the research purpose, I am not testing a hypothesis.

Research Design

In this qualitative study, the design I selected is a multiple case study. In multiple case study research, the researcher strives to chronicle participants' realities and experiences shared during interviews (Stake, 2016). The researcher then analyzes and

interprets the data they collect to understand the phenomena better to address the research questions (Jones, 2019). Multiple case study research constitutes an all-encompassing design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis (Yin, 2018). The high-quality multiple case study research is focused on rigor, validity, and reliability (Yin, 2018). Rigor, validity, and reliability are essential to researchers because multiple case study research must abide by formal methodologic procedures, connecting all conclusions to specific data (Yin, 2018). I have chosen the multiple case study design for the proposed study for the reasons listed above.

Bell et al. (2018) asserted that phenomenological researchers seek multiple meanings attributed to a phenomenon and try to provide a thorough description instead of a justification. Phenomenology is a research design that researchers utilize to help establish a clearer understanding of complicated subjects and the fundamental nature and significance of the phenomenon within participants' lived experiences. (Bell et al., 2018). The essence of a given lived experience is described in phenomenological analysis; therefore, phenomenology is not an appropriate design for this study because I did not seek to understand what it was like to be a hiring manager but to study hiring strategies related to veterans.

Researchers employ the ethnographic design to study people's culture or social world (Bell et al., 2018). The ethnographic design was not suitable for this research as I will not be observing the culture and interactions of individuals or groups. Bell et al. (2018) contended that an ethnographic research design entails gathering observations, interviews, and documents to develop comprehensive accounts of various social

phenomena to help study group cultures and social interactions. An ethnographic research design entails gathering observations, interviews, and documentary data to develop thorough and comprehensive accounts of various social phenomena to help study groups' culture and social interactions (Bell et al., 2018).

Data saturation is often a challenge in qualitative research design (Bell et al., 2018). Determining how many interviews are enough when conducting interviews with case study participants can be a dilemma (Bell et al., 2018). Interviews help reach data saturation (Tran et al., 2017). Although researchers can attain data by interviewing small samples, it is imperative to comprehend that data saturation is about depth, not the number (Bell et al., 2018). To achieve data saturation, I completed five interviews. If I did not reach data saturation within five interviews, I would have continued the interview process until data saturation was achieved. The interview questions were the same for all five participants, which will help develop themes and patterns. I ensured that participants responded in depth to all interview questions by asking follow up questions to verify that no new information emerged.

Population and Sampling

Purposeful sampling is a valuable technique for identifying and selecting individuals knowledgeable about a phenomenon and obtaining reliable information related to participants' experiences (Farrugia, 2019). Researchers use purposeful sampling to select participants to identify and select individuals knowledgeable about a phenomenon analyzed and obtain reliable information related to participants' experiences (Auspurg, et al., 2020). I used purposeful sampling to recruit hiring managers who

understand the impact of applying VPP with at least 5 years of experience in the role to answer my research question. I selected potential participants employed by financial services organizations, identified through social media, and who have successfully used VPP in hiring decisions.

The number of participants that the researcher needs to interview to reach data saturation depends on the focus of the research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

According to (Blaikie, 2018), there is no ideal number of cases because data from numerous cases do not always lead to more significant results. The sample size can be between two and 25 participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I interviewed five hiring managers of financial institutions in southwest Texas for this study.

The eligibility criteria included being a hiring manager in a financial services organization in southwest Texas with a minimum of 5 years of hiring experience. The hiring managers had successfully applied VPP in hiring decisions. I ensured that my location was quiet to avoid excess noise and distraction. I also ensured that I had a neutral background and a well-lit area with good visibility to read and write the summaries. I requested that the participants also have a quiet location to avoid excess noise and distractions. After each interview, I identified new emerging themes and collected further information until reaching data saturation. Data saturation is the process of gathering data until reaching the point where there is no new information arising to answer the interview question (Blaikie, 2018). For this study I was able to reach data saturation by the fifth participant.

Ethical Research

The quality of a doctoral study refers to the value of the information the researcher collects and the researcher's ethical conduct. When interacting with participants, researchers may face ethical issues during a research study (Meneses-Falcón, 2020). The researcher's integrity, honesty, and transparency are of most importance, contributing to the study results' reliability and establishing public trust (Yin, 2018). Readers should trust that the researchers conducted the research study with integrity and that the findings are reliable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Informed consent is a critical part of ethics in research (Canton, 2019). The principle of informed consent is that researchers are responsible for informing the participants of all the areas of the research study (Meneses-Falcón, 2020). The researcher should clarify the researcher's identity, the study's objective, the role of the participants, and how the results will be used (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Informed consent also means that participants exercise their right to agree voluntarily or refuse to participate in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The informed consent must explain how the researcher will protect the participants' privacy and indicate that participants can withdraw from the research study at any point without consequence. I informed participants that they had the right to refuse to participate in this study. I provided an informed consent that included my contact information and specific information about the study.

I also complied with the IRB, which ensure that all Walden University researchers adhere to the university's ethical standards. IRB approval is required before collecting any data; therefore, I applied for and received IRB approval before the data collection

process began. The IRB approval number is 01-07-22-0414835. Obtaining informed consent and maintaining participant confidentiality were requirements for obtaining approval from the IRB (Yin, 2018). For participants' confidentiality and data protection, I protected and secured data in a password protected cloud account and, on a password, protected external hard drive in a locked file cabinet located in my office, which will be kept for a minimum of 5 years before their destruction. After 5 years from the compilation of the study, I will shred interview summaries, notes, and all paper information related to my research and delete all electronic files from the cloud, external hard drives, and flash drives by reformatting drives to ensure all electronic material has been deleted. Cloud based storage spaces will have password protection and routinely be backed up for security. Five years after completing this study, I will ensure the destruction of all raw data is completed according to Walden University policy.

It is also the responsibility of the researcher to store the information collected from the participants in a safe place to keep the privacy and confidentiality of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). One way to securely store data is to use random codes to identify participants instead of names or personally identifiable information (Meneses-Falcón, 2020). During the research process, I used codes to identify the participants. I stored the information in my password protected computer and backed it up in password protected cloud storage. I will continue to store the data securely for 5 years to protect the participants' confidentiality and then destroy all the data.

IRB approval was required before collecting any data; therefore, I applied for IRB approval before the data collection process began. Obtaining informed consent and

maintaining participant confidentiality are requirements for obtaining approval from the IRB (Yin, 2018). I explained to the participants that they could withdraw from the study at any stage of the research process without penalty by submitting an email and assured them that their withdrawal would not negatively impact other participants. Lastly, I did not offer any incentives in this study.

I secured participants' signatures on the informed consent form by requesting that participants read and respond to the email with the informed consent attached with "I consent" for their agreement to participate in the study. For my research dependability and credibility, I sought the participants' consent by explaining the study procedures.

