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Strategies for Minimizing Defects in Outsourced Products

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MBA, Averett University, 2011

BS, Hampton University, 1998

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Manufacturing leaders who produce airbags need to immediately identify product defects before fulfilling customer orders to enhance customer safety and satisfaction as well as to decrease costs. Grounded in stewardship theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies leaders of organizations fabricating parts use for identifying defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders from within the manufacturing industry. The participants were 10 manufacturing leaders from the southeast region of Virginia. Data were gathered from semistructured interviews and document review. Using Yin's 5-step approach, the themes that emerged were (a) communication and relationship with outsourced entities, (b) monitoring and tracking the quality system for product defects, (c) communication and relationship with customer service for defective products, and (d) communication and continuous improvement regarding customer's product defects. A key recommendation from this study is that manufacturing leaders can use the results to identify appropriate strategic planning methods and implement additional effective safety measures. The implications for positive social change can lead to safer vehicles on the highways, which can save lives and reduce recalls that result in financial losses that can affect the stability of jobs in the manufacturing industry.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my father Walter and my mother Josephine who both instilled in me the importance of education and the will to not only push myself but to also believe that I can accomplish anything through God and hard work. This is also dedicated to my grandmothers Ella Louise who was a school teacher and Delzina, a domestic worker, would have loved to have seen me accomplish this extraordinary desire.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Manufacturing companies consider transferring production and using businesses outside their firms to increase performance, reach new customers, and provide a product or service that benefits both parties (Jha et al., 2020). Businesses using outsourced organizations, that include those using IT software, have witnessed business processes become problematic and challenging when the products and services result in defects and lack of trust (Dutta & Omolayole, 2021). For example, the Japanese company Takata, responsible for airbags in most automobiles, received a fine, which was the largest civil penalty in history, for providing defective airbags and not disclosing all information to the public (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2016).

Background of the Problem

Outsourcing providers for many companies became widespread during the 1990s and specialized in goods and services with a specific level of competency (Krishnan, 2021). The use of outside resources of an organization can be a strategic use of outsourcing to perform activities normally handled by internal resources (Krishnan, 2021). However, discovering the defective product may cause the parent organization's buyer to return the material to the outsourced supplier, or the organization's leaders may decide to recall the product if life-threatening situations occur (Nassar et al., 2020).

The defective design of the air bag by Takata is an example of an outsourced product. Before consumers found the airbags defective, the automotive industry leaders discovered information about the defect (Pietenpol, 2019). By 2019, there were 24 deaths and 300 injuries related to defective airbags (Burke et al., 2020). Before completion of the defective airbag investigations, some of the biggest automobile leaders such as Fiat Chrysler, Toyota, BMW, and Honda initially accepted the blame and prepared for recalls of automobiles from customers. However, once the investigations were complete, the defective airbags were traced to the company Takata (Foldy, 2019).

The recall for the airbags is phenomenal in that thousands of cars from all types of makers have sent out recalls for the airbags, causing the leaders of Takata to file bankruptcy (Crouch et al., 2021). The issue is that the manufacturers receiving the airbags are not immediately identifying the defect before shipping the automobile (Foldy, 2019). In order to decrease cost, enhance customer safety and customer satisfaction, the outsourced supplier should identify product defects prior to fulfilling customer orders.

Problem and Purpose

The specific business problem was that leaders of organizations fabricating parts lack strategies for identifying defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders to the manufacturing industry (Pietenpol, 2019). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies leaders of organizations fabricating parts use for identifying defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders from within the manufacturing industry. The targeted population included 10 successful leaders from different areas in manufacturing who provided products to manufacturing companies in the Southeast region of Virginia.

Population and Sampling

In this multiple case study, I used manufacturing companies whose leaders used strategies to fabricate parts and identify defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders to the manufacturing industry. To gain access to the participants, I used the social media platforms Linked In, Instagram, and Facebook to solicit individuals from local organizations who met the eligibility criteria of the study. I interviewed 10 participants. When the research process is specific, and the collection of data is decisive with no new information but redundancy, there is a possibility of data saturation (Alam, 2021).

For this study, purposeful or purposive sampling was chosen. Purposeful sampling is when the researcher relies on their own judgment when selecting participants for participation in studies (Achmad et al., 2022). I chose this type of sampling to ensure I had participants who met the criteria for participation. In this study, the strategic experience of the participants to identify defects before fulfilling customers' orders was the main criteria for selection. After I confirmed the participant met my eligibility criteria, I performed Zoom interviews. Lutfun (2021) stated that when performing qualitative research, the researcher should have a skill of building a rapport and trust with each participant in the research. It is important to have rapport and trust especially if the topic is sensitive or if the research involves participants from a disadvantaged, oppressed, or stigmatized population.

Nature of the Study

The research methods considered for this study included mixed methods, quantitative, and qualitative (see Yin, 2018). Concurrently conducting both the qualitative and quantitative methods is mixed methods research. Mixed methods include analyzing the components independently but interpreting the results together using a convergent parallel design (Miranda et al., 2020). Given the in-depth and detailed requirements of using both research methods for adequate analysis, the mixed method was not used in this study. The research method for this study was qualitative. Researchers using the qualitative method play an important role in collecting data, presentation, and interpretation while exploring their participant's activities and processes in their complexities (Yoon & Uliassi, 2022).

The ability to connect with the individuals who participated in this study while exploring strategies to identify and improve quality of outsourced products made the qualitative methodology best for this study. The quantitative research method aligns more with researchers who identify the cause and effects of techniques, strategies, and assumptions within relationships (Yin, 2018). However, identifying the cause and effect of strategies, techniques, and assumptions was not the goal of this study.

The research designs I considered for my study for the qualitative methodology were ethnography, narrative design, phenomenology, and case study (see Yin, 2018). Researchers use an ethnographic design to study interactions, beliefs, language, and behavior between many people in a culture or group (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). Ethnography was not appropriate for this study because there is no intent to get involved in the lives of group members. The emphasis of narrative research design is focusing on the experiences of participants through the process of storytelling. The story usually has an experience or event that has caused changes in the person or situation (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). With narrative design, participants share their individual views while the researcher interprets their stories (Smith, 2018), which was not suitable for this study.

Researchers use phenomenology to review the lived experiences of group members in a key event (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015). Because lived experiences of group participants were not a part of this study, using phenomenology was not suitable for this study. Instead, a multiple case study design was used for this research. Case study exploration assists the researcher in gaining insight into real life conditions that contains methods of exploring and assessing multilayered issues in a natural setting. The case study allows the researcher to concentrate on the how or why of the study (Verleye, 2019). The case study was the appropriate design for my study because it focused on a bounded case to explore processes within a single area. A multiple case study was chosen over a single case study to closely explore the selected data within multiple organizations instead of a single organization to develop a more in-depth understanding of the phenomena than a single case could provide.

Research Question

What strategies do leaders of organizations fabricating parts use to identify defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders in the manufacturing industry?

Interview Questions

1. As a business leader, describe your relationship with outsourced entities.
2. What strategies do you use to minimize product defects?
3. What strategies do you use to oversee organizations providing products/services to your organization?
4. How often are your quality practices and procedures reviewed/audited?
5. What risk management practices do you use to prevent defects in products?

6. What processes and/or procedures do you use to elicit feedback from customers regarding defects in products?
7. What strategies do you use to address product defects?
8. What strategies do you use to ensure proper relationships with customers for addressing defects?
9. What are your organization's lessons learned strategy on defective products?
10. What else would you like to tell me about strategies you use to identify defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders?

Conceptual Framework

The stewardship theory that applied to this study was first introduced by Donaldson and Davis (1991) as a counterbalance to the agency theory presented by Jensen and Meckling (1976). When applying the stewardship theory, the agent concerns themselves with the goals and interest of their principals with little interest for their own as an agent (Aßländer et al., 2016). The constructs of the stewardship theory are (a) autonomy, (b) motivation, (c) identification, (d) authority, (e) stakeholder orientation, and (f) collaboration (Aßländer et al., 2016). The concepts apply to the problem statement and data analysis in a combination that enhances intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is performing activities for satisfaction instead of a reward (Kachoui, 2018). These concepts were applicable to my problem statement because leaders of organizations fabricating parts need to be motivated, collaborative, autonomous, and intrinsically motivated to address defects proactively. Stewardship theory was appropriate for this study because the leader is concerned about the organization and not themselves. I evaluated the constructs of stewardship theory in the data analysis and the findings because concepts such as intrinsic motivation, collaboration, and autonomy were discovered through analysis.

Operational Definitions

Bottlenecking: Bottlenecking is signified by a restriction of production of a machine triggered by one or more volume constraints that imply maximum production (Ribeiro et al., 2021).

Corporate governance: Corporate governance structure assists how the board of directors navigates the management of the company. The broader objective is to ensure transparency for shareholders and stakeholders while ensuring their best interest. (Kareem Alzubaidi, 2021).

Extrinsic: Extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards and consequences (Kachoui, 2018).

Intrinsic: Intrinsic motivation is driven by internal satisfaction rather than consequence (Kachoui, 2018).

Offshoring: Offshoring uses external suppliers abroad to supply goods and services that the company's own employees previously provided (Kossonou & McMurtrey, 2021)

Product harm crisis: Product harm crisis is a well-publicized, unplanned event where an organization's products are found to be dangerous or defective (Raithel et al., 2021).

Supply chain: Supply chain is the management and flow of resources within the businesses processes from attaining raw materials to distribution of the product to the end user to maintain profitable business operations (Macide Berna Çağlar & Kenan, 2020).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

When conducting scholarly research, researchers face various critical restrictions. These restrictions, which include source availability, may create limitations within the study and the researchers' process as expressed in the assumptions (Simon, 2011). The researcher serves as the tool for evaluation in a qualitative study. The perception of the researcher may potentially influence interpretation, the collection of data, and presentation (Chan et al., 2013).

Assumptions

Assumptions are beliefs or common understandings not verified yet considered true (Simon & Goes, 2013). I assumed that the participants would provide insightful and honest answers during interviews. A second assumption was that the participants would have the required level of experience in identifying defects prior to filling orders.

Limitations

Limitations are unidentified circumstances that transpire, which can weaken the study (Yin, 2018). Within this qualitative study, the limitations included participants who may have lacked the experience in identifying defective products. Training is essential in any facet of employment. The lack of training added with new or short time employment may produce a hindrance.

Another limitation for this study was that the space provided may not have been conducive for the interviews. If the participant and researcher are placed in a room with no privacy or the room is not secured, the participant may feel uneasy in answering the interview questions truthfully. If the participant felt uneasy or felt they could receive backlash from their organization, they could decide to withdraw from the interview at any time. An additional limitation to the study was the time allotted for each interview, along with the times of day the interview may be given. Depending on the time allotted for the interview, the participant may decide to shorten their answers, which may leave out valuable data. If substantial time is given, the participant may feel the need to add information as a filler to their statements. The time of day a participant is interviewed may influence the data obtained (Hovell et al., 2020). Some participants may prefer morning interviews, while other participants may prefer an afternoon interview. The final limitation included statements that were made during the interview that were unclear or incomplete. Incomplete or unclear statements can skew data or, worse yet, cause data to be thrown out.

Delimitations

Delimitations are choices made by an investigator regarding the boundaries for a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This study did not include employees with less than 5 years of work experience in a manufacturing facility located in the southeast region of Virginia. This study only included leaders from manufacturing organizations who manage employees who fabricate parts for delivery to other organizations. This study excluded any employees who worked in other areas of manufacturing like payroll or food service.

Significance of the Study

The social implications of this study informed business leaders on organizations working together to achieve win-win opportunities while improving their internal processes. The training and review of processes and procedures with employees improved product defects before fulfilling orders, which lowered product risk. The results from the study informed business leaders on how to minimize defects in products before fulfilling orders, which resulted in reduced risk, lower cost, and higher quality products. The primary reason business leaders use outsourcing is to stay competitive, decrease costs, and access new markets, while transferring production to outside companies (Zamfir et al., 2017). Because business leaders are concerned with meeting schedules, and curtailing costs, it is imperative for suppliers with expertise to manage products and materials that are outsourced from parent organizations (Khan et al., 2019).

Contribution to Business Practice

In this study, I uncovered strategies and processes that may assist in increasing the quality of manufactured products. The strategies of minimizing defects from outsourced organizations can contribute to benefiting the consumer, increase profit margins, and add profits in the local communities. The research findings within the study can assist business leaders in improving production strategies that contribute to addressing defective products from outsourced organizations, which could enhance consumer safety.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change in this study include a reduction of defective automotive parts from outsourced organizations and improvement in the quality of sourced auto parts installed in manufactured products. One of the main objectives of this study was to engender positive social change by concentrating on the issue of product defects. Product defects concerns have significant social implications and risks. Risks include accepting noncompliant material from organizations with substandard quality processes. Another risk is avoiding counterfeit parts from entering inspections areas, which may prevent sabotage of major components. Lastly, a risk is the threat of terrorism by installing poorly made parts, which could fail and cause detrimental damage.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The literature review begins with the purpose of the study, which was to explore strategies leaders may use to identify defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders in the manufacturing industry. Along with the purpose of the study, I include an analysis of scholarly peer-reviewed articles that provide a definition and explanation of the theory used in this study. I open with an analysis and detailed summary of stewardship theory, which was the conceptual framework for my study. In this portion, I also discuss the constructs of stewardship theory and how the theory has worked in some organizations. Next, I discuss similar and contrasting theories related to stewardship theory and reasons why these theories would not have worked with this study. The next section includes an examination of the strategies addressing product defects and risks from outsourced organizations. After risk, suppliers and their subtiers are explored to understand the importance of the relationship. Lastly, during the time this study was worked on, a pandemic occurred, referred to as COVID-19. I also discuss the effects of the pandemic to manufacturing and the workplace.

