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Motivational Strategies Warehouse Managers Use to Improve Employees' Performance

Brooks LaTonya Demming
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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Brooks L. Demming

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Motivational Strategies Warehouse Managers Use to Improve Employees' Performance

by

Brooks L. Demming

MA, Ashford University, 2015

BA, Ashford University, 2014

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2022

Abstract

Failure to improve employee performance can have unfavorable organizational outcomes. Organizational leaders are concerned about employee performance because improving employee performance is critical for achieving organizational goals. Grounded in Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation, the purpose of this multiple-case study was to explore strategies warehouse managers use to improve employees' performance. Data were collected using semistructured interviews with three warehouse managers, member-checking interviews, and a review of public company documents. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Three themes emerged: organizational communication, employee empowerment, and a supportive work environment. A key recommendation for warehouse managers is to communicate expectations to employees to empower them to complete tasks that improve performance. The implications for positive social change include the potential to help leaders improve employee performance, stimulate economic growth, and create employment opportunities for increasing and sustaining tax revenues.

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Dedication

My doctoral journey consisted of highs and lows. Without the support of my family and friends, I do not think I would have persevered. I dedicate my doctoral study to my awesome family who, from Day 1, supported me with their whole heart. Jeffrey, you are my rock. You are an amazing husband who encouraged me over the years to keep going. I appreciate your unconditional love and support. Thank you for being my greatest cheerleader. J'Auna, you are my heart's desire. You are everything that I asked God for in a daughter. Thank you for sacrificing your weekends to allow me to complete coursework. Thank you for never once complaining. You encouraged and supported me from start to finish, and for that I am grateful. Mom, thank you for raising me to be a confident woman who sets goals and does not stop until I achieve them. Mom, you are a strong and resilient woman. Thank you for your love and support. To my father-in-law, thank you for believing in me. Your love and encouragement motivated me more than you will ever know. To my brothers, Ken, Charles, and Corey, thank you for your encouragement. To my extended family, friends, and colleagues, thank you all for your love and support.

Lastly, I dedicate this study to the memory of my friend, Darlene Y. Graves. Darlene, thank you for the long conversations on the days when I wanted to wave the white flag. Your prayers and words of encouragement kept me grounded. You supported me during the worst moment in your life, and for that I am forever grateful. I cherish you in my heart, and I miss you every day. I pray that Matthew, Derek, and Amaris know how much you are loved and cherished.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The performance of employees is a critical component of an organization accomplishing its goals (Girdwichai & Sriviboon, 2020). Budiwibowo et al. (2020) stated that an organization's employees are an essential resource for achieving goals and executing strategy. Girdwichai and Sriviboon (2020) noted that an organization could only accomplish its goals when employees perform well. Consequently, managing employee performance is essential. Therefore, organizational leaders should examine employee performance and invest in strategies to improve underperformance within the organization.

Background of the Problem

Motivation is directly related to employee performance (Ganta, 2014; Tudor & Petre, 2021). Motivated employees positively affect the success and sustainability of an organization (Lorincová et al., 2019). Motivated employees help improve business operations and remain at the company longer. Conversely, unmotivated employees experience a decrease in performance (Tudor & Petre, 2021). Unmotivated employees do not report to work, lack effort in their jobs, produce low-quality work, and leave the organization (Ganta, 2014; Tudor & Petre, 2021). Unmotivated employees' attitudes toward the organization and colleagues may be negative or inappropriate (Tudor & Petre, 2021). A decreased level of motivation may lead to the employee behaving negatively in the workplace (Tudor & Petre, 2021). Lack of motivation in the workplace stems from unclear expectations, lack of feedback, and misplaced accountability (Gallup, 2017). Despite the negative impact that unmotivated employees have on the organization, some

organizations fail to comprehend the importance of employee motivation (Tudor & Petre, 2021).

Problem Statement

Employees who lack motivation typically do not perform at levels for which they are capable, which can result in ineffective organizational performance (Rasheed et al., 2020). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2018) reported that in the general warehousing and storage industry, employees' hours increased by more than 10%, but labor productivity declined by 7.6%. The general business problem was that managers in the warehousing and storage industry with unmotivated employees experience decreased performance. The specific business problem was that some warehouse managers lack strategies to motivate employees to improve performance.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore motivational strategies that some warehouse managers used to improve employees' performance. The target population for this study was three managers from three warehouses in the southeastern region of the United States who successfully used motivational strategies to improve employee performance. The implications for positive social change include the potential to improve employee performance to increase organizational performance, which may help local communities by stimulating economic growth by creating employment opportunities for increasing and sustaining tax revenues benefiting people and the economy.

Nature of the Study

The three core research methods are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed (J. Park & Park, 2016). Quantitative researchers use closed-ended questions to examine characteristics or relationships through hypothesis testing (J. Park & Park, 2016). The quantitative method was not appropriate for the current study because I was not seeking to understand relationships among variables but instead sought to explore motivational strategies that some warehouse managers use to improve employee performance. Researchers use qualitative methods to understand the “what,” “how,” or “why” of a phenomenon (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015) by applying open-ended inquiry techniques (Yin, 2018). Mixed-methods researchers apply both qualitative and quantitative methods (J. Park & Park, 2016). The mixed-methods approach was not applicable because only the qualitative was necessary to address the current study’s purpose. I used the qualitative method to ask warehouse managers open-ended questions to explore the motivational strategies they use to improve employee performance.

I considered four qualitative designs: (a) ethnography, (b) narrative, (c) phenomenology, and (d) case study. Ethnographic researchers seek to understand cultures to gain insights and meanings from their members’ interactions (Gergen & Gergen, 2018). The ethnographic design was not appropriate because I did not observe warehouse managers’ culture to gain understanding and meanings from their interactions. Researchers use a narrative design to understand the meanings of individuals’ stories (Jack-Malik & Kuhnke, 2020). The narrative design was not appropriate because I did not collect warehouse managers’ personal stories to study their individual and composite

meanings. Phenomenological researchers explore and describe the meanings of the lived experiences and worldviews of participants (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological design was not appropriate because I did not explore and describe the personal meanings of warehouse managers' lived experiences. Instead, I used a case study design to explore a time- and space-bound phenomenon that required collecting data from multiple sources (see Alpi & Evans, 2019). Researchers use a case study design to study a specific case within a real-world context (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) explained that a case study design is appropriate to ask "what," "how," and "why" questions. A single-case study design can produce invaluable insight (Yin, 2018). In contrast, a multiple-case study design allows researchers to explore variations between cases and replicate findings across cases (Lashgari et al., 2018). A multiple-case study is likely to be stronger than a single case study (Yin, 2018). Although a single-case study could have provided valuable insight into the phenomenon, I used a multiple-case study design for the possibility of direct replication when exploring motivational strategies some warehouse managers use to improve employees' performance by asking "what," "how," and "why" questions.

Research Question

What motivational strategies do some warehouse managers use to improve employee performance?

Interview Questions

1. What motivational strategies do you use to improve employees' performance?
2. What motivational strategies did you find worked best to improve employee performance?

3. What were the three most valuable changes that you noticed after implementing your motivational strategies to improve employees' performance?
4. How do you assess the effectiveness of your motivational strategies to improve employee performance?
5. How often do you review your motivational strategies to improve employees' performance?
6. Who was involved in the development of the motivational strategies to improve employees' performance?
7. What else would you like to share about your motivational strategies to improve employees' performance?

Conceptual Framework

The expectancy theory of motivation served as the conceptual framework to explore the motivational strategies that some warehouse managers used to improve employees' performance. Vroom (1960) introduced the initial concept of the expectancy theory in their 1959 doctoral dissertation titled *Some Personality Determinants of the Effects of Participation*, which was featured in The Ford Foundation's Doctoral Dissertation Series. Vroom (1960) hypothesized that when an individual participates in the decision-making process on the job, the individual will have greater motivation for effective performance and a positive attitude toward the job. Vroom (1964) expanded their ideas and introduced the expectancy theory of motivation in which they concluded that employees perform well on the job when management validates their efforts to attain

performance goals through work incentives and rewards. The three constructs of Vroom's expectancy theory that determine motivation in the workplace are (a) valence, (b) instrumentality, and (c) expectancy. Vroom (1964) explained that valence is the value that an individual puts on the expected outcome. For example, in the workplace, a person may perform the tasks of their job more proficiently because they expect that performing more proficiently will lead to a promotion. Vroom (1964) defined instrumentality as the expectation that the employee gets what they desire. For example, an employee works hard to exceed sales goals to earn a bonus. Lastly, expectancy is what an individual expects from their efforts (Vroom, 1964). For example, an employee attends a training class to learn a new skill. The expectancy theory of motivation was expected to relate to the specific business problem in the current study because some warehouse managers lack motivation strategies to improve employees' performance. Vroom's theory provided a conceptual framework for exploring the strategies that warehouse managers may use to increase valence, instrumentality, and expectancy to improve employee performance.

Operational Definitions

Employee disengagement: Employee disengagement is the lack of employee effort to complete simple job tasks (Lemon & Palenchar, 2018).

Engagement: Engagement is commitment or participation with a task (Murayama, 2022).

Job satisfaction: Job satisfaction is an employee's emotional assessment of their job and commitment to the organization's success (Tănăsescu & Ramona-Diana, 2019).

Motivation: Motivation is a person's desire to perform to achieve organizational goals (Vroom, 1964).

Warehouse: Warehouse is a space dedicated to store, raw materials, semifinished or finished products, preservation, packaging material, picking, and shipments (Freitas et al., 2019).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

In a scholarly study, identifying assumptions, limitations, and delimitations helps reinforce the validity and reliability of the research. In the next subsections, I define and describe the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this study.

Assumptions

Assumptions are statements accepted as true without having evidence to support them (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). For this multiple-case study, I made three assumptions. The first assumption was that the organization would permit warehouse managers to be interviewed and access would be granted to organizational and archival records. A second assumption was that the interview questions would elicit responses that would provide a clear understanding of the strategies that warehouse managers used to improve employee performance. The third assumption was participants would allocate time to participate in the interview, and they would answer the interview questions truthfully.

Limitations

A limitation is a risk to the internal validity of the study that is beyond the researcher's control (Behm et al., 2018). I anticipated two limitations to this study: the

number of cases and internal policies that may limit responses. The specific number of cases was three. Collecting data from three companies may limit the transferability of research findings. Because the participants included only a small population of warehouse managers, the findings may not apply to a larger population. However, the findings from this study may be used to support related studies. Second, I anticipated that the three warehouses could have internal policies that may limit the warehouse managers' ability to provide comprehensive responses to the interview questions. None of the three warehouses had a policy preventing the warehouse managers from responding comprehensively to the interview questions.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the boundaries of the research (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). In this study, I limited participants to current warehouse managers who had implemented strategies to improve employee performance. Second, I limited the scope of the study to three warehouses located in the southeastern United States. The study did not include participants from outside of the southeastern United States. I limited the study to a single industry, which may limit the use of the results across other industries.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this multiple-case study was to explore motivational strategies some warehouse managers used to improve employees' performance. Employees are important to an organization because they determine the success of the organization (Adejare et al., 2020). In a warehouse, it is necessary to measure performance and productivity to ensure customer satisfaction, ensure continuous improvement in

operations, identify issues before they become problems, and train staff (Richards, 2017). To maximize the effective use of operational resources, warehouse managers should effectively motivate and manage their employees. A warehouse manager should engage with their staff and adapt their motivation to accommodate each employee (Richards, 2017). Therefore, the need for motivational strategies to improve employee performance is vital for organizations' performance.

The performance of employees is a concern for business leaders because employee performance can affect the sustainability of the business and earning potential. The current study findings may contain ways warehouse managers apply motivational strategies to improve employees' performance for success in achieving organizational goals. Additionally, warehouse managers might strengthen their decision-making process for improving employees' performance. By exploring and implementing motivational strategies to improve employees' performance, warehouse managers may enhance the services they provide to customers. By enhancing customer service, warehouse managers may increase demand, resulting in concomitant increases in production efficiencies and an expansion of operations, which may lead to business sustainability and increased revenue.

This study's results may contribute to positive social change by providing motivational strategies to improve employees' performance to enable managers to attract and maintain local talent, thereby contributing to business sustainability. Implementing motivation strategies may also stimulate economic growth and create opportunities for

increasing and sustaining tax revenues. In addition, the organization can use a portion of the increase in revenues to invest in corporate social responsibility efforts.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

To explore the phenomenon of employee motivation, I conducted a qualitative multiple-case study involving three warehouse managers from three warehouses in the southeastern region of the United States. Before conducting the study, I completed a critical review of the literature exploring what strategies managers use to improve employee performance. The review consisted of peer-reviewed articles and seminal books to understand the topic by analyzing and synthesizing the peer-reviewed journals and seminal books.

I organized the literature review into six topical categories to explain the literature search strategy. I expanded the details of the expectancy theory, the critical analysis, and the synthesis of its supporting and contrasting theories. I also expounded on the two significant themes relevant to the phenomenon of employee performance and a review of methodological literature.

I used the Walden University library to retrieve reports, seminal scholarly books, and peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed journal articles relevant to this study. I used ABI/Inform Global, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, Emerald insight, ProQuest Central, Sage Journals, and Sage Research Methods. Additionally, I used the Walden University library to review dissertations related to my research topic. Also, I used Google Scholar, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and U.S. Census Bureau websites.