Data Collection Instruments

For this multiple case study, I was the primary data collection instrument (Yin, 2018). This qualitative multiple case study's primary data collection method was a video conferencing software used to conduct face-to-face interviews and organizational website content about veteran hiring programs, marketing, public relations information pertaining to veteran hiring, and any additional information the participant was willing to share. With the participants' permission, I recorded or utilized an avatar to adhere to IRB requirements. The collection instrument process is carrying out semistructured interviews with open-ended questioning. I reviewed the organizational website content about veteran hiring programs, marketing, public relations information on veteran hiring, and any additional information the participant was willing to share. I used the organizations' public information on veteran employment and organizational programs that communicate veteran employment ideologies.

I used an interview protocol (Appendix) to ensure that each interview was conducted the same way each time, ensuring consistency. Given that the researcher and the interviewees are the interactive sources of information in interview-based qualitative studies, verbal fluency, clarity, and explicatory and analytical abilities are central to the possibility of gathering in-depth information (Silverman, 2017). The general aim of the interview protocol (Appendix) is to adopt an in-depth semistructured interviewing style-allowing participants to speak freely about their experiences. (Yin, 2018). The participants were five hiring managers in financial services organizations in southwest Texas.

Before the interview, participants were informed of their rights, the purpose of the study, and all privacy concerns as stipulated in the informed consent. I conducted the interviews within video conferencing software. Data quality also depends on the credibility of its sources (Yin, 2018). I utilized the video conferencing capabilities to record the interviews with the permission of the participants to adhere to IRB requirements. The use of open-ended questions also ensures reliable and valid information (Yin, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommend the use of member checking; after the interviews, I transcribed all the interviews and conducted member checking. Member checking solicits feedback on preliminary or emerging findings from the participant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Member checking involves requesting feedback from the participants about the data collected to ensure the data is accurate (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I transcribed the recorded interview the same day, analyzed and summarized the interview data, and provided it to the participant. The summary

provided the participants with an overview of the interview for which they could provide additional feedback. I informed the participants that I would like their feedback on the transcript within a week of receipt to ensure there were no misrepresented responses. If participants did not respond with feedback within 48 hours, I planned to follow up with emails every 48 hours until feedback was received. Researchers use member checking and data triangulation to increase the credibility, dependability, and validity of data collection processes in qualitative analysis (Yin, 2018). The semistructured interviews generated rich, dense, and focused information, allowing me to better explore the problem.

I collected and analyzed information from the corporate website content about veteran hiring programs, marketing, and public relations information about veteran hiring—the data collection process supported in depth questioning during the interview process (Yin, 2018). Information based on hiring managers' successful strategies was used to compare the information captured during the interview to increase insight. Collection of organizational website content about veteran hiring programs, marketing, and public relations information pertaining to veteran hiring deterred researchers' bias. Application of critical thought processes to increase understanding of the collected information deterred bias in the study.

Yin (2018) stated that data triangulation is the merging of data gathered from several sources to include organizational website content about veteran hiring programs, marketing, and public relations information on veteran hiring to verify the consistency of a finding. Data triangulation is a powerful strategy for improving the credibility of a

study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, I used data triangulation to verify the consistency of the findings and member checking to ensure my interpretation of the emerging findings was accurate. Additionally, I used member checking to enrich the credibility of the study. Member checking is sharing data and interpretations with participants (Stake, 2010). Yin (2018) stated that member checking is a crucial way of identifying the possibility of misinterpretation of the significance of what participants say and do. Therefore, I used member checking to identify my biases and decrease the misrepresentation of the gathered information.

Data Collection Technique

The leading sources of data collection are observation, semistructured interviews, documentation, and audio-visual sources. Utilizing a semistructured interview is more trustworthy than other sources in collecting information from reliable sources at a reasonable cost (Yin, 2018). I used a semistructured interview with open-ended questions to produce discussions about the topic and ensure the interview aligned with the research question. I used Zoom video conferencing software to record the interviews as my primary support to mitigate biases and ensure the reliability of transcribed interview responses. Possible challenges to using Zoom video conferencing included internet connection challenges and retrieval of recordings. The positive aspects of using Zoom video conferencing included ease of scheduling and the video recording feature (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). The interviews took place using video conferencing technology at predetermined scheduled times as selected by the participants. I planned a 4-week time frame to conduct the interviews with the five hiring managers of financial services

organizations. I used a Microsoft Surface with the downloaded video conferencing software Zoom for the participant interviews to transcribe and record the interviews. Before the one-on-one interviews were initiated, I referred to the interview protocol (Appendix) and confirmed that participants had read and digitally signed the informed consent form.

I established rapport through the introductory phase with each participant to stimulate self-confidence and readiness to participate in the study. The goal of using an interview was to inspire the participants to speak directly and candidly about the topic (Stake, 2010). Participants responded freely to seven interview questions (Stake, 2010). I collected data to analyze strategies used by hiring managers at financial services organizations to apply VPP in hiring decisions, and I ended the interview with closing remarks to thank each participant.

Yin (2018) discussed how collecting qualitative data could pose advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages of qualitative data is that data triangulation and member checking, and data provide an amicable relationship (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Data triangulation and member checking allow researchers to verify responses and collect data through two sources, interviews, and archival documents (Yin, 2018). I used documents and information obtained from the organization's website about veteran hiring programs, marketing, public relations information, and any information the participant was willing to share to validate the findings of the interviews. Since interviews were time-consuming, the documents and information obtained from organizational website content about veteran hiring programs, marketing, and public relations information about

veteran hiring supported accurate and complete information gathered and shortened the interview duration. Preceding each interview process, I ensured the Microsoft Surface functioned correctly, and the battery was fully charged and in good condition.

Before the interviews' initiation, the study's objective and design was submitted to the Walden University IRB for approval since I used human subjects (Yin, 2018). Upon receiving approval of the study by the Walden University IRB, I recruited study participants using purposeful sampling. After receiving IRB approval, I prepared for my interviews by informing participants that they had the right to refuse to participate in this study. I provided an informed consent that included my contact information and specific information about the study. During the interview process, I took notes to help me better understand the participants' responses. The interviews were open-ended questions that allowed participants to answer freely. The advantage of using open ended semistructured interviews allowed for flexibility for the participants to express their experiences and opinion; the disadvantage was that it was time consuming, but I allocated enough time to help fulfill the justification for using the open-ended semistructured interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In addition to the semistructured interview, I collected information obtained from organizational website content about veteran hiring programs, marketing, and public relations information pertaining to veteran hiring. The advantage of using organizational website content is that it was readily available. One of the disadvantages of using organizational website content is that it can be skewed and designed to present a positive view of veterans' hiring programs (Yin, 2018). I conducted member checking within 48 hours of the interview, and I asked each participant to review the summary of

the interview data and ensure the correctness of the information collected from their answers. The most important source of collecting case study information, interviews, and the use of other sources allowed for data triangulation (Yin, 2018).