A total of 95% of my sources were peer-reviewed (see Table 1). A total of 72% of the literature within this study was within 5 years of my expected graduation date of 2023.

Table 1

Literature Review Summary

Peer-reviewed	Published before 2019	Published between 2019 and 2023	Total
(184) 95%	(54) 28%	(140) 72%	194

The online databases used were ABI/INFORMS Global, ProQuest, and Business Source Complete. Key words used for searching included *stewardship theory, transaction cost theory, stakeholder theory, shareholder theory, resource dependency theory, corporate governance, autonomy, motivation, identification, authority, stakeholder orientation,* and *collaboration*.

Stewardship Theory

I used stewardship theory as the conceptual framework for my study. Stewardship theory was first introduced by Donaldson and Davis (1991) as a counterbalance to the agency theory presented by Jensen and Meckling (1976). In this theory, the steward has a behavior displaying motivations that are individual and look for no economic basis (Schmidthuber & Hilgers, 2019). The steward also has a focus on self-management and empowerment that parallel with the principal's values (Boon, 2018). This conceptual theory was applicable in the data analysis and findings section in several ways. First, my interview questions aligned with the framework. Second, I compared and contrasted the themes from the analysis with the available research on the conceptual framework. Third, my constructs within the conceptual theory aligned with the framework and were applicable with the data analysis.

Business leaders integrating stewardship theory may also use other leadership developments and concepts when collaborating with their employees and suppliers (Franco & Antunes, 2020). Suppliers using stewardship theory within their companies have become strategic partners with their peers, which creates a strategic alliance between the businesses (Fayezi et al., 2020). Collective goals instead of individual goals are the emphasis in stewardship theory (Obermann et al., 2020). The collaboration and strong working relationship between the leaders of an organization and the board, with the board administering advice, may provide agility, visibility, and adaptability to the supply chain, which emphasizes stewardship theory (Poberschnigg et al., 2020).

Stewardship theory is a key component of servant leadership, which empowers individuals to reach goals as an organization or team (Franco & Antunes, 2020). With the rapid change in global economics, leaders are expected to possess mental curiosity and be well rounded in business practices while possessing honesty and modesty when leading others (Franco & Antunes, 2020). Leaders using stewardship theory along with servant leader styles enable their employees to obtain opportunities for development that benefit the organization. This type of leadership can assist employees in reaching their full potential while bringing out the best in them.

Improving accountability in the public domain is important to coincide with stewardship theory in that the concept can work as a mechanism explaining the actions of leaders and the roles in which they operate (Kgobe & Mamokhere, 2021). Fundamentally, accountability is the trust factor between the leaders and their board members to battle unethical conduct because it is one of the most exceedingly adversaries of development (Kgobe & Mamokhere, 2021). Leaders using accountability while implementing good corporate governance must build trust in their employees and their counterparts, which prompts success and effectiveness (Kgobe & Mamokhere, 2021).

In corporate governance, there is a form of agency theory scholars have described as having self-interested behavior. One of the concepts found in the agency theory, may be unrealistic and misleading (Obermann et al., 2020). Those working in a director or agent position may function as stewards at times, who are not concerned with their own financial gain but will act on behalf of their companies (Obermann et al., 2020). There has been an enormous amount of attention given to corporate governance over the past few years (Amartey et al., 2019).

The board plays an important role in corporate governance by participating in the accountability process. The process may at times have a negative connotation by some board members. These negative connotations take place when board members feel a rite of passage and do not have to adhere to rules and regulations. When the processes of the board are not adhered to, the results may be organizations collapsing (Amartey et al., 2019).

If the leader is assigned to the board as a director, and the director has a board to answer to, the relationship between the leader and the board is important to keep the company moving. The knowledge the director may bring to the board is a large factor in the performance of the board (Elms & Nicholson, 2020). The director using the agency theory may not always act in the best interest of their company, but more so in the director's own interest (Elms & Nicholson, 2020). The leader using the stewardship theory has built trust and collaboration along with motivation to work for the best interest of their company (Franco & Antunes, 2020).

Jiraporn et al. (2020) stated that the main driver behind formulating the board committee is agency theory. In order to improve corporate governance and enhance accountability, the creation of subcommittees from the board allows directors from the board to delegate tasks to the subcommittees to show transparency of the board. The board is comprised of inside directors selected from executives of the organization, and the outside director's only connection with the organization is being on the board (Rouf & Hossan, 2020).

The directors of the board have an accountability to bring knowledge to enhance the performance of the board. According to Elms and Nicholson (2020), there are two categories of knowledge the director is responsible for. The first category is functional skills, which are skills unique to the director acquired before joining the board. The second category of knowledge is firm specific knowledge, which requires the director to possess a robust understanding of the strategic plans, operations, and leader's performance within the firm. Elms and Nicholson also stated that there are differences in accountability: being held accountable and feeling accountable. One feeling accountable can be intrinsic.

Leaders who engage in stewardship behavior within their organizations prioritize on behalf of the company and demand a leverage of power in order to increase the organization's performance (Obermann et al., 2020). Prioritizing takes place when leaders identify themselves or have an identification with an organization and have a collective understanding of what is essential to the organization. Along with understanding, the leader also discerns the organization's identity as attractive, unique, trustworthy, and constant with their own self concepts (Ma et al., 2021).

Wei et al. (2021) found that those individuals using the stewardship theory are entrusted to fulfill duties and responsibilities for organizations or individuals through intrinsic motivation. As a worker or leader, the steward is expected to perform their duties in a careful manner, while suppressing their own interest and preserving the interest of the organization. Shah et al. (2021) argued that stewardship leaders are intrinsically motivated to perform job assignments for individuals or organizations to which they are entrusted. With the need for improved business practices, some leaders of organizations needed to institute voluntary mandatory disclosures and greater transparency within their organizations, with respect to certain areas such as structured contracts. These changes came from the loss of trust from consumers not knowing which organizations were honest or had the consumers' best interest (Dumay et al., 2018).

Combined with the stewardship theory are behaviors innate to leaders who apply the theory: (a) higher autonomy, (b) psychological ownership, and (c) identification with the organization (Singh & Amit, 2020). Using higher autonomy allows the leader or employee of an organization to have flexible access to initiate their own actions without restrictions (Ruoxuan et al., 2020). Psychological ownership involves employees who have developed feelings of possession and ownership in the workplace when they are not owners of the organization (Ljungkvist & Boers, 2020). Leaders and employees engaging in the behavior of identification with the organization incorporate significant components from the organizations while perceiving a oneness with the organization (Tipuric et al., 2021).

Business leaders using these behaviors along with the stewardship theory model and corporate social responsibility (CSR) may use these to guide their organizations. These tools benefit the general interest of others by being socially and environmentally responsible with no future irresponsible actions (Sahasranamam et al., 2020). Past researchers focusing on the business world and the leaders running organizations have found stewardship behaviors to be valuable to the organization, stakeholders, and employees (Singh & Amit, 2020). Leaders accepting accountability and responsibility along with commitment to the employees within an organization bring about emotional connections, respect, trust, and authenticity (Singh & Amit, 2020). Incorporating stewardship theory within an organization can promote social change by enlisting leaders in projects within the community. Projects such as feeding the needy and mentoring youth endorse socially responsible engaging leaders to work within the community, inevitably causing the leaders to have a genuine concern for others (Domínguez-Escrig et al., 2019).

Constructs for Stewardship Theory

Aßländer et al. (2016) stated that the constructs for stewardship theory include (a) autonomy, (b) motivation, (c) identification, (d) authority, (e) stakeholder orientation, and (f) collaboration. Along with the constructs, there are concepts of stewardship theory that leaders may possess, such as a motivation to act in the very best interest of the organization, collectivistic behaviors, and proorganizational behaviors (Schillemans & Bjurstrøm, 2020). Some of the constructs mentioned may collaborate along with each other such as autonomy and motivation. Employees using autonomy with permission from their leaders may feel motivated and accountable for their behavior while achieving work improvements (Lobel Trong et al., 2021).

Autonomy

Autonomy is defined as the inclination of one's own interest (Hand, 2020). With respect to autonomy, organizations that are parent companies over family firms look to the family firms for their development and decision making. Within the development and decision making process, family firms use autonomy; freedom from external control or influence to the organization in order to govern itself with has a positive effect on their ownership (Harrison, 2019). Mergers and acquisitions taking place in family firms may decrease the power of proprietorship, autonomy, and cash flow and are less philanthropic (Harrison, 2019).

Autonomy connects to my problem statement by understanding how leaders may have different motivations on how the organization should run. Autonomy is important when outsourcing to another organization. When the parent organization decides to use outside sources for products or services, the outsourced organization must have autonomous leaders as to not be overrun by the parent company.

Motivation

Motivation is defined as the reasons or incentive structures that drive people to act (Bennett et al., 2018). The motivation construct used in stewardship theory undertakes the thought that leaders are motivated by the wellbeing of their employees (Till & Yount, 2018). Leaders along with employees are given responsibilities within their organizations, with an expectation of desired results. When those expectations are not met, the person's performance is reviewed (Osro et al., 2018). The motivation of leaders and employees whose services and/or products are outsourced to parent organizations has an expected result of timely delivery of great quality with a reasonable cost.

Renewing the motivation of leaders and employees can become a daunting task if mistrust and unreliability are within an organization. There are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic (Bennett et al., 2018). When the leader is motivated by egocentricity and responds to reward or is reprimand, extrinsic motivation is present. Intrinsic motivation refers to the leader or employee who believes their task is meaningful, and their self-worth is valued because their skill set and knowledge are used to complete the task at hand (Torfing & Bentzen, 2020). A leader or employee possessing the characteristics of intrinsic motivation also encompasses the stewardship theory towards their organization (Schmidthuber & Hilgers, 2019). The intrinsic motivation character aligns with finding strategies for identifying defects in that the individual has self-motivation, will collaborate, and possesses internal satisfaction to finding a solution.

Reviewing outsourcing in connection with stewardship theory is appropriate because of the decision-making process in business relationships and collaborations with suppliers. Stewardship theory may provide an important advantage when organizational and cultural factors are influential for employee motivation. It is important for leaders to understand whether their employee's motivation is intrinsic or extrinsic (Torfing & Bentzen, 2020). Understanding the difference between the motivations relates to the problem statement and interview questions by recognizing how the participants may react to identifying defects.

Identification

Identification refers to the leader's confidence and certainty that an organization's vision and mission statements along with their purposes align with those of the leader (Li et al., 2019). When a leader identifies with and agrees with their organization's goals and ideology, the leader is more apt to complete their goals and tasks by going the extra mile and finishing either by the deadline or earlier (Li et al., 2019). These leaders also understand that assisting their organization in completing objectives is important not only for themselves but for long term milestones of the organization (Li et al., 2019). Organizations may give incentives to leaders for completing objectives to develop interest and enthusiasm within the department along with stimulating their mindsets (Kapur, 2022).

Stakeholder Orientation

Stakeholder orientation represents how a company attends to the interest of all relevant stakeholders as well as all other parties involved with the success or failure of the organization (Paharia, 2019). The stakeholder orientation is derived from stakeholder theory (Soundararajan et al., 2019), which builds on the culture and behavior of the organization and encourages members to continuously be aware of stakeholders' issues and concerns (Vaitoonkiat & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). In some organizations, the stakeholders believe the organization they are affiliated with should be managed solely for the stakeholder's benefit, regardless of financial gain (Rahman et al., 2019). The organization's day to day business can affect the stakeholder, which is a constant concern (Waheed & Qaisar, 2019). The increased presence of stakeholders in an organization's internal governance promotes equality. Stakeholder theory is appropriate for managers who are concerned with all aspects of business within the organization but does not include a framework for managers concentrating on an immediate project.

Collaboration

Collaboration encompasses a steward to not only care, but share. A leader who possesses steward characteristics, understands the action of working with someone to produce or create something is essential (Cockburn et al., 2019). Within the supply chain organization, especially in outsourcing, all parties must come together to collaborate on information and form a bond of trust (de Goede et al., 2018). Between the two parties, the buyer and supplier must form a bond where a transparency relationship exists to complete the required task or goal that is expected on both sides. Without these important factors in the relationship between the two parties, the relationship can prove detrimental to both parties. Disruptions of any type within the relationship of the two organizations should be at a minimum with the goal to reach each milestone with open communication (de Goede et al., 2018). Collaboration applies to the problem statement and the other sections because teams that collaborate are better able to identify defects (Kachoui, 2018).

Supporting and Contrasting Theories

In this section, I discuss the supporting and contrasting theories related to the conceptual framework of stewardship theory. There are several theories within corporate governance that concentrate on the encounters of governance daily. Because I am examining stewardship in this study, a supporting theory is the transaction cost economics (TCE) theory, while a contrasting theory is agency theory.