While searching in the databases, I used keywords such as *employee performance*, *expectancy theory of motivation*, *employee motivation*, *motivation theories*, *employee performance models*, *process motivation theories*, *content motivation theories*, *employee production*, *employee productivity*, *employee improvement*, *employee engagement*, *disengagement*, *job satisfaction*, *monetary rewards*, *nonmonetary rewards*, *intrinsic motivation*, *extrinsic motivation*, *intrinsic rewards*, *extrinsic rewards*, *productivity*, *warehouse operations*, *warehouse management*, and *distribution centers*. I was able to find literature related to my research question and general topic. The total number of references was 204, of which 171 (84%) were published from 2018 to 2022, and 182 (90%) references were peer reviewed.

The conceptual framework for this employee motivation study was the expectancy theory of motivation developed by Vroom (1960, 1964). In the expectancy theory of motivation, Vroom's (1964) asserted that employee motivation directly affects employee performance. The basis of the expectancy theory of motivation is that motivation depends on individual aspirations and the possibility of fulfillment (Beiu & Davidescu, 2018).

Human resource management is becoming more critical in business (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Therefore, work motivation and employee satisfaction are areas of importance in companies. Sureephong et al. (2020) found that motivated employees are one of the most critical inputs to the organization's success because they are energetic and creative toward accomplishing organizational objectives. For an organization to compete, the organization should optimize its workforce's performance (Rai et al., 2018).

However, despite the workforce being a critical asset of every organization, increasing employee performance and motivation remains a challenge for many organizations (Sureephong et al., 2020). Upon reviewing the literature, I discovered that empirical evidence on strategies managers use to improve employee motivation was lacking in the U.S. warehousing and storage industry. The literature review consists of findings from studies on employee motivation conducted in industries outside of the United States. The lack of empirical evidence in the United States indicated a gap that the current study addressed.

Application to the Applied Business Problem

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore motivational strategies that warehouse managers use to improve employee performance. As organizations diversify, managers require applicable theories to manage and motivate employees (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). Individuals use need-based, reinforcement, and process theories to study employee motivation and job satisfaction (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Organizations in the business industry have examined the implementation of motivation theories (Ta'rifin, 2018). The current study's theoretical foundation consisted of work motivation theories, one of which was the expectancy theory. Lunenburg (2011) concluded that the expectancy theory has significant implications for motivating employees. The expectancy theory of motivation was the lens used to explore the motivational strategies used by warehouse managers that contribute to motivating employees to improve their performance. In the following sections, I provide details of the expectancy theory, as well as supporting and contrasting theories follow.

Vroom's Expectancy Theory of Motivation

Vroom (1964) established a connection between employee performance and employee motivation. Vroom suggested that in a workplace setting, an employee will typically choose what motivates them the most. Within the expectancy theory, motivation is a function of expectancy or profitability. Expectancy is the employee's belief in relation to their efforts and good performance (Rehman et al., 2019). Outcomes are rewards that organizations distribute to employees (Kollmann et al., 2020). Vroom suggested that employees complete their assigned task to improve their performance.

One assumption of the expectancy theory is that selecting from a range of possible choices drives individual behavior (Rehman et al., 2019). The presumption is that the individual will choose what they perceive will be more beneficial (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). Vroom's (1964, as cited in Lunenburg, 2011) expectancy theory has four assumptions: (a) People join organizations with expectations regarding previous experiences, desires, and motivations; (b) a person's behavior is a result of deliberate choice; (c) every person wants something different from the organization; and (d) a person will choose the alternatives that enhance personal outcomes.

The dependent factors of the theory are valence, instrumentality, and expectancy (Vroom, 1964). Valence and instrumentality relate to outcomes and consist of two components: intrinsic and extrinsic (Beiu & Davidescu, 2018). Expectancy is the belief that an individual's behavior will result in a desired outcome (Rehman et al., 2019). Valence measures the value that an individual places on the reward and is impacted by basic needs (Rehman et al., 2019). Valence is dependent on the importance of the reward

to the individual (Baciu, 2017). The valence of an outcome to a person can be positive or negative, and therefore it is important to distinguish its value to a person (Vroom, 1964). For example, a person can desire an object but get little satisfaction from attaining the object. Conversely, a person can work diligently to avoid an object but later discovers that attaining the object is satisfying (Vroom, 1964). Lunenburg (2011) indicated that if an employee has a strong preference for obtaining a reward, the valence is positive. However, if the employee does not have a strong preference for receiving the reward, the valence is negative. If an employee has a low valence for an anticipated reward, the employee may have a low motivation level (Harris et al., 2017). For example, an employee may believe that their efforts will improve the company's performance, leading to a reward, but if the employee does not desire the reward, it will have low valence (Harris et al., 2017). The strengths of a person's desire for an object are focused on their satisfaction or dissatisfaction for achieving the object and not on intrinsic properties (Vroom, 1964).

Leaders can increase the expected value of rewards by distributing rewards that employees express as valuable and personalized. Employees desire different types of rewards. Some employees may prefer pay increases or promotions, whereas other employees may desire time off, insurance benefits, or childcare (Lunenburg, 2011). According to Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, incentives are not always about the personal interests of the workers. They may also be about the coalition that the individual has with their performance and the outcomes of their efforts (Rehman et al., 2019).

Vroom (1964) identified five approaches to measure valence. The first approach is the use of verbal reports. A verbal report is a strategy that management can use to measure the attractiveness or unattractiveness of valence. The second approach for measuring valence is creating new learning from outcomes. If a result strengthens a response tendency, the valence is positive. On the other hand, if an outcome weakens the response tendency, the valence is negative. A third approach is the thematic apperception method, which allows subjects to elicit their fantasy by sharing stories about pictures. After listening to an employee's story about the picture, a manager gives the content and frequency of the story a score. A fourth approach is an assumption that a person's choices infer the valence of the outcome. If a person is given two options, the choice will reflect their valence. The fifth and final approach is an observation of consummatory behavior. This approach applies to outcomes where consumption of food or water occurs. The amount of consumption or the rate of consumption is measured.

Vroom (1964) developed a formula to calculate the motivational force. The motivational force drives behavior (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). Vroom theorized that the motivational force = expectancy x instrumentality x valence. The motivational force is subjective on the expectation that effort will result in good performance and desired rewards (Lunenburg, 2011). The concept of force is the only concept in the expectancy theory of motivation that directly links with observable events. The concept of force is that valences and expectancies combine in determining choices. An individual's behavior is presumed to be the result of a field of forces. The force influencing a person to take part in the action is an element of the number of the valences' results, everything being

equal, and the hopes that the action will prompt the fulfillment of the outcomes (Vroom, 1964). Vroom established the motivational force on an individual's belief that effort will lead to performance and that performance will lead to attaining a desired or undesired reward (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018).

Instrumentality is the belief that performance, if good enough, will lead to a desired outcome (Rehman et al., 2019). Instrumentality is believing that good performance will lead to anticipated outcomes such as pay increases, promotions, or other forms of recognition (Harris et al., 2017). The probability of receiving the desired results influences a worker's choice to apply a specific effort to complete a task (Harris et al., 2017). If an employee views the outcome as positive, their motivation increases, but if an employee views the outcome as negative, their motivation decreases (Chinyio et al., 2018).

Instrumentality is measured as ranging from 0 to 1 (Lunenburg, 2011). Employees' instrumentality can be influenced by the rewards system, promotion policy, leadership attitudes, and payroll policy (Baciu, 2017). For example, if an employee perceives that good performance ratings lead to salary increases, the instrumentality value is 1. On the contrary, if the perception is that good performance rating does not lead to salary increases, the instrumentality level is 0 (Lunenburg, 2011). Factors that aid instrumentality include understanding the relationship between performance and outcomes, possessing trust and respect for the individuals who decide how to distribute rewards, and seeing transparency in the disbursement process (Surephong et al., 2020). Leaders should accurately measure job performance, clearly describe rewards associated

with successful performance, and identify the correlation between previous successful performance and rewards to increase employees' belief that good job performance will result in a reward that they value (Lunenburg, 2011).

Expectancy is the belief that effort in relation to good performance will lead to a reward (Rehman et al., 2019). Expectancy level is also measured as ranging from 0 to 1 (Lunenburg, 2011). Baciu (2017) asserted that if an employee believes their efforts will result in high performance, they will get serious about their work. For example, if an employee perceives that effort will not lead to the desired performance level, the expectancy is 0. However, if the perception is that effort will lead to completing the task, the expectancy value is 1 and indicates a high expectancy level (Lunenburg, 2011). In the workplace, management can measure expectancies using verbal reports. If a person is confident that an outcome will follow an act, the expectancy value is 1.00, but if the person is unsure, the expectancy value is .50 (Vroom, 1964). Employees who believe that they will receive a reward demonstrate effort in the workplace (Akgunduz et al., 2020). Expectancies are subjective to the employee's knowledge and skills, supportive conditions, and resources available to the employee (Lunenburg, 2011). Expectancies have an action–outcome association characterized in terms of their strengths. In an organization, lack of resources can influence the expectancies of an employee in carrying out a task (Baciu, 2017). Leaders should attempt to increase employees' belief that they can successfully perform their job by providing resources, selecting individuals with skills and aptitude to perform the job, providing training and development opportunities, assigning progressively difficult tasks, and coaching employees (Lunenburg, 2011).

In essence, a person's motivation is dependent on the belief that (a) effort will lead to acceptable performance, (b) they will receive a reward for their performance, and (c) the value of the reward is positive (Baciu, 2017; Lunenburg, 2011). The absence of any element of the relationship will result in a lack of motivation (Baciu, 2017). The expectancy theory has in its description things that management can do to motivate employees by altering their effort-to-performance expectancy, performance-to-reward expectancy, and reward valences (Lunenburg, 2011).

Vroom's expectancy theory has faced criticism. Heneman and Schwab (1972) suggested that the approach lacks value because individual actions center on rewards. Vroom (date, as cited in Hackman & Porter, 1968) assumed that rewards encourage employees to increase their efforts but fail to account for rewards' negative impacts. There are also problems with measuring the expectancy model's components and the need to specify the intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes (Locke, 1975).

Porter and Lawler (1968) expanded Vroom's expectancy theory beyond the motivational force to view performance in its entirety. The constructs of the Porter and Lawler theory are as follows: (a) value of the reward, (b) effort-reward-portability, (c) effort, (d) abilities and traits, (e) role perceptions, (f) performance, (g) rewards, (h) perceived equitable of rewards, (i) and satisfaction. Porter and Lawler suggested that the value of the reward and effort-reward-portability when multiplied produce effort. Porter and Lawler found effort-reward-portability increases and that performance does not result in a reward. Also, when an employee experiences satisfaction from a reward, it affects that reward's future valence.

There are two classifications of motivation theories: process and content (Sotirofski, 2018). A process theory explores motivation as a process, whereas a content theory focuses on the individual, their needs, and their goals (Sotirofski, 2018). In the following sections, I summarize three process motivation theories that align with the expectancy theory and two content motivation theories that contrast with the expectancy theory.

Supporting Theories

Process theorists (Adams, 1965; Locke, 1968; Skinner, 1938) of work motivation hypothesized that needs are not enough to rationalize a phenomenon. Furthermore, process theorists incorporate assumptions, values, and discernment to clarify why individuals behave in a certain manner and why they are willing to exert effort to accomplish their objectives (Ćulibrk et al., 2018). Process theories include Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation, Adams' (1965) equity theory, Locke's (1968) goal-setting theory, and Skinner's (1938) reinforcement theory (Black et al., 2019; Ćulibrk et al., 2018). Each of these theories has its limits and, while they do not negate one another, they center on various parts of the motivation process (Ćulibrk et al., 2018).

Equity Theory

Adams (1965) equity theory of motivation aligns with Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation. Adams founded the equity theory on the premise that employees seek social equity from various rewards such as recognition, promotions, and salary increases. Adams theorized that people frequently view their input and output in a ratio format. Adams' argued that an employee can lose motivation for the job and organization if the

employee feels that their input is greater than the outcomes that they receive as the perceived input and output of others. Adams indicated that employees sometimes compare their ratio with coworkers, and those with a high ratio are perceived to be more motivated than a coworker with a low ratio.

Adams' equity theory is suitable as an alternative theory to the expectancy theory of motivation because it focuses on motivating people by following the behavioral process. Despite the focus on employee motivation, Adams' equity theory is not appropriate for this research study because its foundation is that employees seek to maintain equity between their input and outcomes compared to their peers' inputs and outputs (Bawalla, 2020). One fundamental assumption of the equity theory is that an employee may negatively adjust their behavior if they perceive themselves to be in an inequitable situation (Bawalla, 2020).

Locke's Goal-Setting Theory

Locke's (1968) goal-setting theory is similar to Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. Edwin Locke, an American psychologist, created the goal-setting theory to examine the motivation behind decisions people make in their workplace. The goal-setting theory suggests that satisfaction on the job is a result of performance (Demirkol, 2021). The theory proposes a linear connection between the difficulty of the goal and performance with commitment to the goal, self value, contribution to the goal, and feedback (Swann et al., 2021). Locke and Latham theorized that challenging goals were more effective for increasing performance (Swann et al., 2021).