Data Organization Technique

Researchers organize data to provide transparency and prepare data analysis (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) argued that researchers use data organization techniques to manage data by themes, trends, and patterns to understand and review data before analysis. Cleland (2017) added that the researcher should organize data to meet research requirements and achievements. At Walden University, the IRB requires researchers to secure data during the research processes and keep it secure and locked for 5 years after the research completion date (Walden University, 2017). I stored interviewed summaries, notes, and research journals in labeled folders with an anonymous identification code for each participant: P1, P2, P3, P4, P5. For participants' confidentiality and data protection, I secured data in a password protected cloud account and a password protected external hard drive in a locked file cabinet in my office. After 5 years from completion of the study, I will use a shredder to destroy the interview summaries, notes, and all paper information related to my research and permanently delete all electronic files from the cloud and reformat external hard drives and flash drives to ensure all electronic data has been deleted. Cloud based storage spaces were password protected and routinely backed up for security. Five years after completing this study, I will ensure that the destruction of all raw data is conducted according to Walden University policy.

All collected raw data and documents from notes were organized and categorized in Excel and then uploaded into the NVivo system for storage and organization. I also used NVivo to transcribe the interviews. The results from NVivo were used to analyze the data in a comparable and easily understood manner. The NVivo transcription assistant provided accurate verbatim transcription from uploaded video recordings. I used NVivo to identify emerging themes, patterns, and trends on familiar topics. NVivo software was critical to mitigating research bias when converting the interviews into summaries and codifying themes into categories (see Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). For my data protection, I labeled all files and copied files to cloud based storage, assigning anonymous identification codes to each participant to maintain confidentiality during the research processes, and secured them in a locked place. Cloud based storage spaces were given password protection, and relevant files were routinely backed up for security. Five years after the publication of this study, I will ensure the destruction of all raw data is completed according to Walden University policy.

Data Analysis

To order and categorize the collected data, I analyzed the data by identifying themes. Data were methodically searched and analyzed to illuminate the phenomenon under analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I coherently assembled or reconstructed the data transparently, rigorously, and thoroughly while remaining true to participants' accounts. I used data triangulation to provide additional sources for improving accuracy, credibility, validity, and reliability. Data triangulation is a research strategy to test validity by using more than one data source (Onwuegbuzie & Weinbaum, 2017). Data

triangulation means cross checking all data sources to corroborate and validate the information collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I used data triangulation to collect and analyze data from the interview, documents, and archival records obtained from the organizational website content about veteran hiring programs, marketing, and public relations information through my research processes. Researchers use data triangulation to improve research quality, accuracy, validity, and reliability (Nelson, 2017). I collected information from interviews with participants, official government sources and documents, and archival records obtained from the organizational website content about veteran hiring programs, marketing, and public relations information to triangulate. I used NVivo software to analyze the data and develop a detailed description, word frequencies, and identify themes from the data collected from interviews. NVivo software is a tool for organizing and managing data. NVivo software offers an intuitive qualitative data analysis experience that helps researchers uncover more profound research. I analyzed the strategies hiring managers in financial services organizations use to apply VPP in hiring decisions. I used data triangulation to collect data from the interview and organizational documents through my research processes. Information collected during this multiple case study was organized into a system using the NVivo coding method of using the participants' exact words. Once all material was assigned a proper code, data was uploaded to the NVivo system for storage and organization.

I used NVivo software to help identify word frequency to develop codes and themes from the data collected from interviews. I analyzed the strategies hiring managers

in financial services organizations use to apply VPP in hiring decisions. Houghton et al. (2017) suggested that researchers focus on data quality rather than quantity because data quality in qualitative analysis leads to credible findings. I referred to Yin's (2018) five data analysis steps. Per Yin, researchers need: (a) compile database, (b) disassemble data, (c) reassemble data, (d) interpret data, and (e) conclude.

Compiling

The first step of Yin's data analysis is to compile the collected data into a format that the researcher could utilize to discover meaningful answers to the research question (Yin, 2018). Therefore, I compiled the collected data into a format compatible with the research question and used it within NVivo. In qualitative research, Yin (2018) defined the first step of compiling as the procedure of organizing raw data for analysis. Yin (2018) also suggested that a vital aspect of the compiling step is for a researcher to become acquainted with the gathered data via repetitive review. To ensure accurate transcription of sessions and prevent loss of information, I needed to input the interview transcripts on the same day. The procedure of compiling included the integrity of data analysis and the confidentiality of the participants. I compiled the collected data from the interview process and the supplied company documents using Microsoft Word. I meticulously reviewed the transcribed interview records, member checked interview notes and the company documents, and organized the data. Once I completed compiling the data, I disassembled the data.

Disassemble Data

The second step of Yin's data analysis is to break down the compiled data into smaller fragments and assign a label to each category (Yin, 2018). Thus, I disassembled the compiled data into small categories and assigned labels to each one, followed by classifying the categories recommended by Yin (2018). I identified specific field actions, opinions, and explanations of the participants and assigned coding as Yin (2018) discussed. Once I disassembled the data, I then reassembled the data.

Reassemble Data

Step 3 of Yin's data analysis is to reassemble the disassembled data, which entails using practical themes to organize the categorized items by question to identify themes (Yin, 2018). During this phase, identification of themes, checking to see if there are connections between the categories and the themes, and identifying relationships between events and experiences are characterized (Yin, 2018). I then checked to see if participants with similar demographic data responded similarly to the same question (Yin, 2018). I continued with a repetitive process of mixing and matching the coded categories under different arrangements and themes until credible and relevant themes emerged (Yin, 2018). After identifying credible and reoccurring themes, I proceeded to the fourth step of interpreting the data.

Interpret Data

The fourth step of Yin's data analysis is interpreting the reassembled data, which necessitates looking for a close alliance of the data with the research questions (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) posits that the reassembled data starts from a broad perspective and

then is narrowed down in close alignment with the research objectives to bring out relevant points. Next, the themes and connections were interpreted to explain the findings (Yin, 2018). After completing steps one through four, I continued to the fifth and final step, concluding.

Conclude

The final step in Yin's five-step procedure of qualitative data analysis consists of providing a concentrated and concise conclusion to wrap up the data analysis process described by Yin (2018). Yin (2018) proposed that the data analysis process required initial coding, adding comments and reflections memos, and looking for patterns, themes, relationships, sequences, and differences. I completed all these requirements. Finally, I explored patterns and elaborated on generalizations of themes through the lens of Stone and Stone's (2015) framework and additional literature to explain employers' hiring decisions about veterans and present my findings.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are crucial elements that researchers should focus on to ensure the study adheres to the highest standards of academic research (Yin, 2018). Researchers ensure validity by reflecting the view of the phenomenon studied and reliability by presenting the consistency of the findings (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). The concepts of reliability and validity differ in a qualitative or quantitative method. Reliability and validity mitigate bias in research and promote transparency (Yin, 2018). Data triangulation and member-checking ensured reliability and validity by collecting, organizing, and analyzing various information sources for this qualitative study. I also

assessed research quality by addressing dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability.