Transaction Cost Economics

TCE was developed by the late Nobel Laureate Oliver Williamson in 1979 (Francois, 2021). The theory includes elements that assisted leaders in organizations to evaluate internal operations to enhance performance within the organization. Leaders optimize transaction cost by working with outside organizations to minimize cost while exchanging transactions between the organizations (De Carvalho, 2019). There are instances where an organization must decide whether to outsource a product or service. In order to decide whether or not to outsource, the organization needs to understand the cost, time and effort of going through with purchasing from an external source or incurring the cost from in-house; which explains transaction cost (Vyas et al., 2018). Outsourcing products and services are beneficial to all parties when the products or services are too intricate and the resources to obtain these products and services are bare to minimal for the parent organization (Vyas et al., 2018). The TCE theory is appropriate for managers with opportunistic and self-interest goals and was not an appropriate choice for my conceptual framework.

Agency Theory

The agency theory was originated in 1976 by Jensen and Meckling to analyze the principal-agent issues in business settings (Jean Robert et al., 2020). The business setting for some organizations consists of an agency relationship where the actions and motivations of the agents may not align with the principals or stakeholders of the organization (Marashdeh et al., 2021). There is a potential conflict by the agent, even with a relationship contract between the principal and the agent to make the best decisions and perform with the interest of the stakeholders in mind (Marashdeh et al., 2021). Leaders under the agency theory are revered as possessing extrinsic goals, with a self-interest attitude (Bentzen, 2021). The agency theory which was originated by Jensen and Meckling as an economic model, is used by theorists to explain the behaviors of some leaders. The leaders meeting these characteristics can be considered as opportunistic and have a preference of self-interest over the interest of the organization (Zulfiqar et al., 2021).

Agency theory exists whenever a principal hires an agent to perform a service, and delegates decision-making authority to the agent (Gaia & Jones, 2020). A challenge with the principal agent relationship is that the principal and the agent do not share the same goal (Gaia & Jones, 2020). The manager and agent's interests may not align with what is best for the organization (Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

In the same manner, the manager and agent should align goals to help improve organizational competitiveness. Managers are concerned with not just their decisions when outsourcing but are aware of the agent's agenda (Gunasekaran et al., 2015). The agency theory was not appropriate for this conceptual framework because the manager is more concerned with the cost for themselves than the outcome of the project.

Strategies for Addressing Product Defects and Risks

In this section, I provided an examination of the product defects and risks from outsourced organizations. Also included is an overview of the importance of organizations having quality products, reputation, and outsourcing. The importance of having a good global supply chain network through the process is crucial to any leader attempting success with the organization and having to outsource to stay competitive in their respective market.

Importance of Quality Products

Leaders working in the manufacturing industry must be conscious of outsourcing and the associated risk of their company's reputation of quality when products are received from other organizations (Jasinska & Jasinski, 2018). When products received from outside the company are installed into a system, those products are expected to work properly. When the products do not function properly or injure the consumer, leaders should then initiate a product recall. Leaders that wait to recall a defective product have to deal with not only safety factors from consumers or liability claims but also loss of reputation (Patro et al., 2021).

Reputation

Having a good reputation with the consumer can increase a company's capital and sales growth while promoting potential clients and buyers to move into contracts and negotiations. However, when consumers, who have been through situations of product defects can be less than understanding due to suspiciousness of the organization from past product defects recalls (Enis & Bayraktaroglu, 2021). When a leader has made the decision to file for bankruptcy or recall a product, the leader must think about the financial impact of the organization. Defective product recalls have significant penalties to organizations such as pulling products from consumer availability and consumer blame response of the organization (Enis & Bayraktaroglu, 2021).

Recalls for many leaders can lead to financial ruin, especially if the consumer has lost all confidence in the manufacturer. Once the consumer hears a recall is announced, they may participate in the recall, and evaluate whether they will purchase the product in the future. There are two ways a recall occurs; voluntary or reactive. The voluntary recall occurs when the automaker initiates a recall without involving the national highway traffic safety administration (NHTSA), while the reactive recall happens when NHTSA directs the automaker to initiate a recall (Patro et al., 2021).

Outsourcing

Before outsourcing began, the needed parts were taken off the truck, and the production or manufacturing team was made responsible. With the changing times, outsourcing is seen as the way to cut costs if the products are too expensive to make in-house due to training, expertise, or cost of materials. A parent company may use outsourcing to become more competitive in their respective market by outsourcing work that another facility or organization can produce at a cheaper rate because their leaders have hired the experts for the required task (Shaiq & Hassan, 2019). Historically, supply chain agility has been brought into the forefront of business in order to remain competitive in their respective markets (Irfan et al., 2020).

Supply chain agility is defined as the organization's ability to quickly respond and adjust to changing strategies by manipulating internal and external proficiencies to satisfy customer expectations (Irfan et al., 2020). Outsourcing originated from the term "outside resourcing" which explains how organizations utilize the resources outside the organization's scope (Gossler et al., 2020). Pharmaceutical and biotechnology outsourced services are forecasted to reach 91.4 billion by 2028 (Thomas, 2021). Outsourcing is now so widely used; it has become global. Some organizations have chosen to outsource a part or all their business to facilities overseas to lower cost and to concentrate on their core business activities. Leaders are consistently considering new business opportunities and strategies to generate value (Shaiq & Hassan, 2019). Leaders who have access to valuable insights for changing the global market have the opportunity to strengthen relationships while improving their performance (Gawankar et al., 2020).

Offshore outsourcing is not only an important, but an effective part of business operations, especially in the international sector. The global offshoring market has grown in the last 30 years (Matilde et al., 2021). There is a debate however on the benefits and adverse effects of offer shoring especially with jobs (Kossonou & McMurtrey, 2021). The benefits of offshoring include working remotely, online commerce growth, increased rebuilding of networks and local services and innovative workplace management. The drawbacks of offshoring include loss of jobs (especially in the United States), lowered the wages of low skilled workers in the United States, negative effect on foreign jobs in foreign countries (Kossonou & McMurtrey, 2021).

Leaders in the organization desire their projects to have an effective and positive completion. As the products work through the processes of outsourcing, there are items to consider such as schedule, cost, and quality. In some cases, a leader from an organization may complete the entire project in-house, while other leaders inquire from outside services or facilities the capabilities and expertise of that firm to ensure the best quality product or service. Leaders also use developed and underdeveloped countries to supply their needs through outsourcing. The advantages of outsourcing outweigh the disadvantages causing leaders to create a collaborative relationship with the sourced facility (Shaiq & Hassan, 2019).

Outsourcing is a crucial tool for an organization to focus on its core business operations (Prajapati et al., 2020). There are two types of outsourcing: private sector and public sector. Outsourcing is used in the private sector during the purchasing process by leaders buying from the market instead of manufacturing in house (Hakansson & Axelsson, 2020). Another direction used by a leader is to form an alliance or relationship with their suppliers and eventually take over the unit of product. Leaders using outsourcing through the public sector use suppliers from the market, however there is competition to get the most efficient solution (Hakansson & Axelsson, 2020).

To determine if an organization needs to outsource, leaders need to research internally as well as externally to decide if the cost benefits the end outcome. Once management has decided to outsource, leaders then should ensure the outside organization has the same requirements for quality as well as moral requirements of integrity. The process for outside organizations to receive the same requirements as the parent organization is to provide a contract to the outside organization with the standards listed (Sánchez-Jerónimo et al., 2022). Many organizations are outsourcing part or all their businesses to cut cost, remain competitive within their markets and to concentrate on their core business competencies. In an effort to continue remaining competitive, some businesses that collaborate with other organizations to provide products and services is a common place in industries such as manufacturing and retail (Rosin et al., 2019).

These organizations may provide information technology services, banking services, cell phone services or automobile manufacturing (Graham et al., 2019). Once the leaders of the organization have decided to outsource their business, it is important for the parent organization to ensure the outsourced organization is the right fit for business. If the outsourced organization is not the right fit, risk such as product defects, injury of death could happen to the consumer which hampers the entire supply chain stream (Agrawal & Singh, 2021).

In the future, the auto industry will look different than it does now. With technology constantly changing, automobiles will have an abundance of computer capabilities in that communication technologies and information will be incorporated into urban infrastructure (Graham et al., 2019; Kaufmann & Tzanetakis, 2020). With new upgraded technologies and designs, leaders of auto industry and manufacturing should remain in a strong relationship as well as an aligned partnership with their sourced facilities. Where most European automotive businesses as well as two American automotive companies, outsource completely assembled cars to independent vehicle suppliers.

Within the global supply chain, logistics outsourcing has been improving within the core activities in the manufacturing industry. The high demands in the supply chain have caused organizations to examine cost effective products and services in order to satisfy customer needs and expectations (Budler et al., 2021). When choosing outsourcing partners or an outsourcing facility, the leaders might want to think about the advantage of using facilities for their efficient productivity instead of the cost of the contract. Most manufacturing organizations use external contract manufacturing in order to stay competitive within the industry. The organizations using contract manufacturing as an option would not be viable without the benefit of collaboration of the organization's partnerships (Ganesan et al., 2022, 05).

Leaders using outsourcing expect timely responsiveness and cost savings while strategizing competitiveness and sustainability within the organization (Agrawal & Singh, 2021). When leaders of organizations use outsourcing, employees are able to concentrate on the core competencies, while expecting outsourced entities to use their employee expertise on a quality product or service (Agrawal & Singh, 2021).

Organizations run the risk of loss and product recall when using outside entities to perform their manufacturing, however leaders will take the risk for cost savings and lack of expertise among their own resources (Agrawal & Singh, 2021). Reasons for getting out of most outsourcing contracts has to do with suppliers not keeping up with relevant knowledge, using obsolete products or inefficient processes (Hakansson & Axelsson, 2020).

Independent surveys conducted by market watch dogs have shown unscrupulous acts committed by outsourcing offshoring contractors such as sending defective product components or incompetent to carry out desired work (Juvekar & Parekh, 2021). The concerns about outsourced products are high cost for transportation, foreign locations with a lack of transparency within the supply chain, and poor quality of the products (Dachs et al., 2019). Quality control problems are associated with the outsourcing facilities unproductive management skills set along with leadership and the ineffectiveness of managing several issues that affect quality issues in the manufacturing process. Despite the overwhelming advantage of outsourcing, and the incredible history behind the process, cost savings may prove to be an obstacle. A heightened attentiveness by leadership to risk and vulnerabilities through globalization of products moving through the supply chain, starting with sourcing and going through the process to manufacturing and finally the end customer (Vijaykar et al., 2021).

The complexity of the global supply network and many countries emerging as outsourcers need a fine balance between the market obligations based on needs of the customer, capabilities, processes along with safety risks as they manage products moving through the chain (Vijaykar et al., 2021). For the first time since 2019, Amazon initiated a product recall. U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) standards were used by the e-commerce giant to recall 15,300 memory foam mattresses posing a fire hazard to consumers. The voluntary recall included memory foam mattresses sold between April 2020 and March 2021 valued between $150 and $450, sizes including 10-inch and 12 inch for twin, full, queen, king and California king beds. When Amazon executives hear of a recall, all product offers are cancelled, holds all stock in the warehouse and while notifying buyers and sellers (Taylor, 2021). Quality risk problems are often hidden in manufacturing processes, supply network or raw materials and intensified by little to no visibility of quality defects.

Once the sourced organization has received the paperwork to fill the orders of their customers, they must review the requirements of the paperwork. One small mistake with the paperwork, or an increase in orders may set a sourced facility up for failure. Parent organizations choosing their outsourced supplier may want to safeguard against quality issues by having criteria requirements to hold the supplier to the parent organization's requirements and standards. Sourced services and facilities must be held accountable to the parent organizations requirements, but more so they must be held accountable to the standards of the end-customer (Ulewicz, 2018). When sourced facilities are held accountable to schedule delays, defective parts and wrong materials, parent organizations will have the right to reprimand the facility by refusing to use them in future orders.

When materials or products leave the sourced facility and shipped to the parent organization, there is a chance the shipment may be wrong (Jones, 2018). When the shipment is first checked, the inspector will examine the product to confirm it is the correct product as well as checking the quality of the product. If the product is not right, then the schedule is delayed, and the outsourced facility will be contacted with in the issue and a required explanation. If the product has a quality issue, the sourced facility is still contacted and required to provide an explanation as to what happened (Forcinio, 2018).

Repercussions of Defective Products and Materials

With the intricacy of the global supply chain network, all leaders of organizations involved within the layers of collaborating with partners need to understand product recalls not only impact the initial manufacturer, but the entire supply chain stream (Schniederjans & Khalajhedayati, 2021). Leaders who do not require transparency within their supply chain may encounter issues with their products and materials. Product recalls can cause consumers to rethink their trust in an organization, along with damaging the brand, the reputation and quality control of the product (Schniederjans & Khalajhedayati, 2021).

Defective Products

Key performance indicators (KPI) are used to monitor performance in the manufacturing industry (Hedvičáková & Král', 2021). Although manufacturing industries have implemented new digitization processes along with information technologies, human performance is still the most important element responsible for factory productivity and product quality (Hedvičáková & Kráľ, 2021). With the new technologies in place, some sectors of the manufacturing industry are having difficulty with the limited skillset of the workforce (Negara & Hidayat, 2021). There is a struggle to hire qualified, productive workers in some manufacturing areas such as technology, which requires leaders to work with low skilled workers that may produce products with defects (Negara & Hidayat, 2021).

Defective products or materials may go through an entire manufacturing process and end up in an assembly. Sometimes the product is not discovered defective until it is placed in an assembly and malfunctioning. The product can cause injury or death to the end customer. If the defective product or material moves through the processes and ends up with the end customer, with causes injury or death, the leaders of the organization, especially the auto industry, will make the decision to have a product recall. A product recall has the capacity of removing products from the market after the consumer has purchased the products. Automobile recalls have a negative impact on the health and safety of the consumer. The credibility and accountability of the manufacturing firm is reduced when defective products are recalled (Schniederjans & Khalajhedayati, 2021).