The goal-setting theory is an alternate theory to Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation in that it examines what motivates people to perform. In the goal-setting theory, motivation is intrinsically based, which is opposed to this study's focus on what motivational strategies warehouse managers use to improve employees' performance. Goal-setting theory is not appropriate for this study because it places great emphasis on obtaining goals, which can be an issue if a person has multiple goals that conflict with one another. In this case, the person's performance will likely suffer. Therefore, the goal-setting theory is not appropriate for this research study.

Skinner's Reinforcement Theory

Skinner's (1938) reinforcement theory of motivation is like Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation, emphasizing behavior. Skinner's approach centers on the assumption that behavior influences consequences. Skinner argued that reinforcement, punishment, and extinction could change a person's behavior. Skinner (1938) theorized that positive reinforcement occurs when the outcome of the behavior increases the probability that the behavior will continue. Contrastingly, negative reinforcement occurs when the negative result is withheld, which increases the likelihood that the behavior will continue. Skinner added that punishment occurs by imposing a negative consequence to diminish unwanted behavior. Skinner postulated that positive reinforcement could lead to long term behavior modification, whereas punishment influences behavior short term but may have damaging effects. Lastly, Skinner (1938) explained that extinction is a technique to stop learned behavior. Skinner's reinforcement theory is not suitable for this research study because it focuses on shaping behavior by controlling its outcome. In

contrast, Vroom's expectancy theory accounts for behavioral causes but does not focus on controlling the behavior by shaping its outcome.

Contrasting Theories

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg et al. (1959) two-factor theory is a contrasting theory to Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation. In the two-factor theory, Herzberg et al. addressed the effects of working conditions on satisfaction and motivation. Herzberg et al. conducted interviews about job satisfaction and dissatisfaction with 200 accountants and engineers from various industries in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Herzberg et al. found that aspects of a job can affect overall job satisfaction and impact motivation. The two factor theory centers on dissatisfaction factors (hygiene) and satisfaction factors (motivation) (Alrawahi et al., 2020).

Herzberg et al. (1959) suggested that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not opposites because they are two separate factors. For example, hygiene factors do not increase or decrease satisfaction but if lacking, can contribute to dissatisfaction (Alrawahi et al., 2020). Herzberg (1966) discovered that intrinsic factors could result in improved retention and job satisfaction. In contrast, extrinsic factors could result in an increased level of dissatisfaction. In the two-factor theory, recognition, responsibility, achievement, and growth opportunities are motivators, whereas salary, benefits, job security, and relationships are hygiene factors (Hur, 2018).

Although Vroom (1964) and Herzberg et al. (1959) agreed that motivation can occur if there are motivators in the workplace. The expectancy theory of motivation is a

process theory (Holbrook & Chappell, 2019). Process theorists address motivation concerning how perceptions and decisions influence behavior (Holbrook & Chappell, 2019). Herzberg two factor theory is a content theory. Content theories focus on the individual, their needs, and goals (Sotirofski, 2018). The two-factor theory is not suitable for this research study because the basis of this theory is humanistic values. Herzberg et al. suggested that continuous psychological growth and the need to avoid pain were motivating factors, whereas Vroom viewed motivation as a person's perception of their work.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs is an opposing theory to Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. Abraham Maslow introduced the hierarchy of needs theory in the 1943 paper "*A Theory of Human Motivation.*" Maslow classified a person's basic needs into five categories: physiological, safety, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow's theory is grounded on individual needs and their enjoyment level (Alajmi & Alasousi, 2019). Maslow accentuated that meeting the primary physical needs increases a person's motivation. Maslow attributed health and availability of basic needs to employee satisfaction.

Maslow (1943) grounded their theory on the idea that an individual's hierarchy of needs starts with basic and physiological necessities and ascends to the need for growth needs (Alajmi & Alasousi, 2019). Physiological needs include food, suitable temperature, air, adequate workspace, and water. Security needs are job security, a safe workplace, stable wages, and benefits. In comparison, social needs are social activities, teamwork,

and a sense of belonging in the workplace. Contrarily, there are two categories of esteem needs, desire for strength and recognition. The final need is self-actualization, or the desire to reach one's full potential (Alajmi & Alasousi, 2019). Maslow's hierarchy of needs included factors that did not align with this study.

Studies Guided by Vroom's Expectancy Theory

I explored the phenomenon of employee motivation in the warehousing and storage industry through the lens of Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation. The content below relates to employee motivation and Vroom's expectancy theory's specific constructs. There are limited examples of employee motivation studies particular to the warehousing and storage industry. Therefore, the content below reflects literature from studies conducted in other sectors.

Chopra (2019) used the expectancy theory to explain the shopping motives of young consumers in India. Harris et al. (2017) revealed that intrinsic factors are more influential for employees in the restaurant industry. Huang (2018) found that even intrinsically motivated employees may still be willing to work for money if they value the amount. Along the same lines, Akgunduz et al. (2020) found that financial rewards increased employees meaning of work perception; employees with proactive personality characteristics consider their work in the hotel meaningful.

Baciu's (2017) study findings suggested that the city servants had a medium level of motivation related to putting in effort (instrumentality) and generating good results would result in a reward (valence). On the contrary, Sureephong et al. (2020) found that employees perceived physical objects as more valuable, therefore, giving tangible

nonmonetary rewards the highest valence score. Job-related nonmonetary and social nonmonetary rewards did not positively impact employee motivation.

Hashiguchi et al. (2021) found that intrinsic motivation had a more significant impact on the awareness of work performance in younger workers, and extrinsic motivation had a more substantial impact on older workers. However, intrinsic motivation affected both younger, and older workers perception of their work skills and workers with high intrinsic and extrinsic motivation had a greater awareness of their work performance. Alamri et al.'s (2019) results were consistent with the expectancy theory. The researchers found that the student's view of the value of their participation outcome led to their participation in the intercalated degree program. In alignment with Vroom's theory, personal traits, objectives, and perceived constraints determined the perceived impact of taking the intercalated program on career development (Alamri et al., 2019).

Motivation

Human capital is an essential asset of an organization, and to achieve great results, employee motivation is crucial (Khan et al., 2017). When someone becomes conscious of an unsatisfied need, it usually begins the process of motivation (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Organizations will experience challenges in motivation but should act to fix it before it becomes an issue (Mani & Mishra, 2021). Motivation contributes to individuals being successful and happy in their personal and work life (Ozsoy, 2019). Motivation can lead to better performance when other organizational conditions are met (Sureephong et al., 2020).

Motivation can aid management in understanding the behavior and performance of their employees (Tudor & Petre, 2021). Unfortunately, some organizations fail to realize the importance of motivation. In the workplace, some factors could influence motivation (a) equitable compensation, (b) employee development, (c) leadership style, (d) job security, (e) flexibility, and (f) organizational culture (Tudor & Petre, 2021). Employees require motivation to be effective (Hitka et al., 2020). Motivated employees positively affect the success and sustainability of an organization (Lorincová et al., 2019). Research studies show then when employees are unmotivated, they experience a decrease in performance than when they are motivated (Tudor & Petre, 2021).

Motivated employees may (a) partake in the decision-making process, (b) increase productivity, (c) participate in training, (d) and improve their work patterns (Venkatesh & Sumangala, 2018). An individual's motivation derives from the strong belief that their effort will lead to successful performance, and successful performance will lead to a reward that the individual desires (Lunenburg, 2011). Companies can increase employee motivation by offering employees appealing financial and non-financial rewards (Akgunduz et al., 2020). Hur (2018) found that incentives and rewards played a relevant role in motivating employees.

Models of Motivation

Porter and Lawler's Expectancy Model of Motivation

Porter and Lawler (1968) expanded the expectancy theory to consider an individual's aptitudes and skills, to acknowledge the effect that past relationships have on expectancy, and to include the correlation between satisfaction and performance (Lloyd

& Mertens, 2018). Porter and Lawler theorized that rewards could lead to satisfaction, and performance can produce rewards. They postulated that satisfaction might not lead to performance in some instances, but with an effective reward system in place, performance can lead to satisfaction. The theorists linked rewards to satisfaction through the equitable of the rewards (Porter & Lawler, 1968). Essentially, the perception of effort-reward affects motivation (Patricia & Asoba, 2021). Li et al. (2021) applied Porter and Lawler expectancy theory to examine player satisfaction in coach-athlete relationships. The researchers surveyed 223 youth football players aged 13 to 19. Li et al. found that player satisfaction predicts the relationship between the coach-athlete. Players trust in their coach also played a significant role in the relationship.

Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model

Hackman and Oldham (1976) created the job characteristics model to specify how individual differences and job characteristics affect productivity, motivation, and satisfaction (R. Casey & Robbins, 2018). Hackman and Oldham's model focused on the interaction among (a) the psychological states of employees that encourage internally motivated behavior, (b) job characteristics that create psychological states, and (c) attributes that determine how an individual will respond to a challenging job. The core psychological states of the model are (a) meaningfulness of work, (b) responsibility for outcomes of the work, and (c) knowledge of the results of work activities. When individuals connect that their work may affect others, it enhances their meaningfulness of that work. R. Casey and Robbins (2018) applied the Hackman and Oldham model to analyze job characteristics of U.S. and non-U.S. manufacturing and service industry

employees. The researchers examined how job characteristics and individual differences affect motivation, productivity, and overall satisfaction. Findings revealed cross-cultural differences contribute to the understanding of worker motivation.

Types of Motivation

Self determination theory distinguishes two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic (Ommering et al., 2018). Intrinsic motivation is when a person does something they enjoy or of interest. Extrinsic motivation is the desire to perform a task with an objective to receive a positive reward or negative result (Dang & Chou, 2019). There is a presumption that employees value intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (Pang & Lu, 2018).

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is the motivation to perform an activity because the activity is pleasurable (Ohly & Schneiderberg, 2021). Intrinsically motivated individuals may be driven by interest in doing work because they view the work as meaningful (Liu et al., 2021). Work itself can be an intrinsic motivator if it satisfies a personal need for the individual (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Factors in the workplace such as responsibility, freedom to make decisions, personal development, and advance affect intrinsic motivation.

Supervisor and Leadership Support. Leaders can influence the achievement of common organizational goals (Nam & Park, 2019; Ugwu et al., 2020). Motivating employees is a component of the management process and it is essential for business leaders to effectively employ various motivation factors to motivate employees (L. Koziol & M. Koziol, 2020). Papilaya et al. (2019) noted that motivation can drive someone to accomplish a particular objective. Hitka et al. (2020) found that motivating

employees is a crucial managerial skill. A supportive work environment that provides feedback from supervisors and peers enhances collaboration and health competition (Afsar & Umrani, 2019).

Each year, large firms spend millions of dollars on efforts to motivate employees (Sitthiwarongchai, et al., 2020). Kara et al. (2018) theorized that if leaders implement efficient leadership strategies, they may improve their employees job satisfaction which may lead to increased productivity. Leaders play a role in guiding and influencing employees towards achieving their goals (Abasilim, et al., 2019; Muddle, 2020). Engaged employees are more productive, and for that reason, organizations strive to increase their employees work engagement (Žnidaršič & Bernik, 2021).

Organizational Culture. Organizations should create and sustain work environments that foster facilitative leaders, quality jobs with development opportunities, and high-quality relationships (Lysova et al., 2019). Employees desire to collaborate in a supportive and excellent working environment (Ujjah et al., 2020). An organizational culture emphasizing job satisfaction permits employees to work and obtain what they value to the degree of their choosing (Janićijević et al., 2018). Emotionally committed employees increase motivation and loyalty to the organization (Ujjah et al., 2020).

Trust. Effective and efficient leadership fosters trust between leadership and subordinates (Bake, 2019). Trust is crucial for employees to complete tasks and for management to delegate tasks to subordinates (Khan et al., 2017). The reward of trust is beneficial to both the employee and the organization because it adds importance to the

employee. High levels of trust in the workplace lead to collaboration toward achieving common goals (Graham & Dixon, 2022).

Empowerment. Managers could use empowerment to motivate employees (Balajee & Todd, 2018). Empowering employees can improve organizational and individual performance (Guerrero et al., 2018; Zheng & Tian, 2019). Organizational policies should support the delegation of authority to employees (Yakut & Kara, 2022). Moreover, workplace empowerment practices present opportunities for employees to feel a sense of ownership over their work and accomplish organizational goals (Y. Yin et al., 2019).

Idris et al. (2018) found that employee empowerment increased satisfaction by providing feedback about performance and goals. Empowering employees can help employees contribute to organizational performance (Baird et al., 2018) Lack of empowerment in the workplace can result in a higher failure rate (Turkmenoglu, 2019). Empowered employees are less likely to leave the organization (Ganji et al., 2021; Hendryadi & Purwanto, 2019). Leadership that empowers employees affects the proficiency development of the employee (Lei et al., 2021).