Reliability

Researchers refer to reliability to enhance the research's dependability. The trustworthiness of qualitative research studies includes the use of rigor, reliability, and validity (Hayashi et al., (2019). In qualitative research, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and a detailed description can lead to the rigor of the study (Jenner, 2017). For the dependability of my research, I used member checking. Member checking was conducted by asking each participant to review the summary of the interview data and ensure the correctness of the information collected from the participants' answers. Additionally, member checking is a way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what the participants say and their perspectives on their experiences.

Validity

The concept of validity in the qualitative study implies comparing the concepts of credibility, trustworthiness, and authenticity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The study is valid if the findings are accurate or correct, not only for the researcher but also for the participants and the study's readers. Validity is crucial in qualitative research attesting to the findings' credibility and accuracy (Hayashi et al., 2019). The researcher should mitigate bias by enhancing the validity of the research results. Researchers must combine credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Yin, 2018).

Dependability

I achieved dependability by documenting each step so that other researchers could replicate the process. In qualitative research, dependability is achieved when the study findings are consistent and enable other researchers to replicate the information described in the study (Yin, 2018). Even though HRPs in financial organizations may be willing to hire veterans, they may remain unaware of the best hiring strategy to employ. I used data triangulation to obtain dependable findings based on the interview responses, a review of secondary sources, and organizational web content. I also kept an audit trail to ensure that data collection and analysis met the required standard consistently to replicate the findings and that the analysis was justified and not based on my understanding of the topic.

Credibility

To enhance credibility, researchers use triangulation and member checking (Yin, 2018). Researchers use data triangulation and member checking to mitigate bias by adequately identifying and describing the phenomenon analyzed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Credibility in qualitative research is critical to establishing trustworthiness (Yin, 2018). I ensured credibility by collecting and aligning data with the research question for my research. I also used triangulation with interview summaries, organizations' websites content about veteran hiring programs, marketing, public relations information, government official sources, government official sources, and member-checking to strengthen the consistency of the findings.

Transferability

Extensive and descriptive details were incorporated into my explanation of each stage of the study to ensure transferability. Transferability refers to the results being generalizable beyond the study's original purpose (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I explained each step of the research process with clarity and detail to ensure that future researchers have sufficient information to evaluate the applicability of the study. The findings also may be used by other private organizations that find it challenging to hire veterans because of challenging hiring strategies.

Confirmability

The use of NVivo software provided research confirmability by applying the NVivo coding method using the participants' exact words. All material was uploaded to the NVivo system for organization, coding, analysis, and data storage (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers must convince readers to confirm the study's conclusion (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). For my research, I verified my study's confirmability by revealing the impact of using VPP in hiring decisions. I also ensured confirmability by using triangulation comparing data from a semistructured interview, documents, and archival records obtained from the organizations' websites content about veteran hiring programs, marketing, public relations information, government official sources, government official sources content about veteran hiring programs, marketing, public relation information.

Data Saturation

Researchers use data saturation to show the quality, credibility, and transparency of the research (Tran et al., 2017). The goal is to avoid data redundancy and continuously analyze information for the interviews and organizations' documentation until data saturation is reached (Tran et al., 2017). Data saturation is the process of conducting interviews until a researcher finds that there are no new data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers should continue to collect information until reaching data saturation (Yin, 2018). I ensured data saturation for my study by collecting data with additional interviews until no new data emerged.

Transition and Summary

In Section 1, I presented the background, problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, research question, and interview questions related to my research. I also introduced the conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and significance of my study. Further, I presented the professional and academic literature review, which described employers' hiring decisions about veterans and addressed the causes, consequences, and impacts of hiring veterans on financial services organizations' performance.

In Section 2, I presented a restatement of the purpose statement, the researcher's role, participants, research method, and design. I also described the population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments and technique, data organization techniques, and analysis and discussed data consistency and credibility in qualitative analysis. In Section 3, I present the findings, the implications for social change, and

hiring managers' recommendations to improve productivity and climate in their organization. I also formulate recommendations for further research and present the conclusions of my study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies hiring managers used at financial service organizations to apply VPP in hiring decisions. The data collected resulted from semistructured interviews with hiring managers of financial services organizations in southwest Texas. What I found was the culture of the organizations were entrenched in the military mindset; therefore, the strategies to employ veterans, implemented by the hiring managers, were a natural part of the organization. The organizational culture included utilizing self-identified veteran employees to assist in hire veterans and veteran targeted employment initiatives. The data indicated three effective strategies that were used to apply VPP in hiring decisions. The three themes were (a) training and education for hiring managers, (b) veteran job preparation, and (c) diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The findings presented that hiring managers impacted the hiring of veterans and revealed the importance of education for the hiring managers. Furthermore, this study signals the importance of the relationship between veteran preparedness for transition into the civilian workplace and networking.

In Section 3, I present the findings of the data collected. I analyze the results and associations to the conceptual framework of the modified disability model as developed by Stone and Stone (2015). Lastly, I offer evidence to support the material presented in the literature review and how the findings support professional practice.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question for this study was: What strategies do hiring managers in financial services organizations use to apply VPP in hiring decisions? I used a qualitative

multiple case study, which was beneficial to collect information from different participants who had the same experiences to reach this end. A multiple case study design was crucial for better understanding the experience and retrieving answers to who, why, when, and how hiring managers used veterans' preference policies. I utilized Yin's (2018) five-step data analysis with a concise conclusion that identified three themes: (a) training and education for hiring managers, (b) veteran job preparation, and (c) DEI.

Theme 1: Training and Education for Hiring Managers

The first theme that emerged from the participants in this study was increasing the knowledge base of hiring managers about veterans. According to Taylor (2021), hiring managers lack the skills to evaluate and understand resumes that are heavy with military language and job descriptions. Taylor found that this language barrier prevents hiring managers from selecting from the veteran candidate pool due to lack of understanding. When hiring managers better understand the job descriptions and language used in veteran resumes, veterans have a better chance of advancing through the hiring process. A priority made clear by each hiring manager who participated in the current study was the importance of training and education for hiring managers that work directly with hiring veterans. All five participants indicated they understood military job descriptions and military acumen but acknowledged that this is not the case for all hiring managers.

Additionally, hiring managers need to be educated on the litany of soft skills that veterans acquired during military service. Soft skills such as administrative skills, team building, taking the initiative, and attention to detail are added benefits for the hiring manager to capitalize on when making hiring selections. The participants identified the

importance of gaining this knowledge to apply VPP successfully. For example, P3 said, "Education, right? It is the education of hiring managers that helps access the veteran pool most effectively and use preference policies the way they were intended." The specific type of education necessary was not indicated by this participant at this juncture, and no training programs were identified by any of the participants. In this study, the training and education of hiring managers may be key to successfully create a strategy. Education and training for hiring managers that provided a clearer understanding of military language and job descriptions enhanced the hiring manager's ability to make better candidate selections when hiring veterans.