A product recall or product harm crisis is defined as a product that goes against safety regulations while possessing a defect that could cause serious hurt, harm, or danger (Muralidharan et al., 2019). After the product recall reaches the consumer, the organization that put in the order to return the product, must deal with the backlash of the recall. Leaders within the auto industry must use management strategies to certify proper advertising; the recall is initiated while making sure the customer/consumer is assisted

(Muralidharan et al., 2019). The initiated product recall can damage an organization's reputation, cause a lack of support from consumers, or poor product sales.

Consumers amend customers who faced injury and death due to a product that was recalled have had problems taking the manufacturer to court for liability of a product failure that caused hurt, harm, or danger (O'Sullivan & Tokeley, 2018). In some cases, such as the Takata air bags product recall, the company was financially liable for nearly $50 billion worth of lawsuits and recalls of their air bags that were improperly made (Burke et al., 2020). Takata stated that their company did not manufacture the air bags, another facility did, and Takata, a family owned business declared bankruptcy in the United States and Japan, creating a trail of devastation and damage for many associated with the air bags (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2016).

Leaders working in organizations such as IT depend on outsourcing organizations to provide quality products for their clients (Dutta & Omolayole, 2021). Leaders of organizations relying on outsourced entities to provide their products and services are experiencing a high number of failure rates with the quality of products due to the difficulty of monitoring these entities (Wang et al., 2021). The reliability of the supply chain is important to leaders as the entire chain is responsible for the final product dependability (Wang et al., 2021). An organization's profit and brand will decline if the organization has significant product recalls. In order for leaders to reduce products that are defective and harm consumers, organizations should have requirements to audit and inspect their quality control before products leave the organization (Burke et al., 2020). When the organization has an inefficient inspection or quality system, the results influence the organization's bottom line. In some organizations the quality of the product is more important than price. The quality of the product may refer to customer requirements, appearance, reliability and safety to name a few (Burke et al., 2020). Manufacturing a quality product assists the organization in adapting to market changes as well as customer trust.

Product Safety

The influence of globalization and expanding demand for consumer goods creates new hazards (Niven et al., 2022). An example of these hazards is the manufacturing of children's toys. The demand may be extremely high for certain toys; however, the hazards may be contamination with poisons and chemicals along with faulty designs (Niven et al., 2022). Consumers from China are concerned about safety problems especially food due to occurrences from the past in China. Recurrent outbreaks of food incidents have caused customers in China to have low confidence in the domestic food (Maitiniyazi & Canavari, 2021). The government in China has implemented several measures to improve quality and safety of the food.

Leaders, during their manufacturing and outsourcing processes, will sometimes not disclose the quality of the products or the origin of the product when obtained from the global supply chain. In China, around 2008, a substance suddenly started appearing in the milk supply of Chinese milk suppliers. This same substance is also a chemical called Formica which is used in plastic, paint, and paper as a fire retardant. When a thorough investigation was concluded, the discovered results implied that local farmers were adding melamine to their raw milk to simulate a protein boost.

The protein boost would enhance the local farmers' chances of collaborating with the larger dairy producers in the industry (Zhao et al., 2020). Because the milk went through the dairy process, consumers were affected. Six babies from China succumbed to the melanin tainted milk. Those babies that did not die from the tainted milk developed kidney stones (Zhao et al., 2020). Certain foods are essential to a healthy diet such as milk. Dairy products are now beginning to emerge in China (Maitiniyazi & Canavari, 2021).

Transparency is needed within the supply chain and throughout an organization to ensure product safety. When transparency is not used, and the safety of the product is in question, this shows the problem leaders have to determine the responsible persons creating the defects found in their products. Because the global supply chain is extremely large, organizations have a need to understand all entities managing their products to govern defective materials (Zhao et al., 2020). The same melanin found in the large dairy producer, also made its way through an Asian factory that produces chocolates for Cadbury, affecting the chocolate and causing Cadbury to recall all candies produced from this factory due to possible contamination. The tainted milk with melanin went through the Asian supply chain causing Sanlu, another company within the Asian borders to file bankruptcy. The management came to the decision once growing medical claims from consumers reached an insurmountable level (Zhao et al., 2020).

Moon and Tonsor (2020) stated that foodborne illnesses can create societal and individual costs through hospitalizations, medical care and even death. The total annual cost of illnesses caused by 14 major foodborne diseases in the United States is estimated to be in the range of $4.4 billion to $33.0 billion with a reported annual loss of 61,000 quality adjusted life years. Food safety recalls are done by leaders of manufacturers or distributors to protect the public from food products with a potential to cause help concerns or even death. Food recalls are classified into three classes as class I,II,and III with respect to the risk of contaminants. Foods that are recognized as health hazard situations are classified as class I. Class II recalls signify there is a remote chance of health adversities. Class III recalls signify that consuming food will not cause adverse health concerns (Moon & Tonsor, 2020).

Cost and Quality

Consumers in the United States have many options to purchase products and materials. at times, the consumer will go outside the United States because they feel the price of the product may be lower or the product is attainable quicker overseas than the United States (Gray & Handley, 2015). The consumer sometimes does not consider the quality risk involved in purchasing materials and products outside the United States. Gray and Handley explored whether drugs created through outsourcing overseas posed a greater quality risk than drugs created in the United States. A sample size of 30 drug manufacturing companies was chosen in the United States and in Puerto Rico. The sample size selected companies that were ran by the same regulated pharmaceutical administration which was based in the United States. The Puerto Rican plants were found to have higher quality risks rates than their equal plants in the United States, even though all the facilities were under the same administration. The reasoning behind the difference was found to include culture, value, and language (Gray & Handley, 2015).

Risk Management

Risk management is an important component of cost and quality. Leaders should consider the complexity of applying a concept such as a quality control program to an outsourcing organization located overseas. There are several benefits to operating in a global supply network, and there are risks which as well can expose leaders and their organizations to possible defects (Martin et al., 2011). During an interview with managers involved with about 15 diverse outsourcing businesses, the thought of handling global supply chain risk was discussed. The consensus of the interview was that most managers did not consider having a plan for risk management because organizations were overseas, it was thought the outsourced organization had their own and the standards were close to those of the parent organization. The managers had not considered how deep the global supply network went with their product (Martin et al., 2011).

To alleviate defect risk in the global sourcing chain, a need exists to implement policies by leaders that (a) ensure implementing risk management is rooted throughout the supply chain and (b) provide an avenue for the supply chain to respond to erratic change with a quickness (Martin et al., 2011). The suppliers to the global supply chain network are extremely important as well as critical in the accomplishment of outsourcing. Suppliers have ways of managing their proficiencies through the global supply chain however, these capabilities are not known to all included in the process (Perunovic et al., 2012). In a multiple case study, three electronic manufacturers who were contracted discovered suppliers using the right combination of proficiencies were able to achieve their outsourcing obligations successfully (Perunovic et al., 2012). Having a clear understanding of the customer's needs within the supply chain along with competency of technology and relationship management were proficiencies found to ensure global outsourcing success.

Risks occur when products or merchandise are found defective and harmful to consumers. Defective products or merchandise is also defined as a product harm crisis (Schniederjans & Khalajhedayati, 2021). If the defect is severe enough, the agent overseeing the outsourced contractor may decide to survey or audit the outsourced contractor. The outsourced public contractor is not required to audit themselves to safeguard against damaged materials or products sold to their consumers (Burke et al., 2020).

If the parent organization decides to audit the outsourced organization, the results of some audits may foster ill relationships between contractor and agents due to mistrust, conflicts and pressures. To receive the required products and services, leaders need to understand the requirements within their organization to outsource work to the applicable business that aligns with manufacturing needs. These occurrences may affect the reputation of an organization negatively if the product is malfunctioning (Schniederjans & Khalajhedayati, 2021). For the automotive industry, reverse logistics practices are common within the automotive supply chain process (Agrawal & Singh, 2021).

Global business has also changed with the trends of integrated globalization and logistics (Asian et al., 2019). For many companies, such as manufacturers and retail giants, to save money and remain competitive, outsourcing has become the norm (Shaiq

& Hassan, 2019). To reduce production cost, organizations use outsourcing to reduce labor and raw material pricing (Juvekar & Parekh, 2021).

There are advantages and disadvantages for companies to use outsourcing as part of their supply chain process. Some of the advantages of organizations using outsourcing include the outsourced company possessing skills in a particular field or process. The expectation from the parent organization is the outsourced organization will deliver the required product or material on schedule and excellent quality (Aswini, 2018). Another advantage of outsourcing allows the parent organization to concentrate on job assignments and the core business plan (Agrawal & Singh, 2021). Operational cost and risk mitigations are also benefits or advantages to the parent organization. With operational cost, the parent organization could lower cost by not having to hire in-house personnel for a specialized job. The outsourced organization that has accepted the contract must also include risk mitigation(s) in their plans and schedules for the parent organization (Aswini, 2018). This relationship benefits the parent organization by the outsourced organization's understanding through proper analysis, the risk of delays in scheduling, planning and subsequent quality on long with on time delivery (Aswini, 2018).

The disadvantages of outsourcing include lack of customer focus, deliverables, divulging information, hidden cost, and bottlenecking (Ribeiro et al., 2021). The outsourced organization that has many companies to furnish materials and products may lack customer focus to some organizations. The lack of focus may cause job assignments to go undone or be delivered late. If the parent organization did not choose the right company to outsource their product or material to, the outcome may not be as expected. There may be quality concerns, delays in delivery and defects (Shaiq & Hassan, 2019).

When outsourcing a service such as human resources or security, the parent organization runs the risk of confidential information being divulged to the outsourcing company. This information can lead to imitation of product or material of the parent organization's property (Aswini, 2018). Organizations that deal with international outsourcing are not only concerned with the normal contracts between them and the outsourced company. There are concerns with international contracts which incur cost that may cause the parent organization to rethink outsourcing and search inside their own organization for solutions (Aswini, 2018). Organizations that depend solely on outsourcing may lose control with their sourced organization and run into bottlenecking of production (Tauqeer & Bang, 2019).

For a leader to consider outsourcing, the leader of that organization needs to examine the benefits and consequences of outsourcing for their organization. Outsourcing may lower labor cost, as well as give an organization the ability to obtain products, materials, or services that organization may not have the capacity to fulfill (Tauqeer & Bang, 2019). Smaller companies trying to have growth and stability within the marketplace have a need for outsourcing as well. For the company to grow, just like the larger organization, the smaller company needs to decide the process or activity that needs outsourcing to stay relevant and not become a statistic in the marketplace (Tauqeer & Bang, 2019).

Instead of manufacturing their own parts, automobile makers rely on their supply chain or outsourcing to fulfill their needs. The supply chain for the automotive industry consists of products and services delivered by companies and organizations aligned to provide goods to the consumer (Sakuramoto et al., 2019). Toyota, an organization widely known for its processes in lean manufacturing outsourced 80% of their produced automobiles (Sakuramoto et al., 2019). Toyota used two outsourcing companies to complete the organization's manufacturing of their automobiles. Outsourcing agents have a responsibility to align with each other to deliver a quality product to the consumer (Chang & Phan, 2018).

Suppliers and Sub Tier Suppliers

Some organizations that decide to use outsourced suppliers or sub-tier suppliers may require the sub-tier supplier to provide social sustainability within their organization. Social sustainability emphasizes sub tier supplier's leaders to create and promote a space of wellbeing within the workplace for the employees (Venkatesh et al., 2020). This wellbeing may include educational training, safety, security or physical, medical and mental support. Venkatesh et al. (2020) also stated when sub-tiers do not offer or provide assistance or support with social issues for their employees, the unmanaged issues may cause disruption or reputational damage within the organization.

Certain parent or first tier suppliers may demand some sub-tier suppliers to create social sustainability processes within their organizations through coercive pressures. An example of these types of organizations would consist of the garment or clothing industry (Shobod et al., 2020). With past history of child labor law dismissals, some first tier suppliers in the garment district have strict, astringent rules of social sustainability that require sub-tier suppliers to adhere to in order to perform services to the first tier supplier. Some social sustainability rules that may require strict enforcement within the garment or clothing manufacturing industry may include strict labor hours with special permission needed to work overtime for contractual completions (Shobod et al., 2020).

COVID-19

In December 2019, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was first identified in Wuhan, China which infected tens of thousands of people and spread to more than 150 countries, while claiming thousands of lives (Pietenpol, 2019). The virus caused enormous social and economic change globally (Free & Hecimovic, 2021). One major change globally was the impact on the supply chain. There were shortages from every aspect of the supply chain from port traffic to major supplier locations which caused empty shelves and extreme consumer demand of products such as toilet paper, paper towels and cleaning products (Pietenpol, 2019).

An important pillar of the global economy is the automobile industry (Yean, 2021). Vehicle and parts producers formulate the core of the industry which support a wide range of business segments, both upstream and downstream. Global changes in the industry have caused vehicle manufacturers and their suppliers to cope and respond to customer's changing needs (Gruszka, 2021). Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the shortage of supplies especially for automobiles has the industry struggling to continue the supply chain as some of the operations has stopped (Paul & Chowdhury, 2020).

The first few weeks of the initial spread of COVID-19, the supply chains from China were interrupted (Bylen, 2020). The borders across Europe then restricted movement of people, materials and resources in order to contain the virus, while attempting to maintain a limited supply chain (Bylen, 2020). The vulnerability of the global supply chain is highlighted due to COVID-19 which has leaders thinking about the future. Even though leaders are still trying to determine the effects of the supply chain disruption, the decline of production in China has created an insurmountable impact on consumers and producers as far as the United States (Free & Hecimovic, 2021).