Intrinsic Rewards

Intrinsic rewards are personally motivating to an individual's self-worth, learning opportunities, and enthusiasm (Harris et al., 2017). Some nonmonetary rewards have a positive impact on employee performance in the workplace (Sureephong et al., 2020). There are three classification groups for nonmonetary rewards: tangible, social, and job-related (Sureephong et al., 2020). Tangible nonmonetary rewards can be an item or

service such as a trip, desk accessories, gift certificates, or food that the organization presents to its employees. Tangible rewards are physical symbols of achievement that the employee can share with their family or friends, such as recognizing good performance. Social nonmonetary rewards relate to the relationship among the organization's people and are things like letters of appreciation, public recognition, and invitation to join leadership for lunch (Sureephong et al., 2020).

Leaders use nonmonetary social rewards to show that they value, appreciate, and care for their employees (Sureephong et al., 2020). Job-related nonmonetary rewards are related to job tasks and or things such as developmental opportunities, participation, and the decision-making process. Meaningful job tasks increase employees motivation to exert more effort in the workplace (Sureephong et al., 2020). Motivating employees to increase their performance in the workplace is crucial, and organizations that value employees focus motivation efforts on what is important to the workforce (Kollmann et al., 2020).

Recognition. Employees desire compensation and for their supervisor to show they are valuable (Hussain et al., 2019). Organizations can demonstrate their value to employees by approving additional time off, verbal gratitude, and letters of commendation (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Employee recognition is a tangible resource that results in employee engagement (Abu Rumman et al., 2020). Organizations use recognition as a reward to recognize employees for their contributions (Khan et al., 2017). For example, supervisors can demonstrate that they care by recognizing employees with a verbal appreciation or in the company's newsletter (Hussain et al.,

2019). Recognition enhances employee morale, resulting in improved organizational performance (Hussain et al., 2019). Organizations utilize recognition to keep employees passionate about their job and increase their self-esteem (Hussain et al., 2019).

Recognition in the workplace sustains an employee's self-esteem and motivation (Ali & Anwar, 2021).

Flexible Work Arrangements. Deploying flexible work arrangements in the workplace is happening globally (Choi, 2018). Flexible scheduling consists of a compressed work schedule and flextime (Chen & Fulmer, 2018). A compressed work schedule entails an employee working long hours each day to have an overall shorter workweek. Flextime is when an employee can flex their start and stop times (Chen & Fulmer, 2018). Organization leaders are creating work environments to stimulate employees to deter them from leaving (Martin, 2020). Chen and Fulmer (2018) found that flexible work arrangements positively affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Training and Development. Training is an important human resources development practice (Abu Rumman et al., 2020). Training and development are a means that aid employees in achieving professional growth to expand knowledge and skills (Rahayu et al., 2019). Learning in the workplace aids the employee in adapting to change and increases their performance (S. Park & Lee, 2018). Training and development programs aid employees in performing at their full potential (Alvi et al., 2020). There is a belief that training is beneficial to employers and employees (Naizm et al., 2021). Organizations use training and development to upgrade the skills and performance of

their workforce (Okolie & Omamuyovwi, 2020). Continual improvement of employee skills is beneficial for the employee and organization. Continual training and development improve employees' decision-making, maintain adequate performance, and increase service quality (Okolie & Omamuyovwi, 2020).

Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation is the amount of effort a person gives because they believe they will receive pay increases, praise, or promotions (Ali & Anwar, 2021). An employee's commitment to an organization has a significant correlation between rewards and compensation (Mabaso & Diamini, 2018). Employees associate the type of reward to the perception of their quality of work and performance (Baskaran et al., 2018).

Four behavioral regulations comprise extrinsic motivation (a) integrated regulation, which has a connection to an individual's self and value system, (b) identified regulation which represents actions that a person chooses to perform, (c) introjected regulation is prominent with a person internalizes, but external forces do not cause the internalization, and (d) external regulation which are behaviors that external sources impact (Sheehan et al., 2018).

Extrinsic Rewards

Extrinsic rewards are financial or tangible (Khan et al., 2017). Extrinsic rewards such as pay, promotion, status, and security-rewards are controlled by the organization and are often referred to as satisfying mainly lower-level needs (Maslow, 1943). Extrinsic rewards fulfill an individual's hygiene factors, therefore, preventing them from considering leaving the organization (Khan et al., 2017). Receiving an extrinsic reward

that demonstrates the value of an act can reinforce performance and lead the individual to repeat the performance (Murayama, 2022). Management could utilize monetary rewards in the workplace to increase human pleasure leading to satisfaction (Vroom, 1964). Organizations use motivation and reward systems to motivate employees (Pang & Lu, 2018). Monetary rewards increase satisfaction and create room for growth opportunities (Vroom, 1964).

Compensation. Compensation policies play an essential role in motivating the workforce to contribute and perform at high levels (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Compensation can either directly or indirectly influence high and low employee motivation and performance (Berliana et al., 2018). Compensation motivates employees to work and devote themselves to an organization (Elvie, 2019). Compensations must be equitable, competitive, and the amount must motivate the employee to perform (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Organizations give compensation to employees in return for their work (Purnomosidi & Priadana, 2020). Employees who experience satisfaction with their compensation could lead to higher motivation (Do, 2018).

Rewards. Management uses rewards to recognize employees for completing their assigned tasks (Shaheen et al., 2020). Companies that reward employees make them feel valued and encouraged to work harder (Khan et al., 2017). Organizations can use monetary rewards to attract, motivate, and satisfy employees (Chinyio et al., 2018). Rewards are a crucial component that organizations use to guide employees' behavior and performance to keep them motivated and satisfied (Mainardes et al., 2019). Effective reward systems can transform an employee's attitude (Akbar et al., 2018).

Bonuses. Bonuses are positive reinforcement methods that motivate employees to put forth more significant effort and increase utility (Van der Stede et al., 2020). To increase productivity and encourage commitment, organizations offer employees bonuses (Sharma & Jaiswal, 2018). Organizations utilize bonuses to motivate employees to achieve excellent performance during the appraisal year. Bonuses differ within organizations and can be fixed or subjective (Khan et al., 2017). Some organizations give employees individual or group bonuses when they achieve the organization's desired output (Bun & Huberts, 2018).

Incentives. Incentives play a significant role in employee productivity in the workplace because incentives attract attention from skilled workers who possess the skills to achieve organizational goals (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Incentives can be positive or negative, depending on their purpose. Incentives can have a positive influence if the incentive meets the worker's needs when they achieve expected results. Likewise, an incentive can be negative if deprived because the employee fails to uphold organizational values. Management uses negative incentives to minimize inefficiency in the workplace. Negative incentives can be delaying a promotion, reassigning job duties, or reducing job status (Ali & Anwar, 2021).

Gifts. Organizations use gifts as a token of gratitude for achieving organizational goals or appreciation (Khan et al., 2017). Gifts provide short-term satisfaction but motivate the employee to increase their performance. A gift demonstrates that an employee is on the right path and aims to motivate employees to stabilize or increase their efforts to achieve a higher return (Khan et al., 2017).

Benefits. Organizations are taking strides to offer benefits that satisfy their employees (de la Torre-Ruiz et al., 2019). Benefits provided by an employer can aid employees in tackling a major life event (Purdon, 2018). Organizations use fringe benefits to assist employees with pursuing education and adoption (Purdon, 2018). Other types of benefits are vacation, sick, personal days, and flexible spending accounts (Purdon, 2018). Benefits can improve employee motivation and performance (Mulyani et al., 2020).

Promotions. Promotions affect long term satisfaction for employees and are vital to encourage redundancy and routine (Khan et al., 2017). Employee promotion is a human resources practice that is directed toward employee development (Abu Rumman et al., 2020). Organizations use job promotion programs to develop employees to carry out management functions at a higher level (Yamin et al., 2020). Efforts to improve performance are complicated, and managers need to motivate employees by using professional development; one method for motivating employees is by advancing positions (Yamin et al., 2020). Promotion opportunities can offer employees opportunities to stay with an organization, fostering long-term employment relationships by presenting the employee with career development opportunities (Yoon & SenGupta, 2019). A promotion elevates an employee to a higher-level position from their previous position (Yamin et al., 2020). Employees with the desire to receive a promotion tend to have good performance (Yamin et al., 2020).

Engagement

Employee engagement is vital for organizations because, if understood, it can improve employee outcomes (Breugh, 2021). Engagement is a critical concept in management practices (Kosaka & Sato, 2020). Leaders need to identify the connection between engagement and organizational performance (Matthews, 2018). Engagement in the workplace is an important area of research over the past several decades (Martin, 2020). Research shows that work engagement positively impacts both the organization and its employees (Žnidaršič & Bernik, 2021).

Engaged employees have a positive state of mind comprising vigor, dedication, and absorption (Lutfiani Putri Windia et al., 2020). Work engagement relates to individual and organizational performance (Alam et al., 2020; Ge, 2020). Engagement influences employee output (Muddle, 2020) because employees are a source for achieving organizational goals (Akhter et al., 2020). Increased levels of engagement promote better functioning organizations with happier and productive employees (Martin, 2020). Uddin et al. (2019) found that employee engagement could encourage employees to work beyond their job requirements.

Engagement influences performance (Risley, 2020). Organizations strive to increase work engagement because engaged employees are more productive (Žnidaršič & Bernik, 2021). Employees with high engagement enjoy coming to work (C.C. Lee et al., 2018). Disengaged employees negatively impact an organization by decreased performance (Jena et al., 2018). Disengaged employees can impact the overall functionality of an organization by spreading negativity among other employees (Sharma

& Goyal, 2022). Work engagement aids in improving the performance of employees (Ahmed et al., 2018).

Performance Management

Employees are an organization's primary stakeholders (W. Wang & Seifert, 2020), but organizational leaders face talent management challenges with attracting, retaining, developing, and rewarding employees (Luthia, 2022). Performance management enhances performance and promotes accountability (Ateh et al., 2020). Effective performance management can aid organizations with employee engagement and ensure employees have clarity on their goals (Luthia, 2022).

In a warehouse, it is necessary to measure performance and productivity to ensure customer satisfaction, ensure continuous improvement in operations, identify issues before they become problems, and train staff (Richards, 2017). To maximize the effective use of operational resources, today's warehouse managers must effectively motivate and manage their employees. A warehouse manager must learn their staff and adapt their motivation to accommodate each employee (Richards, 2017). It is crucial to measure organizational performance against customer expectations and continually improve performance to prevent losing customers and incur additional labor costs to correct orders (Richards, 2017).

The performance of employees impacts an organization's bottom-line (Afsar & Umrani, 2019). Employees and their knowledge are vital aspects that impact a company's productivity (Ali & Anwar, 2021). To enhance financial standings, organization leaders aspire to improve their employee's performance (Yaakobi & Weisberg, 2018). Effective

and efficient employees can be limited if they lack the motivation to perform (Khan et al., 2017). Organizations must encourage employees to achieve maximum performance because the output of the organization depends on the productivity levels of their workforce (Bun & Huberts, 2018).

Without strong job performance an organization would not be able to survive (Hussain et al., 2019). Therefore, it is important for organizations to value the work of their employees so that they will perform well in completing their tasks (Hussain et al., 2019). In a warehouse setting, a lack of employee engagement directly impacts organizational performance because hourly workers are responsible for performing manual tasks (Passalacqua et al., 2020).

Job Satisfaction

Employee satisfaction is a central aspect of human resource management (Ali & Anwar, 2021). In human resources literature, job satisfaction is one of the most frequently studied issues (C. Wang et al., 2020). Job satisfaction signifies the employee's commitment to the organization's success and their feelings about their work (Tănăsescu & Ramona-Diana, 2019). Employees who display a positive attitude in the workplace have increased job satisfaction, which leads to making strides to increase job performance (Tănăsescu & Ramona-Diana, 2019). Job satisfaction is a critical component of work motivation, a significant factor in one's behavior in an organization. (Ćulibrk et al., 2018; Ritter, 2021).

Motivation stimulates job satisfaction (Yildiz & Kilic, 2021) and is a factor that affects job satisfaction (Ritter, 2021). Motivated and satisfied employees are a critical

factor that separates successful companies from unsuccessful companies (Ćulibrk et al., 2018). Efficient motivation and leadership will motivate employees to perform at a higher level to achieve goals (Shakil, 2020). Individual job satisfaction depends on the individual's perception of their job (Randhawa & Chaudhry, 2019). A positive attitude towards the job equates to job satisfaction and a negative attitude equates to job dissatisfaction (Vroom, 1964). Employees who have a positive attitude in the workplace have increased job satisfaction (Tănăsescu & Ramona-Diana, 2019). Bernarto et al. (2020) theorized that an employee will have high job satisfaction if their work gives valuable results.

The key to any organization's existence is the connection between motivation and job satisfaction (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Khan et al. (2017) research study on the impact of job satisfaction on employee performance in medical institutions found that job performance and satisfaction were affected by facets such as (a) salary, (b) promotion opportunities, (c) safety and security, (d) peer and supervisor relationships, (e) job autonomy, and (f) nature of work. Randhawa and Chaudhry's (2019) research study on factors that influence the job satisfaction of Agri warehouse employees found nine factors that positively influence job satisfaction: (a) training opportunity, (b) job security, (c) pay and incentive plans, (d) supervision, (e) fringe benefits and recognition, (f) opportunity for promotion, (g) relationship with co-workers, and (h) nature of work and communication.