All participants indicated they have knowledge and experience with the military environment, job descriptions, and language. P1 said, "I spent 4 years on active duty, and several years in the reserves, so I am well versed in military culture." What this indicates is that the hiring managers had prior military experience, which is why the initiatives were positively connected with hiring veterans. Additionally, P4 stated that, "the best strategy for applying VPP is overcoming the language barrier between the veterans' resumes and the hiring managers' training and education." In discussing the training and education of hiring managers, P4 said, "the training and education of hiring managers is critical to understand the quality of employee that veterans are." Moreover, P4 added, "if more hiring managers grasped the level of transferrable skills veterans possessed, hiring a qualified veteran would be a no brainer." The better training and education a hiring manager has, the more apt they are to identify the soft skills, understand military language, and translate job descriptions from veteran resumes to employment needs in

the organization. It was apparent that no formal training and education programs for hiring managers existed. However, what emerged in this study was that there were no strategies used but there had been initiatives created to hiring veterans. The initiatives were based on the idea that hiring veterans was positive and to support this initiative hiring managers needed to be educated in the military culture. Another way financial services organizations endorsed this initiative was to rely on employees with prior military service to hire qualified veterans. The financial services organization hiring managers' leadership had relied heavily on employees that held veteran status to encourage the hiring of veterans and training for hiring managers in the military culture, and in support of the organization's mission. The participants relied on their own military experiences as their training and education.

The participants revealed that they had advanced knowledge of the veteran culture and potential because of the participants' own military affiliation. There is a short learning curve for qualified veterans for available positions. All participants agreed, and to paraphrase what they said, a training program for hiring managers is necessary to increase the knowledge base to better use VPP. P5 echoed the same sentiment, "given the mission of the organization, it is unfortunate that more focus isn't on training hiring managers on the value of hiring veterans and how to identify the skill sets." Haynie (2021) supported this contention by suggesting that hiring managers lack the necessary knowledge to assess veterans fairly without training.

Furthermore, the hiring managers in this study believed that the education and training of hiring managers on this topic would create a more well-rounded professional.

Regarding education and training, P5 said, “I have my military affiliations to fall back on, but there are some hiring managers that would benefit from training on military culture and language.” P4 said, “hiring managers would better be able to apply VPP if they received training, but executives see no added value or ROI to invest in that type of training.” None of the participants mentioned that formal training programs for hiring managers were available at their institutions.

The emerging theme of training and education for hiring managers aligned with two aspects of the modified disability model. Education in this study is related to having a knowledge of military culture, how to translate military job descriptions understanding military language, and knowing the soft skills that veterans gain during active-duty service. The participants all spoke about understanding how to correlate military skills to the civilian workplace and the importance of being able to do so. According to Stone and Stone (2015), hiring managers can increase the knowledge of (a) military job-related tasks and knowledge, (b) skills, (c) abilities, and (d) understanding of the degree to which military skills transfer to civilian jobs to apply VPP in hiring decisions. There is an understanding of this model in the financial services industry, but the hiring managers lack the knowledge to apply the VPP effectively (Cooper et al., 2018).

All participants shared their belief that the absence of training and education within an organization is a significant aspect that should be corrected. P2 said, “I come from a military family and understand how to transfer skill sets from military to a civilian job. I helped many recruiters to understand the military and the type of employee we would be hiring”. Additionally, regarding the knowledge of military job-related tasks and

knowledge, skills, and abilities, P4 said, “this lack of knowledge of job-related tasks and knowledge, skills, and abilities creates an obstacle to accessing an extremely qualified candidate pool.” Concerning the absence of training and education for hiring managers within the organization, each participant drew on their own personal knowledge and experience with the military to aid in their decision-making process when it came to assessing veterans for employment. The participants' beliefs in this study reflect observations made by Gonzalez and Simpson (2021). According to Gonzalez and Simpson, hiring managers' decisions related to hiring veterans included veteran attributes and the perceived level of their skill transferability, which are often misguided and tainted by public perception. Observations made by Taylor (2021) included that hiring managers must understand the nature of assessing those and use that knowledge to make an informed decision based on experience and skillset.

The interviewed hiring managers' knowledge base came from their direct connection to the military culture. All the participants had varying military experiences, from being military spouses or children to active-duty members. While no formal training has been sought or received, each participant drew or relied on their personal experiences with the military to provide a foundation for their knowledge base on veterans. For example, P1 said, “I rely on my 4 years of active-duty experience and reserve time to build a knowledge base.” P2, P3, and P5 all confirmed their military affiliation from being children of active-duty members. P4 acknowledged what was gained from being a military spouse. However, the implementation of education and training is one strategy that supports the hiring managers' ability to identify qualified candidates. This strategy

adds qualified individuals to teams and amplifies the potential for increased business success, as observed by Taylor (2021).

In contrast, Ackerman et al. (2020) observed that veterans do not adapt well in some settings as their rigidity does not mesh well with team members. For instance, P1 shared, “I can understand why some hiring managers would believe that some veterans may be more rigid in their approach to getting the job done.” Gonzalez and Simpson (2021) countered this challenge with the adaptability of the veteran as a primary reason to consider a veteran for employment. Additionally, Taylor (2021) concurred that transferrable skills might make a veteran an ideal candidate.

Regarding the emerged theme of training and education for hiring managers, I did not locate any supporting data concerning this theme on the website, nor did the participants provide any archival documentation supporting training and education for hiring managers. Through my data collection, I discovered there was not a formal training and education program established for hiring managers as part of the financial services organizations’ strategy to implement VPP. Since the organizations were already military-minded organizations with missions designed to serve the military community or founded by military members, initiatives for hiring veterans were developed. These initiatives relied heavily on current employee veteran status to support the hiring of veterans as opposed to training hiring managers. It also became apparent that since the organizations did not have a formal training and education program for hiring managers, it relied on its hiring managers with military experience to carry out the ideas and mission of hiring veterans. The theme of education for hiring managers was repeated throughout

the interviews as the participants expressed their commitment to ensuring other hiring managers received the necessary education to apply VPP effectively. The expectations were made clear throughout the training process and reviewed for enhancement to better prepare hiring managers. The participants indicated that education was vital to see the value in potential veteran candidates, as it is crucial to understand veterans' positive attributes.

In summary, the participants expressed the need to create training and education for hiring managers regarding veterans. Training and education for hiring managers included learning about transferrable skills, job descriptions, and the language of the military culture. According to Gonzalez and Simpson (2021), training and education were beneficial for hiring managers to evaluate veteran candidates effectively, as Stone and Stone (2015) echoed in the modified disability model.