Leaders, due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, were forced to send employees home to telework which brought production in organizations to a halt (Palumbo, 2020). There are mixed reviews on employees' home teleworking as beneficial to the organization or the employee. Palumbo (2020) stated for some employees working from home is beneficial in balancing work and private life, while for other employees working from home may bring contention of remote learning with work life and private life overlapping. Seva et al. (2021) stated that teleworking from home can be beneficial to the employee such as spending more time with family and saving money on transportation and lower stress, while the negative of working from home is unproductivity, work space and ergonomics of the work area.

When COVID-19 became a national pandemic in the United States on January 9, 2020, industries such as retail and hospitality were severely affected due to social distancing and travel restrictions. Some hotels were forced to close or functioned with minimal inventory and a reduced staff (Chan et al., 2021). Along with the retail and hospitality industry, the manufacturing industry struggled to keep operations moving forward. The performance of the organization impacted economic performance, causing employees along with stakeholders to agonize over the unknown (Clampit et al., 2021). The compounded COVID-19 cases and social distance requirements caused manufacturers to decrease operations and scale back on production. These interventions had serious impacts and have brought immense pressures on the manufacturing organization's operations (Li, 2021).

Summary

From the literature review, stewardship theory is most appropriate for this study. Leaders using stewardship theory are self-motivated and have goals that align with upper management and stockholders (Schmidthuber & Hilgers, 2019). When using stewardship theory, constructs are associated such as motivation, identification, collaboration, autonomy. Aligning these constructs with business practices may ensure leaders who work with board members and stockholders along with outsourcing partners to reach goals and milestones (Cockburn et al., 2019). TCE theory is a supporting theory considered for this study; however, TCE theory is good for managers with opportunistic and self-interest goals and is not an appropriate choice for my conceptual framework. The agency theory is a contrasting theory to stewardship theory and was also considered however, this theory was not appropriate for this conceptual framework because the manager is more concerned with cost for themselves than the outcome of the project.

When stewardship theory is not used in business practices by the leaders, several factors that may take place that detours goals and milestones of the organization. Goals such as good quality products, on time delivery, and reasonable cost become jeopardized for the consumer as well as the organization. Defective products may cause product recalls from the organization to consumers, which can lead to mistrust from the consumers. This mistrust may also lead to organizations losing business or eventually closing (Muralidharan et al., 2019). Along with defective products and product recalls, leaders who are not using stewardship practices and unfamiliar with supply chain operations may not concern themselves with risk management. This concept is beneficial because there is a need to implement policies by leaders that (a) ensure implementing risk management is rooted throughout the supply chain and (b) provide an avenue for the supply chain to respond to erratic change with a quickness (Martin et al., 2011).

Transition

Section 1 included the problem statement, purpose statement, nature of study, research questions, and the conceptual framework. The problem statement, along with the purpose statement, focused on the strategies leaders of organizations fabricating parts use for identifying defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders to the automotive industry. The literature review included the conceptual framework of stewardship theory with supporting and contrasting theories, along with comparing of outsourcing strategies.

In Section 2, the discussion includes the purpose statement, role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection, data analysis, and reliability and validity. Section 3 includes the findings, recommendations for action, recommendations for future research reflections, and conclusion of the study.

Section 2: The Project

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies leaders of organizations fabricating parts use for identifying defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders within the manufacturing industry. The targeted population included 10 successful leaders from different areas in manufacturing who provided products to manufacturing companies in the Southeast region of Virginia.

Purpose Statement

Using a qualitative multiple case study, I explored the strategies used by leaders of organizations fabricating parts who use strategies for identifying defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders to the manufacturing industry. As the researcher, I took on the role of interviewing the participants with open-ended questions. The use of open-ended questions allows participants to freely express themselves without interference from outside sources (Naidu & Prose, 2018). The role of the researcher, within qualitative research, is to collect and analyze data that may reflect experiences, opinions, and feelings with minimal bias (Clark & Vealé, 2018).

Role of the Researcher

Researchers remaining objective and unbiased in their research may find difficulty in staying the same if certain precautions are not in place. Remaining objective and unbiased ensures credibility throughout the study, especially when the outcome fairs differently (Karagiozis, 2018). Bracketing requires personal expectations of the researcher regarding the outcome of the research to nonexist (Clark & Bower, 2016). I remained objective and unbiased during my research through multiple methods, including using interview questions that aligned with my study, using member checking, and using an interview protocol. Member checking focuses on the interpretation of the participant's response (Birt et al., 2016). During the validation process, the participant was given the opportunity to go over and correct my interpretation of their statements or comments.

During the member checking process for this study, I used a recording device as well as transcribed notes to ensure all information was correct. When the participant is at ease and comfortable with the researcher, the researcher can discover the truth and ensure the research is untainted by personal beliefs, interest, or values (Thomas, 2017). Even though the researcher may try to remain unbiased, there is always a possibility of subjectivity that can manifest through classification of data, personal relationships with participants, or among other areas of the research development (Thomas, 2017).

There is the possibility the results may differ from expected results, and the unbiased researcher must remain objective in reporting the data (Yin, 2018). I have collaborated with companies that outsource their materials and products and that have experienced issues with defective materials or having had wrong products returned to them. However, I did not have any working relationship with the participants I used for this study. While conducting this research, I listened intently to understand the topics discussed while remaining subjective and remaining ethical during the data collection. My study procedures adhered to the protocols within *The Belmont Report* that identify ethical principles that determine the conduct of behavior involving human subjects (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015). *The Belmont Report* initially came about due to the mishandling of participants in the Tuskegee Syphilis study where

African American men were unethically treated and uninformed about treatments given to them (Adashi et al., 2018).

Consent during the study is an important factor that protects the autonomy of the participant (Adashi et al., 2018). Within *The Belmont Report*, there are interviewing procedures and reminders for the researcher to gather information such as the consent form needed from the participant. I adhered to *The Belmont Report* by protecting the privacy, freedom, and dignity of my participants. In reference to freedom, I am referring to the right to change their minds if they no longer wished to participate in the study. The data collection for the study included interviews, member checking, and document review.

I used an interview protocol to maintain organization while collecting data (see Appendix A). My rationale for using an interview protocol is that it allows the researcher to remain focused on the questions and to request any follow up information while remaining unbiased. Because I conducted a qualitative study, the interview protocol was appropriate. An interview protocol includes substantive questions that reflect the inquiries of researchers (Yin, 2018). The protocol prompts the researcher to collect not only the consent form from participants but reminds the researcher to gather other required information necessary for collection. The interview protocol is not only a guideline of questions but a guide of procedures directing the researcher through the process (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

Participants

This qualitative multiple case study included participants who were leaders from the same area providing products to manufacturing companies located in the Southeast region of Virginia. In a qualitative research study, selection of the participant is imperative in obtaining the data needed to answer the interview questions as well as the research question. The participants must have had an interest in and understanding of the research findings (see Price et al., 2020). The eligibility criteria of the participants were leaders who have worked more than 5 years in upper management with successful strategies for identifying defects fabricated by their organization before fulfilling customers' orders, which supported the research question in this study. Another criterion of eligibility of the leaders was that each leader must have had expertise and understanding of the research study question. Price et al. (2020) stated that participants in research should receive consent forms and forms stating that no harm will come to them while guaranteeing anonymity. Participants should be familiar with the research and interview questions to provide quality data to the researcher.

To gain access to the participants, I posted to social media, including Facebook and Instagram. The posting included the eligibility criteria for participation. Once participants identified their interest via social media, I sent them an invitation letter (see Appendix B) with the consent form. To determine if they met the criteria for eligibility, at the beginning of the interview, I read the consent form, which included the eligibility requirements. The participants then self-identified they met the eligibility criteria. Following that confirmation, we began the interview.

To establish a relationship with the participants, a letter was sent to each participant explaining the intent and purpose of the study (see Appendix B). The ethical and confidentiality aspects of the study were explained to each potential participant reassuring the anonymity of everyone. After the letter, I continued correspondence through additional emails and phone calls. Once a working relationship had begun, I introduced and explained the consent form and the interview protocol (see Appendix A). Peu et al. (2021) stated that it is important to remind participants of their right to change their minds about participating in the study at any point of the interview protocol. There were two individuals who participated in the Zoom interviews and then changed their minds, stating they were no longer interested in participating. Their answers from the interview were destroyed by shredding all papers. The participants who did not meet the criteria of the study research question were not chosen to participate in the study.

Research Method and Design

In this section, I explain the purpose for choosing a qualitative research method instead of a quantitative or mixed method research. This was a qualitative, multiple case study where I explored strategies by successful leaders to identify defective products before fulfilling customers' orders. The research method and design supported the research question.

Research Method

I used a qualitative research method. The qualitative research method is appropriate for exploring a subject or issue in relation to experiences and individuals (Naji et al., 2020). For this study, I explored strategies successful leaders use to identify defective products before fulfilling customers' orders. The data collected by using qualitative research involves exploring topics in more detail and depth compared to quantitative research (Hashimov, 2015). A qualitative method is appropriate for exploring ideas using open ended questions (Naji et al., 2020). A qualitative study was more appropriate to understand the phenomenon of strategically identifying defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders to the automotive industry.

Quantitative research involves the inclusion of measurement of facts along with an investigation of a causal relationship (Truong et al., 2020). Researchers use the quantitative method to concentrate on hypotheses and statistical analyses (Mukoka et al., 2021b). Quantitative research was not appropriate for this study because I did not investigate causal relationships or conduct statistical analysis. The mixed method approach incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methods in a study (Mukoka et al., 2021a). This study did not include a quantitative component; therefore, the mixed method approach was not considered for this study.

Research Design

A multiple case study design was used to explore the strategies successful leaders use to provide products to manufacturing companies in the southeast region of Virginia. Yin (2018) stated that a case study may include one or several case studies. The researcher in a single case study may focus on a concern and dive into a deeper comprehension of the problem (Yin, 2018). The individual using a case study design can determine whether to explore a circumstance regardless of activity, group, or individual (Cronin, 2014). Crowe et al. (2011) noted that using the case study design assists the researcher in exploring and assessing complex situations in a setting more conducive to the participant. I chose to perform a multiple case study because I focused on multiple organizations where I collected data from semistructured interviews, documents from the company, and member checking. The multiple case study was chosen to allow me to examine multiple organizations.

I also considered phenomenological design, ethnography, and a narrative design. A researcher uses the phenomenological research design when the objective of the study depends on comprehending the crux of human experiences as depicted by subjects or participants (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology also relates to studying the world of the participant (Rennie, 2012). In understanding phenomenology, researchers study the lived human experiences of several subjects extensively to cultivate patterns and relationships (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology research design was not appropriate for this study because the study did not involve researching participants for their lived human experiences.

Researchers who use ethnography explore the cultural setting of a particular group of individuals within a community (Laws & McLeod, 2004). The data collected from an ethnographic design is an interpretation of sociocultural behavior, beliefs, practices, and knowledge of groups of individuals (Kaman, 1995). Goodrich et al. (2014) defined ethnography as sharing of culture within groups along with the influences of the culture. Manning (2016) provided a study incorporating positionality along with ethnography. The researcher explored gender, class, economic, and demographic status.

Using an ethnographic research design was not appropriate for this study because interpreting culture sharing groups was not the focus of this study.

In the narrative research design, the researcher studies the lives of individuals along with any stories provided by the participants that actively include the individuals in the research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2013). The story is then retold in a narrative chronology by the researcher, combining the researcher's information along with the participant's life stories ensuing a concerted narrative. According to Pinnegar and Daynes (2007), the narrative research design focuses on individual's stories and lived experiences, which in turn may prove challenging to the researcher. The challenge for the researcher is the amount of data necessary to collect about the individual's life experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2013). A narrative research design was not appropriate for this study because interpreting stories and experiences of individuals and groups was not the focus.

Data saturation is a process that can be achieved by data redundancy (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation is gained through the engagement of the study by the researcher through multiple data collection methods that encompass rich data and purposeful sampling until no new information to the researcher (Fusch & Ness, 2015). It is important in qualitative research designs to include data saturation because this ensures adequate amounts of data to be included to safeguard the credibility of the study and the results (Saunders et al., 2018). To reach data saturation, I used interviews and reviewed documents from the companies. I continued interviews until I heard the same ideas repeated, and no new ideas evolved. After the interviews were completed, I reviewed the transcribed data and followed up with another meeting with participants to member check with everyone in the study.

Population and Sampling

In this multiple case study, I used manufacturing companies whose leaders use strategies to fabricate parts and identify defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders to the automotive industry. Because I used expert participants to provide vigorous insight, a small sample size was advantageous to generate the most impact and the best informative information. Agyepong and Adjei (2008) used a case study for their research and had a sample size of two participants to record the experiences. I interviewed 10 participants and continued to collect data until data saturation had transpired. Morse (2015) stated that researchers who use smaller sample sizes are more astute. When the research question is specific and the collection of data is decisive, there is a great possibility data saturation may occur (Suri, 2011).