Transition

In Section 1 of this doctoral study, I discussed the foundation of the research by introducing the background of the problem. I presented the problem and purpose statements, the research methodology and design, the research and interview questions, the conceptual framework, and operational definition. I included assumptions, limitations, and delimitations for the study, the significance of the study, and a review of the literature. In Section 2, I discussed the role of the researcher, participants, and the research method and design. Section 2 includes my discussion on the population and sampling, ethical research, data collection, data organization and collection, and reliability and validity. In Section 3 of this study, I present the study findings, and discuss the application to professional practice and implications for social change. Lastly, I provide recommendations for action and future research, discuss reflections, and provide my conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

In this section, I restate the purpose of my study and describe my role as the researcher in the data collection process. I explain the process of choosing my study participants and my strategies for gaining access to participants. I outline my research method and design and the population that I sampled for my study. I discuss ethical research, my data collection instruments and technique, my data organization technique, and my data analysis technique. Lastly, I discuss the informed consent process that I used with my participants and address the reliability and validity of my research.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore motivational strategies that some warehouse managers used to improve employees' performance. The population consisted of warehouse managers in three warehouses in the southeastern region of the United States who successfully used motivational strategies to improve employee performance. This study might contribute to positive social change by warehouse managers reading the findings and using the motivational strategies to improve employees' performance, which may increase organizational performance. Improving organizational performance may lead to helping local communities by stimulating economic growth through the creation of employment opportunities for growing and sustaining tax revenues to benefit people in local communities.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Clark & Vealé, 2018). Karagiozis (2018) added that the researcher's role is to interact

with participants, collect data, and interpret research findings. In my role as the researcher, I conducted semistructured audio-recorded phone interviews using open-ended questions with three managers from three warehouses who had successfully implemented strategies to improve employee performance. The basis of my relationship with this subject matter consisted of my 15 years of professional experience in human resources management. My professional expertise contributed to my ability to understand and interpret the information that I gathered when I interviewed and engaged participants to gain insight regarding their experience in implementing strategies to improve employee performance.

The secondary role of the researcher is to enforce ethical standards by following the ethical principles outlined in *The Belmont Report*. The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979) established *The Belmont Report* to identify the basic ethical principles for conducting research involving human subjects. I followed *The Belmont Report* protocols to ensure that I protected my research participants. The report consists of three primary principles for ethical research: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979).

To abide by *The Belmont Report* protocol, I used an informed consent form to inform participants of the purpose of my study and to request their participation. I disclosed the process that I used to choose the research participants. I required participants to give their written consent to participate in the study to document that they

had given me valid permission and that I did not intimidate them or make promises of monetary gain for participation. I outlined the potential risks and benefits associated with participating in my research. I respected each participant's decision-making process, and I did not violate or compromise the rights of the participants. I conducted interviews in a safe and secure place to make participants feel comfortable. Lastly, I protected the identity of participants by using pseudonyms (P1, P2, and P3 for the participants and C1, C2, and C3 for the warehouses). I used the pseudonyms during each phase of my study.

The final role of the researcher is to mitigate personal bias. Fusch et al. (2018) pointed out that qualitative researchers bring their bias to the research but try to reduce this bias to interpret participants correctly. Fusch et al. added that for human beings, it would be impractical to remove all bias. Therefore, I took extensive measures to mitigate potential concerns of bias. First, I selected participants with whom I did not have a personal or professional relationship. Second, when reviewing the data, I was open to contrary evidence. Yin (2018) suggested that a researcher should test their tolerance of contradictory findings. I tested my tolerance of contradictory findings through triangulation. During the data collection process, I used member checking and document analysis to verify the accuracy of my understanding of the data. Yin indicated that researchers use an interview protocol to guide the interview. The interview protocol (see Appendix) that I used for this study consisted of the following: (a) obtaining permission to conduct the interview, (b) the set of interview questions that supported my research question with probes and follow-up questions, and (c) follow-up with participants through member checking.

Participants

Selecting the appropriate participants is critical to a study. Identifying research participants is an important part of the research process (Yin, 2018). For the current study, the participants consisted of three warehouse managers from three warehouses located in the southeastern region of the United States. The primary criterion to participate in this study was the participant must have successfully implemented strategies to improve employee performance.

Yin (2018) stated that studies with human participants require prior approval from the institutional review board (IRB). After I received approval from Walden University's IRB, I proceeded with contacting participants. To gain formal access to participants, I gathered warehouse manager names through warehouse websites, Chamber of Commerce, online warehouse directories, Walden University student database, and business and professional networking such as LinkedIn.

I sent an email to potential participants to invite them to participate in the study. In the email, I explained the purpose of my research, the participant's role, and the next steps for interested candidates. After a candidate expressed interest, I emailed the candidate and included the informed consent form in the body of the email. After the participant responded "I consent," I scheduled a time to speak with the participant to discuss the study further and answer questions.

Trust in a study aids the participants in being comfortable and candid when providing information (Hamal, 2020). Establishing a relationship with the participants can help build trust, improve the study, and protect confidentiality (Heslop et al., 2018). I

communicated with participants throughout the study to build rapport with them. I developed professional rapport by answering questions and addressing concerns with participants. I returned my interpretation of the interview responses to participants to allow them to validate my interpretation of their responses.

Research Method and Design

There are three methods to conduct research: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Yin, 2018). The goal of the current study was to explore the strategies that warehouse managers used to improve employee performance. For this study, I chose the qualitative method and multiple-case study design.

Research Method

Researchers use the qualitative method to understand phenomena experienced by the individual through the collection, organization, and interpretation of data collected from interviewing or observing participants (Yin, 2018). Using open-ended questions, qualitative researchers acquire participant data (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The qualitative approach is holistic, and researchers regard the phenomenon as a whole framework and search for patterns in its bounds (J. Park & Park, 2016). Qualitative research focuses on the significance of real-life events (Yin, 2018). A researcher can use qualitative methodology to understand the meaning a group of individuals ascribes to a problem.

The qualitative method is appropriate when the researcher wants to study a real-world setting, gain an understanding of how an individual functions in that setting, and capture everyday life events (Yin, 2018). The qualitative method is suitable when a

researcher seeks to inquire about a subject to understand a bounded case (Yin, 2018). The strategy helps the researcher answer complicated questions regarding the failure or success of the implementation of best practices (Yin, 2018). Qualitative research enables a researcher to conduct in-depth studies about various topics (Yin, 2018). Leung (2015) suggested that qualitative researchers seek answers for the five W's (who, what, when, where, why). In the current study, I asked the participants open-ended questions to understand what strategies they used to improve employee performance.

Quantitative research differs from qualitative research. Researchers use quantitative research to explain phenomena by collecting scores and reporting the data in number form (Abood & Zbar Alalwany, 2021). The aim of quantitative research is to test a hypothesis. In quantitative research, structured closed-ended questions are used (Tayal & Bharathi, 2021). For the current study, the quantitative method was inappropriate because I did not examine a phenomenon with statistical data or employ closed-ended questions to answer the research question.

The mixed-methods approach is a type of research that combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research for the objectives of depth, insight, and corroboration (Kansteiner & König, 2020). Researchers use the quantitative method to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data (Overby et al., 2022). I did not incorporate quantitative methodology. Therefore, the mixed-methods approach was not appropriate.

Research Design

In a study, the primary purpose of the design is to circumvent a situation in which the results do not address the research question (Yin, 2018). Fusch and Ness (2015) emphasized that the researcher should select a design that enables them to answer the research question. Selecting the correct research design is essential because it can impact the reliability of the findings. For the current study, I considered three qualitative designs: ethnography, phenomenology, and case study. I chose a case study.

Ethnography is a reflective interaction of an individual in their natural setting or field by methods or techniques that capture their social implications involving the researcher participating in the environment or activities to gather information efficiently without being biased (Spurr et al., 2022). Researchers who execute the ethnographic design seek to interpret the values, language, and beliefs of a group (Kassan et al., 2020). In the current study, I did not investigate the beliefs and values of warehouse managers, and I did not participate in their environment or activities; therefore, the ethnographic design did not meet the requirements of this research.

Phenomenology is an approach to researching and understanding people's everyday lived experiences (Frey, 2018). Phenomenologists explore a phenomenon from multiple perspectives, emphasizing experiences and seeking meaning (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological researchers are concerned with how a group or individual experienced a phenomenon (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). For the current study, the phenomenological design was not appropriate because I did not seek to understand warehouse managers' everyday lived experiences.

The case study approach is used to gain insight into the connection between processes, outcomes, or relations (Krehl & Weck, 2020). A case study design enables the researcher to explore strategies that managers use to address a problem. A single case study can allow the researcher to explore the circumstances and conditions of an ordinary situation (Yin, 2018). The case study design enables a researcher to develop an understanding through multiple data collection techniques such as interviews, field observations, and document reviews (Yin, 2018).

In a case study, the researcher conducts a comprehensive analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, person, or process (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Yin (2018) stated that bounding the case is an essential step in a case study. Yin also noted that if the unit of analysis is a small group, the group's people then become the topic of the case. A researcher can use a case study to focus consideration on how a group of individuals approaches an issue (Shaw, 1978). The specificity of focus makes a case study a good design for practical problems (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Yin indicated that the central tendency of all types of case study research is the attempt to explain a decision by addressing the reason for making the decision, the implementation of the decision, and the outcome of the decision. A multiple-case study addresses more than one unit of inquiry to answer the research question (Bager-Elsborg, 2018). A multiple-case study provides a broader approach than a single-case study because of the triangulation of data (Bager-Elsborg, 2018). For the current study, I used the multiple-case study design to explore strategies that warehouse managers used to improve employee performance.

Population and Sampling

A researcher must choose participants, identify the sampling method, and determine the appropriate sample size (Yin, 2018). The target population for the current multiple-case study consisted of managers from three warehouses located in the southeastern region of the United States. I selected participants who met the primary criterion to participate in this study. The participant must have successfully implemented strategies to improve employee performance.

Sampling is the process of selecting individuals or units from a target population (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016). Common qualitative sampling methods include (a) convenience sampling, which involves selecting accessible participants; (b) snowball sampling, which entails a participant recommending someone with similar experiences to participate in the study; and (c) purposive sampling, which involves selecting participants because of their expertise (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016). Convenience sampling is a nonprobability sampling method in which researchers select participants because they are easily accessible (Staetsky, 2019). Yin (2018) stated that convenience sampling is not preferred because the accessible source for data may not be the most informative. Convenience sampling was not a suitable sampling method for the current study because accessible sources for data may not be the most informative to answer the research question.

Researchers use purposive sampling when they need the opinion of an expert in a field or topic (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016). For the current study, I used purposive sampling as the primary technique and snowball sampling as the secondary technique.

Martínez-Mesa et al. (2016) stated that snowball sampling is frequently used in studies addressing a population that is difficult to locate. I chose managers with experience in improving employee performance in the warehousing and storage industry who were employed in a warehouse located in the southeastern region of the United States. During the interview, I asked the participants if they knew anyone else who met the criteria to participate in this study.

The inability to reach data saturation affects the research's nature and can obstruct the validity of the content (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation occurs when no new relevant information emerges (Fofana et al., 2020). In qualitative research, data saturation occurs when there is enough information to repeat the study, no new data are attainable, and coding no longer reveals new themes (Fusch & Ness, 2015). During data collection, I arranged to interview three warehouse managers and reviewed the company's employee handbook. I concluded data collection when the data collection methods ceased to present new information.

Ethical Research

The researcher has the ultimate responsibility to apply ethical standards in research (Cumyn et al., 2019). Adhering to ethical principles is important in each step of the research process. I conducted research in accordance with the principles of *The Belmont Report*. One of the requirements of *The Belmont Report* is to obtain informed consent from participants (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). I conducted this study using Walden University IRB approval number 07-26-22-0998376.

The informed consent form is a document free of jargon that provides potential participants information about the research study to allow them to make an informed decision to participate or decline participation in the research study (V. Lee, 2018). The informed consent form should also offer a statement for the participant to seek clarification and withdraw from the research at any time (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). P. Ellis (2019) stated that there are five elements of consent, and if a researcher fails to meet each element, the consent that they obtained from participants is invalid. The five elements are: (a) capacity (understand information and make decisions), (b) information (ensuring that the person has enough information to make a choice), (c) understanding (checking to ensure the person understood the information), (d) freedom from coercion (no pressure from others while making their choice), and (e) freedom of choice (the decision to participate or not) (P. Ellis, 2019).

The informed consent process for this study involved me emailing potential candidates to invite them to participate in my research. Once candidates volunteered to participate, I emailed the informed consent form in the body of the email. The participants were instructed to reply to the email with the words, "I consent."

I informed the participants that I would scan the interview notes and store audio files electronically. Participants could request to withdraw from the study orally or in writing. If a participant elected to withdraw from the study, I would erase the digital recording of their interview, and I would give the participant their interview notes to

destroy. I assured the participants that there would not be any repercussions if they decided to withdraw from the study.

I exercised caution in maintaining confidentiality. To safeguard the identity of participants, I used pseudonyms to code participant and organizational data. I redacted identifiable information from research documents to ensure I protected the privacy of participants and the organization. I will safeguard all data that I collected in a safe in my home office with a secure code and by a secure database system NVivo for 5 years. After 5 years, I will destroy and erase all data as required by the university.