Theme 2: Veteran Job Preparation

The second theme of veteran job preparation was prevalent among four participants. P4 shared, "hiring managers could receive all of the training and education about veterans available, but some of the onus falls on the veterans. I can get you to the track, but you have to run the race." P3 mentioned that veterans needed to be better prepared for resume writing and interviewing, while P1, P2, P4, and P5 agreed that resume writing and interviewing by the veteran was an effective strategy for hiring managers and felt building relationships was an integral part as well. During data collection, P1 explained, "The best way for this process [veteran job preparation] to work is networking, creating relationships between hiring managers and military base

personnel to facilitate mentoring, resume writing, and mock interview workshops." P4 said, "The art of networking is such a critical part of veteran job preparation. It is about whom you know." P2 stated, "We would set up a military affairs day. Today it's called a career fair. We would go, talk to the soldiers, get a copy of their resumes, and if they presented themselves professionally and their resume was adequate, we had a candidate we could work with." A viable candidate could make a great employee. While veteran job preparation rests with the veteran, programs are available to assist the veterans with veteran job preparation. These programs are run by HRPs and hiring managers so that the veterans have information from the subject matter experts. Hiring managers reviewed resumes, conducted mock interviews, and frequently introduced veterans to other hiring managers to facilitate the networking aspect of veteran job preparation. P5 stated, "There are organizations with facilities in the local community that can be used for career fairs, networking, and events that help prepare veterans for the workforce, like interviewing and resume writing." The participants mentioned various programs available in the local area that provide the necessary resume writing, interviewing, mentoring, and networking provisions for veterans to better prepare for the hiring process: #MilCity, Heroes2Hire, FourBlocks, and vets2industry.

McLennan (2021) discussed that forging the networking relationships necessary for veterans to succeed is imperative. Organizations designed to assist veterans with employment, financial services organizations, and veterans work together and are critical for hiring managers to hire veterans successfully. Additionally, all participants referred to the reality that for years 4, 10, or 20 plus years, veterans have not had to apply for a job,

write a resume, or interview for any job while in the military. The 4 year mark is indicative of an initial enlistment or contract. The 10 year mark is typically the halfway point of a service members military career, and 20 years is the retirement stage. Furthermore, the participants discussed that the need for mentoring, networking, and veteran job preparation is vital for veterans to incorporate into their transition for hiring managers to effectively apply VPP.

Networking is something that I do every day. While I believe veterans network while they are in the military, there is a different take on it in the civilian environment. We create relationships to position ourselves for role changes and promotions. Let's be honest, and it really is. You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours. (P4)

P5 said, "I have joined several groups within the organization to network, veteran, business, gender, even LGBTQ+ to raise my networking game."

According to Stone and Stone (2015), hiring managers and veterans could offer a strategy to address veterans' challenges in the hiring process and understand how military skills transfer to civilian jobs. In the interviews conducted, the emerging theme of veteran job preparation is aligned with Stone and Stone's framework of hiring managers making recommendations for strategies that may be used by other hiring managers and veterans. Hiring managers should be the professionals that see the challenges veterans face. There was a consensus in the participant base of hiring managers that changes could be made to address the gaps managers encounter when interacting with veterans during the hiring process. One identified gap was for veterans to have the opportunity to talk to hiring

managers and HRPs to voice the challenges they face from their perspective. Then, collectively hiring managers and veterans could provide information to subject matter experts that provide training to veterans to better prepare for veteran job preparation and the hiring process.

The veteran job preparation theme presented a conundrum for the participants in that the strategies used to apply VPP were believed to be solely the hiring manager's responsibility. The consensus of the participants was that the onus of job preparation fell on the veteran and further collaboration between hiring managers and veterans would be necessary. Stone and Stone (2015) offered that hiring managers should offer strategies that can be used by hiring managers and veterans to address veterans' challenges in the hiring process. Manoushagian (2020) suggested that recommendations from hiring managers further benefited veterans in the hiring process. For example, the participant's recommendation of mentoring, networking, classes for resume writing, and interviewing veterans to better prepare for the hiring process would be in the purview of hiring managers.

LePage and Global Campus (2020) discussed that effective resume writing was the veteran's responsibility. Accordingly, while in data collection, I discovered that P1 and P5 are active in assisting veterans in job preparation support. P1 said, "I attend many veteran networking events. I meet many vets and hiring managers and try very hard to connect people." P5 said, "I am active with a veteran group called Vets2Industry that assists with veteran employment. This group is a virtual networking group that provides knowledge, connections, and opportunities for veterans." P2, P3, and P4 indicated they

were passive regarding veteran job preparation activities. P3 and P4 indicated they had presented at veteran workshops, and P2 had not participated in any veteran job preparation activities.

I browsed the associated financial services organization websites of the associated financial services institutions revealed informational tabs for “career”, “career opportunities,” “veteran,” and “VetAlign” which were indications of veteran employment programs. After inputting personal information to test the site’s capabilities, I landed on a page called *Aligned*. This page showed one position to apply for employment. That position, contrary to the informational identity, was not aligned with my military or civilian education or work experience. The position was dissociated with my education and experience related to operations, education, and business, as the position was for tech installation. The software seemed poorly designed to match veterans with jobs. All financial services institutions employed by the participants used this same procedure linked to the VetAligned software.

The theme of veteran job preparation for veterans for life after the military repeated itself throughout the discussion with the participants. The participants suggested that another key to using VPP is to have veteran candidates prepared through well written resumes. The participants indicated that this type of preparation would empower veteran candidates for the various steps of the hiring process.

In summary, the participants conveyed an understanding that veterans have the responsibility of job preparation. The participants also communicated that some circumstances might prevent the veteran from understanding how to prepare for a job,

search, or the hiring process. P2 said, “The job search and hiring process is difficult for civilians. A veteran has not had to search, apply, or interview for a job for years.” P4 echoed that sentiment. Stone (2020) suggested that programs designed with the input of hiring managers to assist veterans were essential to applying VPP. The participants did not mention of community programs such as civic job fairs or college workshops. The participants mentioned various programs available in the local area that provide the necessary resume writing, interviewing, mentoring, and networking provisions for veterans to better prepare for the hiring process: #MilCity, Heroes2Hire, FourBlocks, and vets2industry.

Theme 3: DEI

The third theme presented during the study was DEI. Thomas and Demeola (2021) defined diversity as a matter of numbers. The representation of those within an organization in a society of diverse identities that have been historically excluded from a profession and are marginalized should be included. Thomas and Demeola referred to inclusion as organizational culture and the nature of that representation: an evaluation of where those diverse individuals are represented within an organization, what roles they hold, and whether they are valued and respected equally. Lastly, Thomas and Demeola described equity as the fundamental fairness of organizational policies and procedures, as stated, implemented, and applied. All participants discussed that veterans would be better served if they were included in DEI categories. Hunter-Johnson (2021) posited that veterans should be included in the DEI program. P1 echoed the same sentiment as Hunter-Johnson, "veterans' preference policies create more separation and make

candidates feel like they are being excluded, so while the idea of this policy is for good... More often than not, that is not the case. More separation is created" The participants did not mention how hiring managers use DEI associated with VPP.