There are several types of sampling, such as systematic, stratified, and random, which may be used for qualitative research (Mukoka et al., 2021b). Any one of these types of sampling may assist the researcher in obtaining an appropriate from the participants (Mukoka et al., 2021a). For this study, purposeful or purposive sampling was chosen. Purposeful sampling is when the researcher relies on their own judgment when the selection for participation takes place (Suri, 2011). I chose this type of sampling to ensure I had participants who met the criteria for participation. In this study, the strategic experience of the participants to identify defects before fulfilling customers' orders was the main criteria for selection.

I performed Zoom interviews with participants. Connelly and Peltzer (2016) stated that giving the opportunity to choose when the interview takes place builds trust. Allowing the participants to have a telephone interview instead of face to face may make the participant feel more in control (Saura & Balsas, 2014). Before the interview began, I read the contents of the consent form. Reminding the participants of the contents of the consent form assisted in creating trust. During the research process, I began with 10 participants who all agreed to participate in the study. All 10 were given the same instructions and were asked the same questions using Zoom in a quiet location. There were two participants towards the end of the interviews who decided they did not wish to participate any longer. They were skeptical that information would get back to their employers. I reminded them of their option to opt out with no repercussions. I then discarded their data by shredding and collected data from two new participants.

Ethical Research

The ethical considerations for research are provided through the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which ensures ethical concerns are identified at all levels of the study. The primary goal of the IRB is to protect participants from harm as well as protect their privacy and their dignity (Brown et al., 2020). Privacy and anonymity are incorporated through a study's ethical foundation to protect participants while concurrently decreasing introduction to unintended harm (Wilson et al., 2018). I ensured ethical protection of all participants in this study participants through obtaining IRB approval, using an informed consent process, and using pseudonyms to keep participant information confidential. All data collected will be confidentially stored for 5 years; then all data will be destroyed. My IRB approval number is 08-09-22-0465205.

The informed consent process is an integral part of research study. When participants receive the informed consent form, it is important not only for the participants to read the form but also to understand the statements within the form. Nishimura et al. (2013) stated that many times the participants do not completely understand the informed consent form. The informed consent document used in this study included information such as: (a) confidentiality, (b) procedures, (c) voluntary nature of the study along with (d) purpose of study. Also included in the informed consent form is information letting the participants know they can withdraw from the study at any time, by informing the researcher. Possible participants should understand any probable risks or benefits from partaking in a study (Bouësseau & Coleman, 2008).

The informed consent included information about my study and explains my intent to conduct a study of the company's strategies used to minimize defects before the product is shipped from the company. First, emails were used through social media such as Facebook and Instagram to elicit participants willing to become a part of my study (see Appendix B). Once participants agreed to participate in my study, they were asked to provide information to ensure the potential participants met the criteria of the study. Once qualified individuals have met the criteria, informed consents were given to prospective participants. Participants initially responded to my email with the words "I consent." The consent form was reviewed again upon meeting the participant virtually. The participant could withdraw from the study at any time before, during, or after the study. The participant could withdraw even if the study is not complete.

There were no incentives provided. Lastly, to protect the participant's confidentiality, the data obtained from the research will be locked in a file cabinet within my home for 5 years. It will then be destroyed. Protection and privacy of participants and the company are the foundation of this study. The company name was never used or mentioned anytime or anywhere within this study. Pseudonyms were used for the company as well as the participants to protect the identity of all parties involved. The company name was referred to as Organization A. The participants in this study were referred to as Participant A, Participant B etc.

Data Collection Instruments

For this study, I was the primary data collection instrument. When conducting research, the researcher operates as the human instrument for collecting and analyzing data (Linnenluecke et al., 2020). Assarroudi et al. (2018) expounded that on data collection as a variation of methods used in qualitative research such as (a) group or individual interviews; (b) observations; (c) textual or visual analysis of company documents, books, or videos. As part of data collection, I collected documentation from the company's website. Documentation included four different manufacturing processes along with two processes for inspection of products. The rest of the inspection processes collected from other company websites were similar to inspection documentation already collected. I asked all the participants for any public documentation they may have to assist with this study. I was given work instructions, team processes for inspection as well as two procedures in inspection, handling and returning defective material. Documentation is one of the multiple sources in collecting information for a case study (Smith, 2018).

Another source of collecting information is interviewing. Interviews, along with other sources of data, are essential in validating information (Smith, 2018). Interviews, especially personal interviews, are ideal for qualitative research because the researcher can discuss a specific topic with the participant and realize the participant's experiences (Atheer et al., 2019). I used interviews as a data collection source along with the interview protocol, document review and member checking and journal (field notes) to ensure validity, reliability, and alignment. The interview protocol (see Appendix B) included a checklist with questions to ensure all criteria are met including participant eligibility criteria, along with the participant's consent. I began the interview by providing the participants with information on the purpose of the study, reviewing the consent form with each participant, confirming they met the eligibility criteria, and requesting permission to transcribe and record the interview. I moved on to ask my interview questions and informed the participants I would follow up with member checking.

Data Collection Technique

Methodological triangulation is important in qualitative research. Researchers, when performing qualitative research, explore phenomena to gain understanding (Renz et al., 2018). Qualitative research may include note taking, interviews, and tape recording which combined, can assist with reliability of the results (Renz et al., 2018). Baker et al.

(2020) explained triangulation as validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources or methods. I used data triangulation in this study with data collection techniques including semistructured interviews, member checking, and company documentation from the organizations public websites regarding manufacturing capabilities when working with outsourced organizations. The documentation was used to compliment data collected from member checking and semistructured interviews. Baker et al. (2020) stated that using two or more of these collecting techniques ensures the completeness, validity as well as the depth and breadth of the study.

Broadbent (2020) explained the advantages of using interviews for data collection as creating a personal connection to the participant to ensure their comfort and trust. Interviews also create a space for follow-up questions. Broadbent stated that the disadvantages of interviews include the time required and that interviews are more complicated than a survey. The advantages of documentation of information are to increase transparency of data collected as well as increase collective knowledge of the subject. The disadvantages of documentation include the information is prone to damage or possible misplacement and lack of security for the information (Broadbent, 2020).

I contacted the participants through email with the consent form and requested they email me back "I consent" agreeing to participate in my study. After the participant's consent to the interview, a time was set up for the interview. At the beginning of the interview, I reiterated the main concepts from the consent form again to ensure the consent is still valid for participation. Once consent was validated, I confirmed the participant met the eligibility criteria, and then asked for permission to record and transcribe the interview. The interview then began, and the participant answered the questions. There was not a pilot study.

The interview was one on one and performed on Zoom, while the questions were shared on the screen. There was no existing list of participants. I identified potential participants via social media by reading the consent form to each participant and reminding them of the eligibility criteria given to the participate before the interview was conducted. The eligibility requirements were also stated via social media on the flier for all interested potential participants. Once potential participants were identified, I provided an introductory email and a copy of the consent form. Participants replied through email "I consent" with their name typed out. I contacted ten potential participants and interviewed ten participants for a robust sample. During their individual interviews, there were two participants who decided they did not wish their information be used for this study. The information from those two participants was destroyed by a shredding machine. The interview was performed using Zoom and I was in a quiet place to conduct the interview to ensure the participant could hear and focus. To satisfy triangulation, a journal (field notes) was kept, along with member checking and document review. Participants were emailed a summary of their responses and followed up with a phone call to discuss their feedback and interpretation will follow, if more time is needed the request would be honored. No participants in this study needed extra time for interpretation.

I used an application from my cell phone. I did not use a digital recorder in case I could not work the recorder. I did not use the live scribe pen; I was afraid I might lose it or not turn it on properly and miss some information. The cell phone was the best option for me. Covid restrictions have been lifted, however I did not meet any potential participants in person. There are preparations in place for Zoom. I kept a journal (field notes) with additional information about the participants such as body language, any questions they had, observations, and mental notes taken during the interview. This additional information was applied to the data analysis and later in findings as instrumental in providing transparency data in accordance with the problem statement.

Birt et al. (2016) stated that member checking focuses on the interpretation of the participant's response. After the interview ended, the interview was transcribed from the taping and summarized. A second virtual interview was set up to allow the participant to review the summarized interpretation to identify any corrections or add any additional information. Because the cell phone was used to record each interview, each participant individually was given the opportunity before the member checking process to hear the questions and their responses. Once the participants heard their responses, I was asked by four participants to add information such as clarifying a statement about a process used in a particular department of a company. Another participant asked if I could ask a particular question in another way giving the participant an opportunity to provide additional information on the question. By allowing the participants to add additional information and clarifying their statements before data analysis began, reliability and validity assisted in the data analysis and findings sections of the study.

Data Organization Technique

Methodological triangulation is important in qualitative research. Researchers, when performing qualitative research, explore phenomena to gain understanding (Renz et al., 2018). Qualitative research may include note taking, interviews and tape recording which combined, can assist in reliability of the results (Renz et al., 2018). Baker et al. (2020) explained triangulation as validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources or methods. I used data triangulation in this study with data collection techniques including semistructured interviews, transcripts, field notes, member checking and review of company documents. Baker et al. (2020) stated using two or more of these collecting techniques ensures the completeness, validity as well as the depth and breadth of the study. I labeled the files with P-A, P-B, P-C, P-D etc. which stood for Participant A, Participant B, Participant C, Participant D. These files will be secured in a filing cabinet for 5 years and then will be destroyed.

Broadbent (2020) explained the advantages of using interviews for data collection as creating a personal connection to the participant to ensure their comfort and trust. Interviews also create a space for follow-up questions. The disadvantages of interviews include the time required and the interviews are more complicated than a survey (Broadbent, 2020). The advantages of documentation of information are to increase transparency of data collected as well as increase collective knowledge of the subject. The disadvantages of documentation include that the information is prone to damage or possible misplacement and lack of security for the information (Broadbent, 2020).

I contacted the participants through email with the consent form and requested they email me back "I consent" agreeing to participate in my study. After the participant's consent to the interview, a time was set up for the interview. At the beginning of the interview, I reiterated the main concepts from the consent form again to ensure the consent was still valid for participation. The participant was then asked questions to ensure eligibility of criteria, permission to record and transcribe the interview. The interview then began and the participant answered the questions. There was not a pilot study.

Birt et al. (2016) stated that that member checking focuses on the interpretation of the participant's response. After the interview ended, the interview was transcribed from the taping and summarized. I set up a second virtual interview for member checking, to allow the participant to review the summarized interpretation and identify any corrections or add any additional information. During this interview, I provided each participant a written summarized interpretation and played back portions of the initial interview. I then asked each participant if any changes should be made to the interview summary document. I did not have to make corrections. I was asked to add additional information to clarify statements which assisted in the data analysis and findings sections of the study. The clarification of additional information consisted of the participant explaining oversight of their supplier. In the initial interview, one participant was not completely clear on the definition of oversight and realized after hearing the interview, the participants actually had more insight than previously noted.

Data Analysis

Researchers exploring phenomenon use triangulation methods to collect and analyze data (Sugita et al., 2021). Using the triangulation method ensures the data are accurate when obtained from different sources (Sugita et al., 2021). Case studies have several types of triangulation which include methodological, data, theory and investigator (Jackson, 2018). Methodological triangulation means a researcher will use several methods to have multiple perspectives on issues being studied (Jackson, 2018). I used methodological triangulation for this qualitative single case study.

As part of data collection, I collected documentation from the company's website, which included four different manufacturing processes along with two processes for inspection of products. The rest of the inspection processes were similar in comparison. I asked all the participants for any public documentation they may have to assist with this study. I was given work instructions, team processes for inspection as well as two procedures in inspection, handling and returning defective material.

Documentation is one of the multiple sources in collecting information for a case study (Smith, 2018). I also included semistructured interviews and company documentation from the company's websites. The company documentation included overall processes for handling materials, along with quality documents. I was able to use these documents as research to align with the participant's responses to key questions during the interview.

To analyze data in qualitative research, coding is important for researchers to break down information collected to discover new information (Elliott, 2018). To understand and explain the data, I followed Yin's (2018) five-step data analysis process. The five steps included: (a) compiling the data to align with the research question, (b) disassembling the data to understand and determine the data techniques, (c) reassembling or organizing the data, (d) interpreting the meaning of the data, and (e) concluding the data. Qualitative researchers using coding are enabled to identify, organize, and build theory (Williams & Moser, 2019).

The compiling phase included reviewing field notes, recordings from interviews and other data sources (Yin, 2018). I analyzed the interview data obtained from the semistructured interviews performed, not including the two participants' information due to their unwillingness to participate. I looked for repetitious terms, any keywords, and universal themes. During the disassembling phase, I looked for common theme patterns while analyzing the recordings and notes taken during the participant interviews. During this phase, data was reduced. After the data was collected and analyzed I uploaded the identified, transcribed data and information collected from participants into NVivo 12. NVivo is a data analysis program that can be used to code and categorize collected interview data (Öznacar et al., 2018). For qualitative data, the data analysis software used is synonymous to obtain similar data accounts to collect answers for questions (Öznacar et al., 2018).

During the third phase, which is reassembling, I reassembled the data and analyzed the data to identify any variances or parallels in the data to find emerging themes. By reassembling the data and comparing the field notes and company documents, I was able to find stewardship theory concepts which aligned with the participant's answers. When making decisions during this step, comparisons should continue with other patterns or themes (Yin, 2018). Once the identified data was uploaded to NVivo 12, the collected data was then organized to patterns and themes (Renz et al., 2018). Once the patterns and themes were organized, I explored these themes and patterns for common trajectories between the data. I continued to research newly updated studies and journals more current that are prevalent to this study. Finding common trajectories between the data assists in building theory.