Data Collection Instruments

The researcher is the primary data collection instrument when conducting employing the qualitative method (Yin, 2018). In this doctoral research study, I served as the primary data collection instrument. Researchers incorporate more than one data collection method in qualitative research (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). For this qualitative multiple-case study, the data collection process consisted of audio recorded semistructured interviews with member checking follow-up interviews and the review of employee handbooks.

Rubin and Rubin (2012) hypothesized that in qualitative research, the core forms of in-depth interviews are unstructured and semistructured. An unstructured interview is usually an extended conversation between the researcher and the participant. The researchers may formulate questions as the interview proceeds. In a semistructured interview, the researchers prepare a limited number of questions in advance about a specific topic and plan to ask the participant follow-up probing questions (Rubin &

Rubin, 2012). The interview method that I used for this research study was semistructured interviews. Moser and Korstjens (2018) stated that researchers use face-to-face in-depth interviews to elicit the participant's experiences, views, and beliefs. Heath et al. (2018) reported that while there is a high cost associated with conducting face-to-face interviews, the method offers flexibility, personal and observable interactions with participants. To overcome the cost associated with traveling to conduct face-to-face interviews and ensure participants' safety during COVID-19, I conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews using open-ended questions and follow-up with member checking. Member checking is when a researcher returns their interpretation of the interview to participants for validation (Birt et al., 2016). In conducting the semistructured interviews, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix). Yeung and Lenette (2018) stated that a reliable interview protocol is essential to obtain quality interview data. The interview protocol must be easy to understand and should cover all research objects to gain insight on the phenomenon (Yeung & Lenette, 2018).

I reviewed the employee handbook that I obtain from the company's website. Yin (2018) stated that in case study research, documents are utilized to validate and augment evidence from sources. I analyzed the documents. I used a reflective journal to log data, recall experiences, and document my thoughts. I wrote in the journal in all stages of the research project.

Data Collection Technique

After receiving approval from Walden University, IRB, I began collecting data. I conducted face-to-face, Zoom semistructured interviews, member checking follow-up

interviews, and reviewed public company documents like employee handbooks to explore what strategies warehouse managers use to improve employee performance.

In this study, I employed face-to-face, Zoom semistructured interviews to answer the research question. I also conducted one phone interview to accommodate a participant. One advantage of semistructured interviews is they give more prominent expansiveness and profundity of data and the chance to discover the respondent's understanding and translation of reality. I ensured appropriate member checking through follow-up interviews with participants to discuss my interpretation of the participants' responses during the interview. Birt et al. (2016) stated that involving the participant in checking the results of the interview may reduce the potential for research bias.

During the face-to-face, Zoom semistructured interviews, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix). In qualitative research, a dependable interview protocol is vital to obtain valuable interview data (Yeung & Lenette., 2018). The interview protocol for this study included scripts to introduce the interview, wrap up the interview, schedule follow-up interviews for member checking, and interview questions.

I visited the company's website to review production reports. However, neither company had production reports accessible on its website. Therefore, I reviewed employee handbooks to verify that policies support participant responses. Lastly, I used reflective journaling to document my experiences and thoughts. I began journaling when I started collecting data. I continued to write in the journal throughout the data collection process.

Data Organization Technique

In qualitative research, various data sources require a method for organizing and storing the data to make the data accessible (McLeod & O'Connor, 2021). I used Microsoft Word to transcribe research notes and my analysis of company documents. Yin (2018) stated that Word tables are sufficient to organize data and assign codes. I did not associate names with participants'; I referred to the participants as P1, P2, and P3. With permission from participants, I audio record the Zoom interview and transfer the file into NVivo, a qualitative software platform. I manually reconciled the NVivo transcript with the audio recording to check for accuracy. I used NVivo to categorize and code data that I collected from (a) face-to-face, Zoom semistructured interviews with member checking follow-up interviews, (b) public company documents like employee handbooks, and (c) reflective journaling. In qualitative data, analysis coding is the process of assigning words or phrases to capture the meaning of a more significant portion of data (Yin, 2018).

I used Adobe Acrobat to save handwritten notes and external company documents. I created a folder on a secure digital (SD) drive for each participant and saved the interview transcripts and audio recordings. I deleted the recordings from Zoom and the NVivo software platform. I stored all scanned and uploaded data from document analysis, member checking, transcriptions, interview protocol, and interview notes on the SD drive. I will store paper documents, the reflective journal, and the SD drive in a locked safe, only accessible by me for 5 years. After 5 years, all hardcopy documents will be shredded, all electronic files will be permanently erased, and the SD drive will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

Methodological triangulation is a strategy that involves collecting data from multiple sources to study a phenomenon (Yin, 2018). In qualitative research, triangulation adds depth to the information collected (Fusch et al., 2018). For this research study, I used methodological triangulation. I triangulated data from (a) face-to-face, Zoom semistructured interviews with member checking follow-up interviews, (b) public company documents like employee handbooks, and (c) reflective journaling.

Yin (2018) hypothesized that in qualitative research there are five phases of analysis (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. The data collection for this research study will include (a) face-to-face, Zoom semistructured interviews with member checking follow-up interviews, (b) public company documents like employee handbooks, and (c) reflective journaling. For this research study, I followed the data analysis process outlined by Yin (2018) utilizing a qualitative analysis software NVivo. In addition, I compared the tenets of the expectancy theory of motivation with the data that I collected from warehouse managers during the study and with previous studies. I used the conceptual framework to link the literature with my methodology and study results.

I used the NVivo software to help me sort the data for patterns and codes, which I used to identify common themes and categories. I interpreted and correlated the themes from my research with similar research studies, conceptual framework, and information in my literature review related to employee performance.

Reliability and Validity

In a qualitative research study, reliability and validity are vital aspects for demonstrating the research's quality and trustworthiness. Spiers et al. (2018) stated that reliability is data accuracy, whereas validity is data appropriateness. Researchers give a lot of consideration to reliability and validity in research studies because without rigor; the research loses its value (Spiers et al., 2018). Essentially validity and reliability are chief occupants of certifying good quality research (Jordan, 2018).

Reliability

In qualitative research, reliability is the replicability of a research study's process and results (Leung, 2015). The reliability objective is to minimize the errors and biases in a study (Yin, 2018). In a case study, the use of multiple data sources aids in enhancing the reliability of the case study (Yin, 2018). In this multiple-case study, I used various sources of data collection such as a face-to-face interview, documents, and reflective journaling to enhance dependability. Dependability in qualitative research alludes to the consistency of research findings if the study were repeated (FitzPatrick, 2019). Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained how dependability is a principle for reliability and the importance of considering both factors when deliberating research results' reliable. To demonstrate dependability in this research study, I conducted member checking follow-up interviews. Birt et al. (2016) noted that member checking is a process whereby participants review the researcher's interpretation of the data collected during the interview for accuracy.

Validity

In qualitative research, various perspectives constitute validity, such as credibility, dependability, transferability, confirmability, and soundness (FitzPatrick, 2019). Validity is the suitability of the tools, processes, and data (Leung, 2015). A researcher can reduce personal bias by including the research participant to examine and verify the results (Birt et al., 2016). The purpose of the study and content determines validity, and researchers should address validity threats (FitzPatrick, 2019). To mitigate bias and increase my research study's reliability, I used methodological triangulation to analyze data from multiple sources.

Credibility

In qualitative research, credibility replaces internal validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is the confidence placed on the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Hays et al. (2016) defined credibility as the extent to which the research study's findings appear accurate based on the research process. Member checking is a method that a researcher can use to enhance credibility of the research study. Member checking occurs when the participants review the researcher's interpretation of interview responses (Birt et al., 2016). I met with each research participant after the initial interview to engage in member checking to review my interpretation of their responses, expound on my interpretation, or remove misinterpreted data.

Transferability

Transferability is another indicator of validity. Transferability concerns the generalizability of findings to other settings and relevancy in different contexts (Noble &

Smith, 2015). In a research study, detailed descriptions, and triangulation to enhance transferability (Hays et al., 2016). I enhanced the transferability of this research study by providing future researchers who choose to utilize the data from this study documentation to support each step that I performed during the research study.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the accuracy of participants' perceptive without interference from the researcher (Hays et al., 2016). A researcher achieves confirmability by addressing truth value, consistency, and applicability (Noble & Smith, 2015). I achieved confirmability through reflective journaling and follow-up member checking interviews.

I addressed the credibility and confirmability components of my research by reaching data saturation. Data saturation occurs when no new information emerges from interviews (Fofana et al., 2020). Data saturation allows qualitative researchers to increase consistency and reduce bias and errors (Yin, 2018). Data saturation is necessary to make valid conclusions (FitzPatrick, 2019). Fusch and Ness (2015) theorized that when a researcher fails to reach data saturation, it impacts the quality of the study and impedes the validity of the findings.

Transition and Summary

Section 1 of this research study included the problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, research method, and design. Section 1 also contained the research question, interview questions, conceptual framework, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and a review of the professional academic literature.

In Section 2, I restated the purpose statement, discussed the role of the researcher, and identified how I plan to gain access to participants, and establish a working relationship with participants. Section 2 also included my research method, research design, population and sampling, and strategies to ensure ethical research. I covered the data collection instruments, data organization techniques, data analysis, and procedures for enhancing reliability and validity.

In Section 3, I present the research findings, application to professional practice, and implications for social change. I offered recommendations for actions and future research. I also provided my reflections, and conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the motivational strategies that warehouse managers used to improve employees' performance. The target population consisted of three warehouse managers from three warehouses in the southeastern region of the United States who had successfully implemented motivational strategies to improve employees' performance. The data were derived from semistructured face-to-face interviews using Zoom and from company documents. The participants shared their experience using motivational strategies to improve employees' performance. Data analysis, member checking interviews, and triangulation of participant responses, reflective journal notes, and public company documents such as the employee handbook resulted in the emergence of three themes: (a) organizational communication, (b) employee empowerment, and (c) supportive work environment.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study was the following: What motivational strategies do some warehouse managers use to improve employee performance? After receiving approval from Walden's IRB, I began searching for participants on LinkedIn and in Walden's Dissertation Journey Facebook Group. I also contacted warehouse managers from the contact information listed on the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce website and Leonard's Guide Online warehouse databases. I sent potential participants an email inviting them to join my study. After potential participants responded to my invitation, I sent them the informed consent form and explained that

their participation in the study was voluntary. I selected three participants from three warehouses. After participants consented to participate in the study, I scheduled the interviews. I used a semistructured face-to-face interview technique to gain knowledge of the motivational strategies warehouse managers use to improve employees' performance. I conducted two interviews via Zoom and one interview via telephone to accommodate the participant's lack of familiarity with Zoom. I completed each interview in the 30-minute time frame as scheduled.

After each interview, I reviewed the audio recordings, transcribed the responses to Microsoft Word, interpreted the responses, and validated my interpretation via member checking. I assigned each participant a pseudo identifier (P1, P2, and P3), ensuring the privacy of each participant and their organization. I imported the data into NVivo, the software that I used to store, categorize, code, and analyze the data. I placed the data into codes and sorted into subcodes based on relationship. Once I completed all coding and verified no new themes emerged, I used methodological triangulation and analyzed the following data for similarities and differences: participant interview responses, organizational public records, and my reflective journal.

The conceptual framework for the study was the expectancy theory of motivation developed by Vroom in 1960, which established a connection between employee performance and employee motivation. The findings of the current study indicated that organizational communication, employee empowerment, and a supportive work environment improve employee performance. The three themes link to Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation, which indicated that employees perform well on the job

when management validates their efforts to attain performance goals. The three themes are depicted in Table 1 by the frequency of occurrence of the themes and subthemes.

Table 1

Themes and Subthemes

Major theme	Frequency of occurrence	Subtheme	Frequency of occurrence
Theme 1: organizational communication	24	Feedback	6
		Employee input	7
Theme 2: employee empowerment	23	Accountability	10
		Training and development	7
		Recognition	6
Theme 3: supportive work environment	20	Leadership support	10
		Culture	6
		Rewards	4

Note. Frequently used words during the interview transcripts developed with NVivo.

Theme 1: Organizational Communication

Organizational communication was the first theme to emerge from participant interview responses and a review of employee handbooks retrieved from the company's websites. Organizational communication has many objectives and, if practical, can (a) improve management skills; (b) convey information; (c) answer questions and help those engaged in the process; and (d) plan, direct, or organize tasks (Agustriyana et al., 2022). Adnan (2021) found that effective communication influences employee performance. Internal communications affect the success of a business (Ljajić & Pirsl, 2021). Each participant in the current study indicated that they used organizational communication as a motivational strategy to improve employees' performance. Participants indicated that communication with employees contributed to improved performance.

In Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, the expectancy construct is what business leaders expect from their employees' performance. In the current study, warehouse managers used various forms of communication to communicate their expectations to employees. Each participant expressed the importance of communicating with their employees about individual and team performance, objectives, and processes. In differing ways, P1, P2, and P3 used feedback, scheduled meetings, and employee input to communicate with their staff. P1, P2, and P3 indicated that an open line of communication aided them in establishing manager–employee relationships and building cohesiveness among the team. During the interviews with participants, I noted that communicating with employees was essential to the warehouse managers. It was apparent through the recurring meetings with employees.