The participants believed that VPP should be the equivalent to DEI policies. Additionally, all of the participants noted that they did not consider the policies as different but sought inclusive hiring practices. In other words, the participants felt that VPP and DEI should be joined together. Additionally, in this study, DEI is considered a strategy to hire veterans in applying VPP because veterans are considered a protected status or group. The participants all have advocated for DEI to be used as a strategy that hiring managers use to apply VPP. During data collection, P1 said, "Rather than have veteran preference policies and having another group singled out, they [veterans] could be included in DEI groups. I think that would be a better solution." Furthermore, P4 said, "DEI could be used as an effective hiring strategy because it still provides hiring managers with the opportunity to review veteran candidates preferentially, just like other underrepresented categories." Thomas and Demeola (2021) opined that DEI policies are reserved for racial, ethnic, LGBTQ+, and disability representation. A protected status is warranted in this discussion because all the participants believed DEI would be a better strategy for hiring veterans than having a separate category of VPP.

When [veterans'] preference policies are used correctly, the appearance that a specific group is being favored is rejected; bring me a candidate that is qualified with a well written resume that interviews well. I don't care if the candidate is a unicorn; I will give them an opportunity. For me, it's the qualifications and

resume that get them in front of me... Pink, red, yellow, or sparkles. Individuals on the outside looking in are losing the spirit and design behind the policy.

Furthermore, yes, veterans should be included in the DEI canopy. (P4)

P4s' comments indicate that a contradiction exists, and the significance of discrepant data is present. P4 indicated DEI policies are not needed for their purpose, but that is not the case for all hiring managers. Participants P2 and P3 indicated that they felt veterans could be included under the DEI policy as long as veterans were still fairly evaluated. P5 stated that "as a frontline manager, I feel VPP are more of a DEI overarching umbrella than a specific veteran thing. That may better suit what we are trying to do."

Gonzalez and Simson (2021) also discussed the advantages of adding veterans to DEI and the idea of viewing diversity as a standpoint that helps to explain that veterans are a social group and their inclusion in the workplace. Workplace diversity consists of individual differences in work entities such as groups and organizations. Hunter-Johnson (2021) discussed that these differences encompassed various demographic attributes (e.g., gender, age, race, and ethnicity) by which people defined themselves and others. Veteran status shares many aspects with other social identities, including being unchangeable, similar to biological sex and race, and being relatively invisible, which is the case with sexual orientation.

The emerging theme of DEI aligned with Stone and Stone's (2015) concentration on stereotypes associated with individuals with disabilities. This idea also applies to many veterans. This aspect of Stone and Stone's modified disability model is essential to understanding the possibility of grouping veterans into the DEI category. Stone and Stone

posited that veterans are stigmatized like people with disabilities and that hiring managers presented concerns that would likely affect their veterans.

Of course, hiring managers have concerns about hiring vets. There is a stigma that is a cloud of unknown. There is so much positive around hiring veterans and then this big question mark about PTSS or other challenges that veterans may face.” P4 was the only participant that mentioned the stigma. These concerns or stigmas could affect veterans’ employment. (P4)

The theme of DEI being incorporated with veterans' preferences echoed throughout the interviews as participants stated that VPP created another separation category. This idea caused candidates to feel excluded or singled out when the policy was designed to aid employment. The participants indicated that DEI might be a better fit for VPP instead of its own category. Regarding the theme of DEI related to veterans, while the participants did not provide any information, the website revealed proactive recruiting measures. However, the website did not reveal specific veteran policies or practices for hiring or recruiting. Several tabs on the financial services organizations' websites pointed to veterans being a separate group with no relationship to DEI.

In summary, all participants believed that there should be a fair assessment of a veteran candidate; it was just a matter of achieving that end as hiring managers use VPP. At the same time, Hunter-Johnson (2021) agreed with Stone and Stone (2015) that veterans should be included in DEI. Thomas and Demeola (2021) argued that veterans might be better served as a standalone group. Four participants echoed the sentiment of Hunter-Johnson, while one participant sided with Thomas and Demeola. All participants

believed that there should be a fair assessment of a veteran candidate; it was just a matter of achieving that end as hiring managers use VPP.

Applications to Professional Practice

The results of this study could be valuable to current and future financial services organizations that apply VPP in hiring decisions. The results of this study could improve financial services organization productivity and performance. This study is of value to business practice because the findings and recommendations may improve strategies for hiring when applying VPP in hiring decisions. Three themes emerged during the study: (a) training and education for hiring managers, (b) veteran job preparation, and (c) DEI. Financial services in the local area could benefit from this study as a training tool to implement strategies in their organizations that will align hiring managers' use of VPP. Stone and Stone (2015) identified three strategies of the disability model, which are (a) modifying beliefs about veterans, (b) hiring and training decision-makers, and (c) increasing knowledge of military job-related tasks and knowledge, skills, and abilities. The participants followed the strategies of Stone and Stone because of the spirit, mission, and culture of the organization, not because of any written VPP. The participants discussed how they embraced and understood the value of hiring veterans and that veterans were a protected group in the hiring process. Most participants already understood the value veterans bring and job skills transfer. P4 said, "veteran employees are a valued asset to the organization. They show up to work on time, take the initiative, and work well in teams." Hiring managers should embrace VPP education which could increase the candidate pool, provide quality employees, and increase the overall

effectiveness of the organization and the bottom line. This study could increase hiring managers' knowledge, awareness, and strategies for using VPP.

Lastly, the findings could increase hiring managers in financial services institutions' use of VPP and improve veterans' presence within the organization. The findings from this study could contribute to increased awareness and collaboration between hiring managers and local military installation coordinators in southwest Texas in identifying transitioning veterans and preparing those veterans for a smooth transition into the civilian workforce. Financial services organizations in the area may be motivated to build working relationships with military installations to increase recruiting, resume writing and interviewing skills, networking, and preparation for life after the military.

Implications for Social Change

The findings from this study could include reducing the veteran population's unemployment rate, making a difference in the veteran homeless population, and possibly increasing their purchasing power to support the local community. Hiring managers could apply findings from this study to implement and improve VPP in hiring decisions. The implications of positive social change from this study could strengthen the hiring process and decrease veterans' challenges in the workplace. The social change from this study could impact the veteran community by better preparing hiring managers to utilize VPP and veterans for the hiring process and transition into the civilian workplace.

Implications for social change include reducing the veteran population's unemployment rate. If a hiring manager is better prepared to use VPP based on the findings from this study, financial services institutions could benefit through

sustainability and increased profits. Therefore, the local community's veteran unemployment rate may decrease, resulting in a stable local economy and reduced homelessness. The results of this study could help fill gaps in the literature on what strategies hiring managers use to apply VPP in hiring decisions in southwest Texas.