After the third phase of reassembling was completed, I interpreted the data to relate to the research question, as well as correlated the themes to my conceptual framework of stewardship theory and the literature. The data collected through documents was used to support evidence of my themes and patterns. The researcher has to familiarize and understand the data, as well as interpret the data correctly. Interpreting the data correctly ensures the researcher has collected the participants' experience (Clark & Vealé, 2018). Once a researcher has interpreted the common trajectories, the results build a theory which explains phenomenon (Gehman et al., 2018). The usage of stewardship theory as the conceptual framework applies to the data analysis because concepts such as intrinsic motivation, collaboration, and autonomy were discovered through analysis. The final step of the five step analysis is concluding, which presented the results of the study and provided suggestions for future research (Yin, 2018).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

For this study, I was the primary data collection instrument. When conducting research, the researcher operates as the human instrument for collecting and analyzing data (Linnenluecke et al., 2020). While working through the research, I ensured dependability in this study through member checking. Naidu and Prose (2018) stated that when the researcher takes on the role of interviewing the participants with open-ended questions, the open-ended questions allow participants to freely express themselves without interference from outside sources. Dependability is stressed by qualitative researchers through trustworthiness and creditability of the research (Carcary, 2020). Using interviews from the participants in the study creates a personal connection to the participants, which ensures their trust and comfort (Broadbent, 2020). Birt et al. (2016) stated that member checking focuses on the interpretation of the participant's response. Participants within the study should feel safe, physically as well as psychologically and protected against misinterpretations and misunderstandings (Tess Huia Moeke-Maxwell et al., 2018). Member checking allows the participant to check, comment on or prove data interpretations from the researcher (Iivari, 2018).

Validity

Credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability are used to test the validity of the research performed (Panda, 2020). Researchers use credibility, conformity, dependability, and transferability to assess the trustworthiness of the research (Nikfarid et al., 2020). Research strategies such as triangulation and member checking are methods researchers can use to improve study result quality, dependability, and repeatability as well as credibility (Spiers et al., 2018).

FitzPatrick (2019) found that open dialogue with the leaders of a manufacturing company, along with collected documents, demonstrated credibility and quality, which led to improved consumer satisfaction. Confirmability is the record-keeping of all data sources, sampling, and implementation of procedures (El Hussein et al., 2016). To reach confirmability, other researchers' interpretation of the data confirms the data as accurate, verifiable data, and not false or exaggerated (Korstjen & Moser, 2018). In research, transferability allows other or future researchers to conclude if the findings of a study are valid or beneficial to the new research (Connelly, 2016).

The responsibility of a researcher is to provide detailed data of the research process to contribute to future research by other researchers who can transfer and use the results in their setting to ensure transferability (Korstjen & Moser, 2018). I ensured credibility by using member checking. Transferability is essential for other researchers; therefore, I presented a detailed description of the findings for future researchers. Along with the detailed description of findings, I also included a reflective journal of notes or field notes on the interviews with the participants. This journal (field notes) consisted of thoughts, body language and additional comments from the participants. The journal also included notes such as voice inflections and breathing by the participants.

As the researcher, I collected data, reviewed documents and conducted semistructured interviews until no new data or themes emerged. During the research phenomena, when all new ideas are exhausted, then data saturation has occurred

(Carnevale, 2016). The thoroughness of data collection confirms data saturation (Carnevale, 2016).

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I addressed the purpose statement, my role as the researcher, the selected participants who have successfully implemented strategies to minimize defects with their outsourced product, research methodology and design. I described the population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, technique, data organization technique, and data analysis. Section 2 concluded with information on methods and techniques for researchers to ensure the trustworthiness of my study. Section 3 will begin with an introduction, the purpose statement, along with the research question and the presentation of findings.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies leaders of organizations fabricating parts use for identifying defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders within the manufacturing industry. In this section, I include an analysis of my findings from data derived from semistructured interviews with 10 participants and public documents from manufacturing companies' websites located in the southeastern region of Virginia.

The first theme was communication and relationship with outsourced entities. The participants were adamant about communicating with their suppliers and having a relationship with the suppliers, so if there were questions or issues, the supplier felt comfortable enough to contact the organization for clarification. Simon et al. (2021) stated that for the contract between the organization and the supplier to be successful, a close and transparent relationship is a must along with performance measurements that are agreed upon between the two parties.

The second theme was monitoring and tracking the quality system for product defects. All the participants agreed that there needed to be some sort of monitoring and tracking system within the quality division of the organization. The third theme was communication and the relationship with customer service for defective products. In this theme, participants believed in the importance of being able to communicate and had a relationship with customer service when defective products were recognized. The fourth theme was communication and continuous improvement with customer defects. The participants explained there should be an element of continuous improvement in the organization's quality system.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question was as follows: What strategies do leaders of organizations fabricating parts use to identify defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders in the manufacturing industry? The themes that emerged were (a) communication and relationship with outsourced entities, (b) monitoring and tracking the quality system for product defects, (c) communication and relationship with customer service for defective products and (d) communication and continuous improvement regarding customer's product defects. The conceptual framework of stewardship theory applied in the findings by data analysis through research. The concepts of collaboration, intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and identification were identified through the participant's answers.

Theme 1: Communication and Relationship With Outsourced Entities

The use of communication and relationship with outsourced entities was the first theme that emerged relating to strategies leaders use to identify defects (see Table 2). Nguyen et al. (2021) stated that the buyer-supplier relationship involves an alliance of both entities voluntarily going into an agreement through communication, which results in a relationship of sharing knowledge, services, technologies, and products. Both parties having good communication with each other while building on their relationship can promote good business. Relationships that are trust-based and long term with suppliers can promote better performance benefits than selecting a cheaper supplier (Ayman et al., 2021).

Table 2

Frequency of Theme 1: Use of Communication and Relationship With Outsourced Entities

Theme	Number of participants mentioning this theme	Frequency of public documents mentioning this theme
Communication with outsourced entities	6	3
Relationship with outsourced entities	4	1

The use of communications with organizations was mentioned by six of the 10 participants during the interviews and from public documents retrieved from the manufacturing company website. P-F stated, "Having open lines of communications can help with setting goals and improve relationships." Mir et al. (2021) confirmed that communication is not just for sharing information but is also a tool for impacting behavior by focusing on important issues. P-D indicated that communication was important when working as a team because it depended on ensuring inspections for outsourced entities were done correctly. Disruptions of any type within the relationship of the two manufacturing departments should be at a minimum, with the goal to reach each milestone with open communication (de Goede et al., 2018).

In contrast, Figueiredo (2021) related challenges of companies having to rethink their communications, production, and distribution due to the pandemic. Initially, when the pandemic started, corporations, companies, and organizations were all at a standstill, each watching their customer's actions on how to proceed. As stated in the literature review, leaders realized their employees now working from home had plenty of autonomy when interacting with the team and upper management (Palumbo, 2020).

Communication and the relationship with the outsourced entity is not as important as trust with respect to productivity. Ganesan et al. (2022) explained that not only is having good communication essential with outsourced suppliers but there must also be an understanding of what is needed to ensure the relationship is sustainable. Public documents retrieved from the manufacturing company's website confirmed strong communication with suppliers from their initial partnership with the company. These documents assisted the supplier in working with the company by providing information on communicating with different departments, explaining types of products needed from the supplier as well as providing best practices for working with the company.

The company builds a relationship with the outsource supplier offering training and other resources for success in working with the manufacturing company. This theme aligns with my conceptual framework because the participants noted that communication, relationship, and collaboration are all tools needed by the parent organization and the outsourced entity need in order to be successful. These ideas also align with the constructs in stewardship theory and with the literature. For example, within the supply chain organization, especially in outsourcing, all parties must come together to collaborate on information and form a bond of trust (de Goede et al., 2018).

Theme 2: Monitoring System and Tracking the Quality System for Product Defects

After analyzing the data, I evaluated Theme 2 as systems for monitoring and tracking the quality systems for product defects (see Table 3). If the outsourced organization is not the right fit, risk such as product defects, injury, or death could happen to the consumer, which hampers the entire supply chain stream (Agrawal & Singh, 2021). The participants in my study discussed monitoring and tracking the quality system of the supplier's products using checklists and supplier scorecards. This theme was also supported by standard operating procedures and my field notes. From my journal (field notes), I wrote down that participants mentioned the ability to engage in creating standard operating procedures and other quality measures in order to support the demands of the manufacturing process. The participants seemed to have a behavior of ownership and motivation to continue process improvement. As indicated by the study, leaders working in the manufacturing industry must be conscious of outsourcing and the associated risk of their company's reputation of quality when products are received from other organizations. Table 3 shows the frequency of the theme monitoring system and tracking quality system along with the public documents obtained from manufacturing companies.

Table 3

Frequency of Theme 2: Monitoring System and Tracking the Quality System for Product Defects

Theme	Number of participants mentioning this theme	Frequency of public documents mentioning this theme
Monitoring system	5	3
Tracking quality system	6	3

The monitoring system was mentioned by five of the 10 participants, while the tracking system was mentioned by six of the 10 participants during the interviews and from the public website of the manufacturing companies. P-B mentioned checking to see if a supplier has a system to monitor processes daily to provide data showing they are shipping out the product expected. Betul et al. (2022) explained that organizational leaders may have supply chain achievement when systems for measuring and monitoring supplier performance are in place. Standard operating procedures from the manufacturer's company website showed that managers perform oversight of their suppliers and use processes to monitor performance of delivered products.

The aforementioned documents explained to potential and current suppliers the expectations of the organization on how the supplier should have a monitoring and tracking system comparable to the organization's system. The same documents also explained that the organization had the obligation of supplier visits to ensure proper oversight was taking place. P-D explained the monitoring system of using checklists to ensure employees are on the same page when inspecting materials and products to be used in inventory. As previously stated in the literature review, leaders of organizations relying on outsourced entities to provide their products and services are experiencing a high number of failure rates with the quality of products due to the difficulty of monitoring these entities (Wang et al., 2021).

P-G stated that products from suppliers were easily monitored by using paperwork transfers and pallets that employees could easily see visually. By using rapid access to reliable and relevant information, an organization can expend traceability to track material in the supply chain from producer to user (Westerlund et al., 2021). As stated in the literature review, the reliability of the supply chain is important to leaders as the entire chain is responsible for the final product dependability (Wang et al., 2021). Leaders working with the employees to practice proper processes in monitoring and tracking their quality system also practice intrinsic motivation, which aligns with finding strategies for identifying defects. In contrast, Ruderman and Clerkin (2020) explained that monitoring and tracking materials through the quality system was not the only way to ensure products and materials were not defective. Building self-management skills or interpersonal competence assists employees to maximize performance.

As described in the literature review, professionals have identified some competencies such as self–regulation, self-awareness, and self-motivation. These competencies assist leaders by increasing self–direction (Ma et al., 2021). These competencies align well with my conceptual framework and align with autonomy.

Leaders with these competencies have the ability to act on their own interests and values. As stated from the conceptual framework, stewardship theory, using higher autonomy allows the leader or employee of an organization to have flexible access to initiate their own actions without restrictions (Ruoxuan et al., 2020).

Theme 3: Communication and Relationship With Customer Service for Defective Products

Theme 3 was communication and relationship with customer service for defective products (see Table 4). Li et al. (2021) expounded that quality of service is important when it comes to working in customer service and communicating with employees and clients. Disruptions of any type within the relationship between the two organizations should be at a minimum, with the goal of reaching each milestone with open communication (de Goede et al., 2018). Li et al. further explained that communication can be considered warmth or competence. Warmth contains trustworthiness, friendliness, helpfulness, and sincerity. Competence includes effectiveness, intelligence, and creativity, which can enhance communication with customer service. P-C said that their department responded to customer feedback by contacting the customer with a friendly attitude and eliciting as much information as possible. P-E explained that sending out a friendly email to solicit feedback from the customer assists in keeping good communications between organizations.

Table 4

Frequency of Theme 3: Communication and Relationship With Customer Service for Defective Products

Theme	Number of participants mentioning the theme	Frequency of public documents mentioning this theme
Communication with customer service	4	4
Relationship with customer service	3	2

Communication was mentioned by four out of the 10 participants, while relationship was mentioned by three out of the 10 participants during the interviews. Quality plays a significant role in continuing sustainable relationships, lucrativeness, and endurance of companies (Osman et al., 2022). As stated with collaboration from the literature review, de Goede et al. (2018) explained that relationships between two parties, the buyer and supplier, must form a bond where a transparency relationship exists to complete the required task or goal that is expected on both sides. P-E stated that employees have extensive conversations with customers and clients to ensure all questions are asked and understood before working on material. P-J explained the importance of having a working relationship with their fellow employees to connect with all individuals linked to the specific task. Gawankar et al. (2020) clarified that leaders accessing valuable insights when changing the global market have opportunities to strengthen relationships while improving performances. In contrast, Oduro et al. (2020)

stated that communication and relationships are not the important elements that enhance performance within an organization. Conversely, collaboration, trust, and atmosphere are elements that may enhance performance. Collaboration consists of buying organizations and their suppliers cooperating effectively with each other and can assist buyers in maintaining a competitive advantage. Trust enables each party to exercise good faith in their dealings with the other party. Last, atmosphere is defined as a space where the relationship between the buying organization and the supplier is a strong affirmative atmosphere.