Feedback

Leaders are responsible for the performance of their subordinates (Harding & Hartzell, 2018). Leaders use communication to voice concerns and provide feedback (Tan et al., 2018). Each current participant indicated that communicating with employees and giving feedback was a good motivation strategy. Providing feedback to employees is a management function, and most often leaders can evaluate employees' performance and provide written or verbal feedback (Harding & Hartzell, 2018). Fu et al.'s (2019) study about performance management strategies found that performance feedback is a tool that leaders can use to retain employees, maintain performance, and achieve organizational goals.

Guo and Ling (2020) found in their study of the relationship between leader-motivating language and contextual performance that the quality of feedback had a positive role in the connection between motivating language and contextual performance. Guo and Ling discovered that feedback was necessary for the leader and employee exchange process, and the quality of the leader's feedback improved the employee's performance. Moss et al. (2020) theorized that leaders who provide feedback may allow employees to adjust their behavior to align with expectations, thereby increasing their prospect of success. In the current study, P1 stated "if I have an employee that is doing good or not doing good, I meet with them often to provide feedback." P1 added "I meet with them every 30 to 60 days." P2 expressed "I'm constantly trying to figure out ways to help the employees, so I meet with them on a weekly basis." P3 indicated "throughout the day, you have to communicate with employees to make sure that everybody is ok."

P2 indicated that they also used email as a communication method to relay information to employees. P2 stated "I send out emails daily to the staff to let them know how they are doing." P2 expressed that email help them communicate across shifts. I identified policies related to communication in C1's and C3's employee handbook, which validated communication as an essential tool throughout the organization. C1's employee handbook indicated that the company values employees and does not tolerate unprofessional written or verbal communication. The company holds all employees accountable for professional communication in the workplace. C3's employee handbook indicated that each employee must communicate clearly and effectively to accomplish objectives. C3's employee handbook indicated that they promote the use of clear,

concise, and well-organized language in documents to communicate with intended audiences effectively. C2 did not have an employee handbook accessible on the company's website.

Employee Input

All participants in differing ways discussed the importance of allowing employees to participate in decision making. Each participant found that their employees take pride in making suggestions or weighing in on proposed changes. Participants' created opportunities for employees to add input by conducting formal meetings or impromptu huddles. Vroom (1964) found that employees permitted to participate in the decision-making process experience positive attitudes toward their jobs. All current participants indicated that they include employees in certain stages of the decision-making process. P1 stated "I meet with employees often to discuss their performance and concerns. I allow the employees to make suggestions." P2 said "I meet with my employees weekly and consider their input." P3 added "we huddle up every day and talk about what we need to do and how we need to do it." Participants' responses align with the findings of Vroom, who found that permitting employees to participate in decision making can increase morale.

Organizational Communication and the Literature

According to the literature, there is a connection between communication and employee performance. Adnan (2021) linked effective communication to employee performance. Moss et al. (2020) found that leaders who provide feedback present an opportunity for employees to change their behavior to fit organizational expectations.

Consistent with the literature review, the findings from the current study confirm the link between communication and employee performance. Participants' responses confirm the findings of Agustriyana et al. (2022) that leadership style and communication have a positive impact on employee performance. The participants in the current study stated that they used various channels of communication to build trust with employees and provide support for accomplishing goals. Interview responses revealed that P1, P2, and P3 held regular meetings with employees to communicate team and individual performance. Each participant conveyed the importance of open communication in the workplace. P1, P2, and P3 reported that open communication increased employees' ability to meet deadlines and achieve goals. The current study's findings extend the literature with examples of how warehouse leaders used communication to motivate employees to improve performance.

Theme 2: Employee Empowerment

Employee empowerment was the second theme to emerge from participant interview responses. Participants' empowered employees by allowing them to take ownership of their tasks. Al-Rahmi et al. (2020) found that empowered employees have increased confidence, successful execution, and progression in their work. Empowerment enables employees to try new things, take risks, and participate in decision making. Empowered employees are likely to make decisions without asking for help from more experienced employees (Al-Rahmi et al., 2020). Each participant in the current study used employee empowerment as a motivational strategy to improve employees' performance. Participants indicated that empowering employees contributed to improved

performance. P1 stated “I give them training to be better at other tasks, and I allow them to train other employees.” P2 said “I provide a form for everyone to complete to allow to provide ideas. Some of the employees are very creative and do a great job helping me come up with ideas to help the autonomy of the team.” P3 shared

we have monthly inventories due by the 15th day of each month. I allow the employees to work together to complete the tasks and do not provide direct oversight on meeting the deadline unless the employees ask for help. I found that the employees often complete the task a week earlier than scheduled.

During my observations of participants during the interviews, I noted that each participant spoke with enthusiasm regarding their employees and their desire for them to succeed at their jobs.

Tudor and Petre (2021) found that increased motivation levels give employees a greater sense of empowerment. Beiu and Davidescu (2018) found that expectancy impacted work motivation, revealing that employees valued management regarding them as good performers. In the current study, P3 stated “employees come to me and ask if I need them to do anything. They want to get recognized for getting the job done.”

Employee performance is not limited to competency but includes motivation and commitment (Papilaya et al., 2019). Employees with high levels of motivation will do their job efficiently and have good performance (Papilaya et al., 2019).

Accountability

Vroom (1964) theorized that for employees to obtain desired outcomes, they must do the required work. Current participants expressed the importance of holding

employees accountable for completing their work. Each participant expressed the importance of accountability for themselves and their employees. P1 stated “if I give an employee a task to do, I expect them to do the task. Holding employees accountable is important.” P1 added that employees are trusted to complete their work without being micromanaged. P1 stated that employees work better with minimal management oversight. P2 stated “to help everybody keep on task, I email current tasks with a reminder of the deadline, and I expect employees to meet the deadline.” P2 elaborated that communicating expectations with team members helps to reinforce what is due, and the reminders have decreased the team missing deadlines. P3 conveyed the value of meeting with employees to discuss deadlines and helping them to plan how to accomplish the tasks to reach the deadlines. Beiu and Davidescu (2018) found that employees perceive their level of responsibility, deployment of skills and competencies, and achievements as determinants for increasing motivation. Nam and Park (2019) found that when employees understand organizational values and expectations, they can perform their jobs better.

Training and Development

In the expectancy theory, intrinsic valence manifests the need for personal development, and it has an important impact on motivation (Beiu & Davidescu, 2018). In the workplace, training is a tool organizations use to develop employees (Beiu & Davidescu, 2018). In the current study, P1 was the only participant to use training and development as a tool to empower employees. P1 stated “I give them training to become better at performing tasks.” P1 valued training and ensured that training was a viable tool

to close the gap of poor performance and sustaining good performance in the workplace. P1 indicated that when employees needed and desired training, the organization planned for the employees to attend training. P2 and P3 did not discuss training and development as a strategy they used to motivate their employees to increase performance.

Recognition

Supervisors who consider the feelings of their employees positively affect their motivation to perform their jobs (Vroom, 1964). Each current participant expressed that recognition for efforts was necessary and helped to motivate employees. Gulyani and Sharma (2018) found that demonstrating appreciation for an employee's work influences work happiness. In the current study, P2 expressed that the team is diverse, and it is important to recognize employees for their contributions and the diversity that each member brings to the team because of their background. P1 recognized employees for meeting safety metrics and for completing tasks on time. P3 recognized employees for helping their peers, taking the initiative to get more work, and achieving goals. The emergence of the subtheme recognition confirms the findings from other employee motivation studies (Abu Rumman et al., 2020; Ali & Anwar, 2021; Hussain et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2017).

Employee Empowerment and the Literature

In the workplace, employee recognition is a tool used to motivate employees. Recognition is a tangible resource that organizations can use to boost engagement (Abu Rumman et al., 2020). Recognition keeps employees passionate about their jobs (Hussain et al., 2019). P1, P2, and P3 used recognition to empower employees to improve

performance. Balajee and Todd (2018) found that empowerment is a tool to motivate employees. Zheng and Tian (2019) found that employee empowerment improves individual and organizational performance. Consistent with the literature review, the current study findings confirmed the linkage between employee empowerment and employee performance. P3's response was consistent with the results of a study conducted by Al-Rahmi et al. (2020), who found that empowered employees successfully execute their work. P3 stated, "the employees take the initiative to receive work and complete tasks. They approach me and ask for work."

In the current study, participants used accountability, training, development, and recognition to empower employees in the workplace. My observation from the participants during the interviews was that each participant thrived on empowering employees to take ownership of their tasks by empowering them to prioritize their work with limited oversight. P1, P2, and P3 stated that the employees' attitudes toward work improved, and absenteeism decreased. The current study findings help extend the literature with specific examples of how warehouse leaders used employee empowerment to motivate employees to improve performance.

According to the literature, training and development and recognition are tools organizations can use to improve employee performance. Training and development can also empower employees to reach their full potential through mastering skills (Okolie & Omamuyovwi, 2020). In a review of the effectiveness of human resources within organizations, Okolie and Omamuyovwi (2020) found organizations train their workforce to sustain effective performance and improve service delivery and the decision-making

process. They discovered that training benefits individuals and organizations by helping employees improve their workplace skills and performance. Consistent with Okolie and Omamuyovwi's research results, P1 found that using training and development as a form of employee empowerment help sustain effective performance. P2 and P3 did not use training to empower employees.

Theme 3: Supportive Work Environment

A supportive work environment was the third theme to emerge from participant interview responses and a review of employee handbooks retrieved from the company's websites. The supportive work environment theme aligns with Tudor and Petre's (2021) study that found a link between a supportive work environment and motivation. Leaders must do more than direct employees; they must encourage employees to perform their work (Al-Rahmi et al., 2020). Employees with low motivation have a difficult time completing tasks (Al-Rahmi et al., 2020). During my observation of the participants during the interviews, I found that all the participants worked to build trusting relationships with employees, create a culture that valued employees and reward them for their efforts. During my observation of C1 and C2's employee handbooks, it was evident that both companies valued its workforce by creating policies to establish safe and productive work environments.

Leadership Support

Leaders impact employees' ability to function and achieve targets because they encourage, direct, and influence their employees (Al-Rahmi et al., 2020). A leader's leadership style in the workplace influences employee attitudes towards the organization.

Leaders can empower employees to grow (Al-Rahmi et al., 2020). Participants expressed their support for employees by meeting with them to discuss their performance, provide guidance, and encourage them to meet objectives. Participants also expressed the importance of working alongside employees to accomplish goals. P1 stated, “I do the work; I will take out the trash, sweep the floors. I show the employees that I am not too good to do the work.” P1 expressed the importance of letting employees see that you are not above doing the “dirty work.” P3 said, “it’s important to know the employees.” P2 expressed the importance of a supportive environment. P2 stated, “we are family oriented.” Abasilim et al. (2019) found that leadership styles are a vital factor that can increase an employee’s commitment to attain organizational goals.

Culture

The culture within an organization can influence employees’ compliance with processes (Nam & Park, 2019). Hitka et al. (2020) found that employees were motivated by a positive work environment. The current study findings also linked organizational culture as a motivator to improve employees’ performance. When employees become social members of an organization, they accept the organization’s culture or rules (Nam & Park, 2019). P1, P2, and P3 conveyed a genuine appreciation for their employees and the importance of a supportive culture.

C1 and C2 have anti-harassment policies in the employee handbooks that promote supportive work environments. Both companies have zero tolerance for using unprofessional language in verbal or written communication. The guidelines also cover sexual harassment and discrimination due to sex, gender, religion, ethnicity, gender

expression, pregnancy, marital status, citizenship, or other basis protected by local state or federal laws. Both companies hold the employees responsible for creating an environment free of harassment. C3 did not have an employee handbook accessible on the website.

Rewards

In the workplace, nonmonetary rewards have a positive impact on employee performance (Sureephong et al., 2020). One type of nonmonetary reward used by P1 and P3 was tangible nonmonetary rewards. Sureephong et al. (2020) classified tangible as food, trips, gift cards, or desk accessories. Sureephong et al. theorized that recipients of tangible rewards could share their achievement with family and friends. P1 and P3 indicated that they used nonmonetary rewards such as letters of appreciation and food to motivate employees to improve performance. The use of nonmonetary rewards aligns with literature on employee motivation. On the contrary, P2 did not use any form of rewards to motivate employees to improve performance. C2's website did not list the use of monetary or nonmonetary rewards as a motivation strategy.

Supportive Work Environment and the Literature

In the literature, leadership played a vital role in improving employees' performance. Afsar and Umrani (2019) found that leadership support enhanced collaboration in the workplace. P2 stated, "I'm constantly trying to figure out ways to help the employees." P2 conveyed that making sure each employee was happy to be a part of the team was high on the list of priorities for the organization. P3 stated, "interacting with employees multiple times per day boost morale and build trust." P1

stated, “I work side-by-side with my employees, and I will sweep the floor if needed to ensure that they know that they have my support.” Active leaders with their employees foster trust (Abasilim et al., 2019). Khan et al. (2017) found that trust is crucial for employees to complete tasks assigned by management.