Recommendations for Action

Hiring managers need strategies to apply VPP because the hiring process begins with the hiring manager. According to Haynie (2021), hiring managers lack the necessary knowledge to assess veterans fairly. The results of this study may present value to hiring managers of financial services organizations who lack strategies to apply VPP. The financial services industry employed approximately 6.31 million workers, from customer service representatives, supervisors, and executives (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). When hiring managers in financial services organizations implement the strategies found in the current study, the application of VPP in hiring decisions in their organizations could improve exponentially. Based on the themes revealed in this study, I would make three recommendations for hiring managers to maximize strategies to apply VPP.

Recommendation 1

Hiring managers must receive training and education on evaluation and understanding resumes from veterans with military language and job descriptions. The training and education should not be surface level but such that the hiring manager is well versed in military culture and acumen. According to Taylor (2021), when hiring managers better understand the job descriptions and language used in veteran resumes,

veterans can advance through the hiring process. Furthermore, Haynie (2021) suggested that hiring managers lack the necessary knowledge to assess veterans fairly without training. Training and education filled with military culture, job descriptions, and verbiage will create a hiring manager knowledgeable about applying veteran preference policies.

Recommendation 2

Hiring managers should offer strategies that can be used by hiring managers and veterans to address veterans' challenges in the hiring process. Manoushagian (2020) suggested that recommendations from hiring managers further benefit veterans in the hiring process. The recommendations from experienced hiring managers should include what they are looking for and what they expect to see on resumes and hear in interviews. Additionally, recommendations should consist of information on mentoring and networking, and how these elements tie together in the hiring process.

Recommendation 3

Hiring managers should provide implementation strategies at an organizational level to promote diversity and inclusion, specifically regarding veterans within the DEI program. Hunter-Johnson (2021) stated that although veteran status has been overlooked in diversity research within the management field, it is a social category by which people define themselves and others. Hunter-Johnson posits that veterans should be included under the DEI programs because veteran status shares many aspects with other social identities, including being unchangeable, similar to biological sex and race, and being relatively invisible, which is the case with sexual orientation.

Recommendations for Further Research

Hiring managers in financial services organizations should find the best strategies to apply VPP. Recommendations for further research specific to the financial services industry include expanding similar studies to different locations. Three out of the five participants mentioned that the word strategy was not part of their organizational terminology; therefore, I recommend using the word initiatives as opposed to strategies to align more with industry concepts. I also recommend that the researcher expand the analysis to include financial services organizations outside of southwest Texas.

It would be equally valuable to consider the market size when exploring strategies to apply VPP. Veterans' preference strategies may vary within region populated differently, so choosing a more sparsely or more extensively populated market may produce valuable results. I recommend that researchers veterans' preference strategies in a more prominent, if feasible, and small market in financial services.

While this study was directly related to exploring strategies to apply VPP, each participant mentioned "veteran and or military spouses" during their interview. Expanding the study to explore strategies to apply veteran preference policies for veteran and military spouses may strengthen the existing research and add new techniques to explore. I believe that a study conducted within different industries would also be beneficial as this study was focused on the financial services industry. Other possible industry study options would be education, corporate, and services.

Lastly, this study involved only the perspective of hiring managers with experience using VPP. All participants had an affiliation with the military (e.g., veteran,

spouse, or child of a military member) as they were the first five to respond to the invitation to participate in the research study. It would be advantageous to conduct this study with hiring managers who meet the criteria but do not have an affiliation with the military.

Reflections

When I started this journey, it accelerated my career path and put me in a better position to advance professionally. Since that time, many life changes have taken place, and while I am open to an advancement professionally, I now have options. As a retired military veteran of the United States Navy, I can now choose what I want to do. Hence, I decided to complete this journey for a personal reason, not because I had to but because I wanted to.

When I reflect on my doctoral journey, many thoughts come to mind, some good and some bad. I faced an array of trials, including setbacks, crying tears, and emotional exhaustion. I also experienced triumphs. I considered ending this journey on several occasions as the path became extraordinarily grueling and, at times, what seemed unsurpassable. The support of my wife, family, friends, and chair encouraged me every step of the way. I encountered and overcame numerous obstacles, loss of employment, and deaths in my family, and I rose to the occasion. I strengthened my resolve and remembered who I am and whose I am. I utilized my resources and moved forward. I have learned more about myself and what I am capable of, this process called research, and what it takes to be a leader.

I learned that becoming a doctor is not about the title. It is about the professional journey and the opportunity to give back if only a portion of what I received. The excursion also involves challenging oneself to go beyond your limits, intellectual stimulation, developing as a professional, and the desire to finish. There is no quit in my DNA, and I am my ancestors' wildest dreams.

After 20 years in the United States Navy, transition, and job loss, I have understood the need for enhanced transition programs and VPP. I see veterans around me, and I have understood the need for further study in this arena. This study proves to be no different. As I climb the ladder of success, I must reach down and pull others alongside me; In doing so, the implications for social change could reduce the veteran population's unemployment rate, potentially making a difference in the veteran homeless population and possibly increasing their purchasing power for supporting the local community.

Conclusion

I conducted a multiple case qualitative study to explore the strategies hiring managers use to apply to VPP in hiring decisions in financial services organizations. Hiring managers in financial services organizations need to improve their strategies to apply VPP in hiring decisions to recognize veterans' skills and increase their veteran employee base. To obtain data triangulation, I conducted semistructured interviews with the hiring managers of financial services organizations and viewed relevant information on their websites and social media. Through the data collected, training and development, veteran job preparation, and DEI emerged as themes. The common themes found in the

current study align with much of the available existing research. The recommendations from experienced hiring managers should include what they are looking for and what they expect to see on resumes and hear in interviews. Additionally, recommendations should include information on mentoring, networking, and how these elements tie together in the hiring process. Hiring managers should provide implementation strategies at an organizational level to promote diversity and inclusion, specifically regarding veterans within the DEI program.

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<p>* Watch for nonverbal cues * Paraphrase as needed *Ask follow-up questions to get more in depth responses if necessary</p>	<p>I will ask you 7 questions and will audio record this interview as well as take notes. Your participation along with this interview in a private matter, and I will keep these proceedings confidential.</p> <p>Do you have any questions or concerns about anything that I have discussed with you this far?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What are your organization's veterans' preference policies?2. What strategies do you use to apply veterans' preference policies in your hiring decisions?3. What is the basis for the strategies you use to apply veterans' preference policies in your hiring decisions?4. What strategies do you find work best to apply veterans' preference policies in hiring decisions?5. How does the organization assist hiring managers to apply veterans' preference policies in hiring decisions?6. What assessment do you use to evaluate the organizational effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the applied veterans' preference policies in hiring decisions?7. What additional information would you like to add about veterans' preference policies in hiring decisions?
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