As noted in the public documents, the supplier's communication was welcomed along with any questions the supplier may have about becoming a supplier. The supplier who had current contracts with the organizations was given the chance to meet with the organization along with other suppliers to network. Even though there was potential competition amongst the suppliers, this organization provided a networking event for suppliers. This element aligns with my conceptual framework as discussed in identification. In the conceptual framework, the leader understands that assisting their organization in completing objectives is important not only for themselves but for long term milestones of the organization (Li et al., 2019). When the leader's vision and mission align with the organization's statements, the leader exemplifies confidence and certainty.

Theme 4: Communication and Continuous Improvement With Customer's Defects

Theme 4 was communication and continuous improvement with customers' defects (see Table 5). Customers writing reviews share not only their experience with a product but they also talk about the components of the product and the services (Singh et al., 2020). Consumers who have been through situations of product defects can be less than understanding due to suspiciousness of the organization from past product defects recalls (Enis & Bayraktaroglu, 2021). Barre et al. (2021) suggested that quality is categorized as excellence, conformity to requirements, value of money, and meeting of customer's requirements. Meeting and exceeding quality ensure an organization's sustainability in the competitive environment. P-B explained that processes and procedures used in eliciting feedback from customers include face to face and Zoom to provide insight to the customer base. P-H stressed communication through verbally speaking to the customer for quality feedback, then ensuring the responses are relayed to the rest of the team.

Table 5

Frequency of Theme 4: Communication and Continuous Improvement With Customer's Defects

Theme	Number of participants mentioning the theme	Frequency of public documents mentioning the theme
Communication and customer's product defect	3	3
Continuous improvement and customer's product defect	2	2

Communication was mentioned by three out of the 10 participants, while continuous improvement was mentioned by two out of the 10 participants during the interviews and from the public website of the manufacturing companies. Production management's primary focus is improving processes while decreasing employee criticism (Boeriu & Canja, 2022). Grenzfurtner and Gronalt (2021) explained that continuous improvement is a commitment to eliminate waste within systems and processes and to increase the efficiency of an organization. P-A commented that a continuous improvement report is issued if any reports of defective materials are discovered. P-C stated that continuous reports are used to report when subcontractors have defective products.

This theme aligned with my conceptual framework because continuous improvement is a characteristic of motivation. With this characteristic, the motivation for continuous improvement includes working with integrity and honesty without looking for reward (Schmidthuber & Hilgers, 2019). In the conceptual framework, stewardship theory leaders, along with employees, are given responsibilities within their organizations, with an expectation of desired results. When an organization works with a supplier, the motivation of leaders and employees whose services and/or products are outsourced to parent organizations has an expected result of timely delivery of great quality at a reasonable cost.

Applications to Professional Practice

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies leaders of organizations fabricating parts use for identifying defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders within the manufacturing industry. Four themes that emerged included (a) communication and relationship with outsourced entities, (b) monitoring and tracking the quality system for product defects, (c) communication and relationship with customer service for defective products, and (d) communication and continuous improvement regarding customer's product defects.

The findings of this study focused on the strategies leaders of organizations fabricating parts used for identifying defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders in the manufacturing industry. This study uncovered strategies and processes that may assist in increasing the quality of manufactured products. One strategy is for employees to have a quick meeting after lunch with the supervisors to discuss any issues discovered from the morning assignments. Providing a space and time for employees to present information allows issues and questions to be discussed and handled before the issue(s) or defective product(s) move to another location, which will escalate the situation.

Another possible strategy is employees working in teams to perform assignments and double check steps to ensure accuracy. Leaders in the manufacturing industry could use the results from this study to minimize defects from outsourced organizations. Minimizing defects could benefit the consumer, increase profit margins, and increase local communities' profits. In addition, the research findings within the study could assist business leaders in improving production strategies that contribute to addressing defective products from outsourced organizations, which could enhance consumer safety.

Implications for Social Change

One of the objectives of this study was to engender positive social change by concentrating on the issue of product defects. Product defect concerns have significant social implications and risks. Risks include accepting non-compliant material from organizations with substandard quality processes. Another risk would prevent counterfeit parts from entering inspection areas, which may prevent sabotage of significant components—lastly, the threat of terrorism by installing poorly made parts that could fail and cause detrimental damage.

The results could encourage leaders to use the appropriate strategic planning methods and further research to implement additional effective safety measures. The implications for social change can lead to safer vehicles on the highways, which can save lives and reduce recalls that result in financial losses that can affect the stability of jobs in the manufacturing industry. First responders to accidents will have more time to assist with other emergencies.

Recommendations for Action

I researched successful strategies to explore leadership strategies for automobile leaders of organizations fabricating parts for identifying product defects before fulfilling customers' orders in the automotive industry. Risk management is an essential component of cost and quality. Leaders should consider the complexity of applying a concept such as a quality control program to an overseas outsourcing organization. There are several benefits to operating in a global supply network, and there are risks that can expose leaders and their organizations to possible defects (Martin et al., 2011). To alleviate defect risk in the global sourcing chain, a need exists to implement policies by leaders that (a) ensure implementing risk management is rooted throughout the supply chain and (b) provide an avenue for the supply chain to respond to erratic change with a quickness (Martin et al., 2011). The suppliers to the global supply chain network are important and critical in accomplishing outsourcing. Suppliers have ways of managing their proficiencies through the global supply chain. However, these capabilities are unknown to all included in the process (Perunovic et al., 2012).

The results of this study could prove valuable for manufacturing industry leaders, consumers, and supply chain professionals in other industries who outsource their suppliers. The results could encourage leaders to use the appropriate strategic planning methods and further research to implement additional effective safety measures. Leaders in the manufacturing industry could use the results from this study to minimize defects from outsourced organizations.

Recommendations for further action could include better communication and relationships between the outsourced company and the suppliers. Li et al. (2021) indicated that quality of service is important when working in customer service and communicating with employees and clients. The outsourcing company personnel could set up a monitoring system to track the quality of the supplier's products using a checklist and supplier scorecards. Organization leaders could work with the suppliers to motivate leaders and employees whose services are outsourced to parent organizations, therefore, leading to timely delivery and excellent quality at a reasonable cost.

The results of this study will be distributed at leadership conferences, in journals, and among automotive leaders at routine meetings. In addition, the results of this study could become a valuable source for training in the manufacturing industry and other industries that outsource their supply chain. The information could be included in conversations in board meetings. The suppliers could obtain the information from the results and distribute safety information before company leaders purchase the supplies. The information could be included in disclaimers before selling the supplies to the automobile leaders and other industries.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study's findings contributed to the literature regarding strategies to assist manufacturing leaders of organizations fabricating parts for identifying product defects by fulfilling customer orders in the automotive industry. This qualitative method and design in this research study included limitations because of the structure of the study. The qualitative research method is appropriate for exploring a subject or issue concerning experiences and individuals (Naji et al., 2020). A quantitative method could garner more results by including statistical information. Yin (2018) indicated that quantitative research includes testing relationships and capturing larger audiences by generalization. The quantitative method could assist in capturing larger audiences and more experimental research to test the products on the market.

A multiple case study design assisted with exploring successful leaders' strategies to provide products to manufacturing companies in the southeast region of Virginia. Yin (2018) stated that a case study may include one or several case studies. In a single case study, the researcher may focus on a concern and dive into a deeper comprehension of the problem (Yin, 2018). Using a case study design, the individual can determine whether to explore a circumstance regardless of activity, group, or individual (Cronin, 2014). Crowe et al. (2011) noted that using the case study design assists the researcher in exploring and assessing complex situations in a setting more conducive to the participant.

Limitations are unidentified circumstances that transpire, which can weaken the study (Yin, 2018). Within this qualitative study, the limitations included participants who may lack experience in identifying defective products. Future research could include participants with more years of experience. Participants with more years of experience could offer better solutions for suppliers in the auto industry.

Another limitation of this study was that the space provided may not have been conducive for the interviews. If the participant and researcher are placed in a room with no privacy or the room is not secured, the participant may feel uneasy about answering the interview questions truthfully. If the participant feels uneasy or may receive backlash from their organization, they may withdraw from the interview at any time. Future research could include locations that were comfortable for the participants.

Another limitation to the study was the time allotted for each interview and the times of day the interview might be given. Depending on the time allotted for the interview, the participant may decide to shorten their answers, leaving out valuable data. If given substantial time, the participant may need to add information as a filler to their statements. In future research, the participants could have more time to complete the interview; therefore, they would not rush through their answers.

Reflections

When reflecting on my experience while on the journey to obtain a DBA, the doctoral process tested me in ways I never thought I would witness. There were many times I wanted to give up; however, I realized that someone needed my study to help them. In the beginning of my doctoral journey, there were general explanations of the program and how aggressive the doctoral candidate needed to be to succeed in a timely manner. It seemed as if those professors running the program were expecting the chairs of the doctoral candidates to drive the students into working fast to graduate from the program.

Upon entering the program, the professors employed by Walden University explained that students/candidates who worked were welcomed, and the professors were willing to work with flexible schedules. Once entering the program, I discovered the program was not as flexible, and I was at the mercy of several zealous instructors before I started working on my capstone study. Because all my classes were online, I believed it would be difficult to reach professors when I had questions or issues arose. After I communicated with professors and understood the professor's expectations, I was able to move forward in the program. After completing the program, I think back and realize if I had been given certain information sooner, such as starting my problem and purpose statement earlier, while understanding this was the foundation of my study, writing my dissertation would have gone smoother.

Conclusion

This qualitative multiple case study was appropriate to explore strategies leaders of organizations fabricating parts use for identifying product defects before fulfilling customers' orders within the manufacturing industry. Outsource providers can deliver defective parts to automobile industry manufacturers that could hurt consumers, especially children. Product recall occurs on a regular basis; however, before a product is in recall, actions should occur that ensure the safety of motorist, pedestrians, and first responders.

The automobile leaders take risks when they purchase products from an outsourced company. The outsourced company leaders should communicate with the automobile leaders about the product. A better relationship and communication could yield better results that could save lives. Monitoring systems could track the quality of products and the supplies could create scorecards and checklists. Safety is essential in the automobile industry. Defective parts should not have a chance to occur on the market. Many accidents occur because of defective parts. A human life should not be a sacrifice or a risk factor. Risk management is important when human lives are at stake.

I used stewardship theory as the conceptual framework for my study. Leaders should practice stewardship leadership in business practices. Leaders need to assure good quality products. For good quality products, several factors may take place that detours the goals and milestones of the organization. Goals such as good quality products, on-time delivery, and reasonable cost become jeopardized for the consumer and the organization. Defective products may cause product recalls from the organization to consumers, leading to mistrust. This mistrust may also lead to organizations closing (Muralidharan et al., 2019). Along with defective products and product recalls leaders who are not using stewardship practices and are unfamiliar with supply chain operations may not concern themselves with risk management. This concept is beneficial because there is a need to implement policies by leaders that (a) ensure implementing risk management is rooted throughout the supply chain and (b) provide an avenue for the supply chain to respond to erratic change with quickness (Martin et al., 2011). The results of this study could prove valuable for manufacturing industry leaders, consumers, and supply chain professionals in other industries who outsource their suppliers.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date of Interview ____ Interview Identification Number

Thank you for participating in my study Strategies for Minimizing Defects in Outsourced Products. Confirm that I have received the email response "I consent" from the participant, remind of confidentiality, remind participant may rescind from interview, a summary of interview will be available.

Purpose of Study

The general business problem is leaders often outsource products to the manufacturing industry that do not have identifiable quality strategies for minimizing product defects. The specific business problem is leaders of organizations fabricating parts lack strategies for identifying defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders to the automotive industry. The purpose of this single qualitative case study is to explore strategies leaders of organizations fabricating parts use for identifying defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders to the automotive industry.

Interview process

I will conduct this virtual interview asking ten open ended questions. Please speak freely and openly. Your answers need to be truthful. I will take notes and record the interview, with your permission.

Interview Questions:

1. As a business leader, describe your relationship with entities outsourced to.
2. What strategies do you use to minimize product defects?
3. What strategies do you use to oversee organizations providing products/services to your organization?
4. How often are your quality practices and procedures reviewed/audited?
5. What risk management practices do you use to prevent defects in products?
6. What processes and or procedures do you use to elicit feedback from customers regarding defects in products?
7. What strategies do you use to address product defects?
8. What strategies do you use to ensure proper relationships with customers for addressing defects?

9. What is your organization's lessons learned strategy on defective products?
10. What else would you like to tell me about strategies you use to identify defects in products before fulfilling customers' orders?

End of the Interview

I will thank the participant for allowing me to interview them and assisting with my study. I will further ensure credibility by member checking the virtual interview. I will plan a second virtual interview to allow the participant to review their responses. Within one week, I will send the participant an email with the transcribed interview.

Member checking

I will thank the participant for agreeing to speak with me a second time to validate the responses during the virtual interview. After the participant has reviewed the transcribed virtual interview, I will verify with the participant the accuracy of their responses and give the participant the opportunity to give additional responses if needed.

Thank you for participating in my study.

Kecia Ballen

Appendix B: Letter

Dear Participant,

My name is Kecia Ballen and I am a doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Business Administration program with a specialization in global supply chain management at Walden University. I would like to interview you for my study Strategies for Minimizing Defects in Outsourced Products. The purpose of my study is to explore strategies of organizations leaders who fabricate parts and identify defects in products before fulfilling customers 'orders to the manufacturing industry. I will use pseudonyms in my study and any publications to protect the privacy and identity of the participants to ensure confidentiality.

Attached please find a consent form. If you decide to participate in this study, please respond "I consent" to this email. I will share a summary of my study results and suggestions with you and your managers, which may provide additional information to your organization's strategies.

Thank you for your consideration

Kecia Ballen