Consistent with the research findings of a study by Graham and Dixon (2022), high levels of trust lead to management and employees working together to achieve goals. The current study findings confirm the link between employee performance and supportive work environments. The participants in the current study provided a supportive work environment by working alongside their employees. The participants also created a culture that did not tolerate disrespect or harassment in the workplace. The current study findings help to extend the literature with specific examples of how warehouse leaders created supportive work environments to motivate employees to improve performance.

Themes and Conceptual Framework

Communication, employee empowerment, and a supportive work environment align with the conceptual framework. Vroom (1964) found that employees experience increased job satisfaction when leaders focus on their needs. Research participants focused on employee needs by communicating and supporting employees to achieve personal and professional goals. The managers empowered employees by including them in the decision-making process. Vroom (1960) found that participation in the decision-making process on the job increased an employee’s motivation for good performance and an optimistic attitude towards the job. Participants noted that employees’ attitudes

improved towards the organizations after including the employees in certain stages of the decision-making process. Vroom theorized that employees know what they want; therefore, it would be beneficial for leaders to allow them to share in the decision-making process. The participants in the current study included employees in some phases of the decision-making process. The participants found that involving the employees in decision-making increased accountability to complete a task.

Although the emerging themes aligned with Vroom's (1960) expectancy theory of motivation. The expectancy theory was not the most suitable framework for exploring motivational strategies in the warehouse industry. Vroom (1964) defined instrumentality as the expectation that employees get what they desire. The employee believes that good performance will lead to anticipated outcomes such as pay increases, promotions, or other forms of recognition (Harris et al., 2017). Vroom theorized that the employee's value on the outcomes determines the motivation level. Two out of three research participants did not offer employees any rewards. Neither participant used promotion opportunities or bonuses to motivate employees to improve performance. Lunenburg (2011) stated that instrumentality ranges from 0 to 1. The current study findings have an instrumentality level of 0, negatively impacting employee motivation and performance. However, neither research participant indicated that they were experiencing unmotivated employees or poor performance. The warehouse managers in this study focused on communicating with employees, recognizing employees, empowering employees, and not rewarding employees, which is the basis of the expectancy theory.

Application to Professional Practice

Low levels of motivation in the workplace contributes to many companies' experiences with employee-motivation related issues, and as such prompts leaders to actively seek ways to manage and understand motivation (Tudor & Petre, 2021). Motivation directly impacts employee productivity, efficiency, and satisfaction (Ganta, 2014; Tudor & Petre, 2021). Employees with low levels of motivation may have low productivity and lack focus (Tudor & Petre, 2021). Despite the established connection between motivation and performance, employee motivation is a problem for business leaders. Unmotivated employees may produce a poor quality of work and directly impact productivity (Ganta, 2014). In the warehouse industry, employees are involved in various daily tasks that can determine the success or failure of operations. Employing strategies to motivate employees might help warehouse managers and or business leaders to improve performance.

Three warehouse managers from three different warehouses in the southeastern United States shared their motivation strategies that increased employee performance. The warehouse managers answered open-ended questions about their motivational strategy and their effectiveness. Warehouse managers regularly communicated, empowered, and supported employees as motivation techniques to improve performance. Participants linked positive motivation to employee performance. The current study research findings revealed that business leaders could motivate employees to achieve desired organizational outcomes by effectively communicating with employees, empowering employees, and creating a supportive work environment.

In summary, warehouse managers who participated in this study communicated to employees their expectations and allowed the employees to ask questions and express concerns. The participants stated that communication was a key motivation strategy. Another critical motivation strategy was empowering employees to complete their tasks and make decisions. Leaders can give employees a sense of ownership by empowering them to make decisions and take accountability for their work. Lastly, a supportive work environment where employees are recognized and valued for their contributions can lead to increased performance.

This research study may provide warehouse managers and or business leaders with insight into motivational strategies. The motivational strategies shared are proven effective in improving employees' performance. Organizations may also benefit from implementing these motivational strategies to enhance individual and organizational performance to increase productivity.

Implications for Social Change

Unmotivated employees in the workplace can lead to low productivity, low commitment, and absenteeism (Tudor & Petre, 2021). The results of the current study could contribute to positive social change by providing warehouse managers and or business leaders with motivational strategies to help them face the challenge of motivating employees. The findings of the current study link organizational communication, employee empowerment, and a supportive work environment to employee performance. By implementing these strategies, warehouse managers and or business leaders could experience an improvement in employee and organizational

performance, leading to an increase in productivity. Organizations can use the revenue from an increase in productivity to reinvest in the company.

If warehouse managers and business leaders communicate their expectations to employees and provide feedback, they allow the employee to seek clarity, request assistance, and meet goals. Leaders who offer feedback may enable employees to adjust their behavior to align with expectations, increasing their likelihood of improving their performance (Moss et al., 2020). Leaders can overcome challenges that negatively impact performance by developing manager-employee relationships (Tudor & Petre, 2021). Communicating regularly with employees can help build a trusting relationship which may lead to an increase in employee and organizational performance. Thriving organizations can create job opportunities in the community.

Empowering employees can improve individual and corporate performance (Guerrero et al., 2018). Empowered employees can feel a sense of ownership over their work (Y. Yin et al., 2019). Organizational leaders can empower employees by holding them accountable for completing tasks, recognizing their contributions, and providing development opportunities. Employee empowerment could contribute to higher performance and job satisfaction. Empowered employees may feel a sense of pride for themselves, the organization, and their community.

Organizational leaders can create a supportive work environment by communicating with employees, demonstrating that they value employee contributions, and empowering employees. Supportive work environments can increase employees desire to collaborate (Ujjah et al., 2020). Recognizing employees' contributions can

increase motivation, satisfaction, and team cohesion. Supportive work environments can lead to the organization's reputation in the community as a great workplace. A good reputation may increase customer satisfaction ratings.

Recommendations for Action

The current research may be helpful for warehouse managers and business leaders to gain an understating of employee motivation and its impact on employee performance. The following recommendations for action to improve employees' performance emerged from the study findings. Employee motivation is a critical component of organizational success and sustainability. The recommendations for managers are to (a) communicate with employees, (b) empower employees, and (c) provide employees with a supportive work environment to motivate employees to improve performance. Communication in the workplace can present opportunities for leaders to convey expectations and employees the opportunity to provide feedback and seek clarification. Communication can also demonstrate the organization's transparency with policies and procedures. Communication can build trust between leadership and employees.

The second recommendation is for managers to empower employees to take responsibility for their work and provide input in decision-making. Empowering employees can give them a sense of ownership in the workplace. Managers should also recognize employees for their contributions to the workplace. When employees are recognized, they will likely repeat the behavior (Vroom, 1964). Employees are motivated to perform when they feel valued.

The third recommendation is for managers to create a supportive work environment that rewards employees for their efforts, fosters growth and development, and open communication. Supportive work environments encourage collaboration and teamwork (Ganta, 2014). When employees work together, they can accomplish personal and organizational goals. Better team harmony can increase corporate profits and stability (Ganta, 2014). Leaders must encourage employees to complete their work (Al-Rahmi et al., 2020).

Research participants will receive a 1- to 2-page summary of the findings. Walden University will publish this research in its library in the ProQuest dissertation database. My goal to further disseminate my research study is to request to speak at professional conferences. I also plan to submit excerpts of my study findings to the *Human Resources Management Journal* and *Journal of Management Development*. The study aims to help managers across various industries motivate employees to improve performance by implementing strategies that three warehouse managers found successful.

Recommendations for Future Research

Motivating employees to improve performance is critical for organizational competitive advantage and survival. Employee motivation can increase morale and overall organizational performance (Tudor & Petre, 2021). In Section 1, I provided two study limitations. The first limitation was the number of cases would limit the transferability of study findings. I collected data from three warehouse managers from three warehouses located in the Southeastern region of the United States. Despite having a small number of cases, the warehouse manager's experience and knowledge of the

phenomena somewhat increased the trustworthiness of the study findings. One recommendation to overcome this limitation is for future researchers can conduct a similar study with a higher number of cases from the same geographic location to determine if the motivational strategies used by warehouse managers in the southeastern region would produce the same results.

The second limitation was that the organizations might have internal policies limiting the warehouse manager's responses to the open-ended interview questions. Neither manager was limited by a nondisclosure agreement or internal policy that prevented them from answering the interview questions. Each participant answered the interview questions (see Appendix) truthfully about the motivational strategies they successfully implemented to improve employee performance. However, I did not use a partner organization to access participants. Therefore, I could not access internal documents such as performance ratings, meeting notes, or internal policies or procedures. However, I visited the company's website to review the employee handbooks to analyze if any policies were listed to support participant responses. Future researchers could use a partner organization to gain access to internal documents to validate the participant's responses.

Another recommendation is that future researchers consider other industries where managers have successfully implemented motivational strategies to improve employee performance. Future researchers could employ the quantitative method to investigate managers' motivational strategies to improve employees' performance in a

larger population. Statical data may provide researchers with new insights, which could improve performance on a larger level.

Reflections

I started this journey 5 years ago after pondering whether being a military spouse would obstruct my ability to complete a doctorate. My husband's military obligation required us to move every 3 years. Therefore, I knew I had to find an online program. After finding a program that would allow me to continue my studies during a move, I leaped. I initially enrolled in the doctor of business administration (DBA) with a concentration in human resources management at another university, but the program was not a fit. After 1.5 years at the other university, I transferred to Walden in January 2019 and enrolled in the DBA self-designed program.

Walden DBA program helped me to develop skills to work in academia and run a Fortune 500 company. The program forced me to think outside the box by exposing me to various business topics, theories, and diversity with multicultural instructions with varied educational and professional backgrounds. The knowledge and skills I have learned while pursuing this degree made me better at strategizing, being a change agent, and helped me clarify my focus on research and the social implications. My research study qualifies me to become a consultant for companies seeking strategies to improve employee performance.

Conclusion

Unmotivated employees are less productive than when they are motivated (Tudor & Petre, 2021). This multiple-case study aimed to explore motivational strategies some

warehouse managers used to improve employees' performance. I conducted semistructured, face-to-face interviews with three warehouse managers from three different companies to understand the motivational strategies they used to improve employees' performance. I also reviewed the employee handbooks retrieved from the organization's websites and used reflective journaling. The analysis of the interview responses, company documents, and reflective journaling led to the emergence of three themes (a) organizational communication, (b) employee empowerment, and (c) and supportive work environment. The current study findings indicated that warehouse managers implementing these motivational strategies could improve employee performance and productivity.

There are other means of motivating people besides money, and it can help leaders to understand why employees act and perform in a particular manner (Tudor & Petre, 2021). To motivate employees, managers in the warehouse industry should communicate goals with employees, empower employees, and foster a supportive work environment. When employees receive feedback from leadership, provide input on daily tasks, and receive support, they experience increased motivation. The current study findings may model how other business leaders can motivate employees to improve employee performance.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Introduction Interview Protocol	
Action	Script
Introduce the interview and set the stage	<p>Hello, my name is Brooks Demming. Thank you for taking the time to participate in my research study.</p> <p>I will review the consent for participation form with you at this time (verify electronic consent was returned).</p> <p>The documents for this study will refer to you as Participant ____.</p> <p>I will take notes during the interview, and I would like to use the recording function on this zoom call to accurately capture your responses. Do I have your permission to record this call?</p> <p>Do you have any questions or concerns?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask follow-up probing questions to get a more in- 	<p>I will begin with an icebreaker: Please tell me about your management role here at the organization</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">1. What motivational strategies do you use to</p>

depth response.	improve employees' performance?
	2. What motivational strategies did you find worked best to improve employee performance?
	3. What were the three most valuable changes that you noticed after implementing your motivational strategies to improve employees' performance?
	4. How do you assess the effectiveness of your motivational strategies to improve employee performance?
	5. How often do you review your motivational strategies to improve employees' performance?
	6. Who was involved in the development of the motivational strategies to improve employees' performance?
	7. What else would you like to share about your

	<p style="text-align: center;">motivational strategies to improve employees' performance?</p>
<p>Follow-up Member Checking Interview</p>	
<p>Schedule follow-up member checking interview</p>	<p>After reviewing and documenting my interpretation of your responses, I will share the document with you to give you an opportunity to clarify, correct, or expand on your responses.</p> <p>I want to schedule this member-checking interview with you in the next five days; please let me know when the best time will be to meet with you.</p>
<p>Introduce follow-up interview</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1. What motivational strategies do you use to improve employees' performance?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Synthesis:</i></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">2. What motivational strategies did you find</p>

	<p>worked best to improve employee performance?</p> <p><i>Synthesis:</i></p>
	<p>3. What were the three most valuable changes that you noticed after implementing your motivational strategies to improve employees' performance?</p> <p><i>Synthesis:</i></p>
	<p>4. How do you assess the effectiveness of your motivational strategies to improve employee performance?</p> <p><i>Synthesis:</i></p>
	<p>5. How often do you review your motivational strategies to improve employees' performance?</p> <p><i>Synthesis:</i></p>

	<p>6. Who was involved in the development of the motivational strategies to improve employees' performance?</p> <p><i>Synthesis:</i></p>
	<p>7. What else would you like to share about your motivational strategies to improve employees' performance?</p> <p><i>Synthesis:</i></p>