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Faith-Based Leaders' Perception on the Need for Active Assailant Contingency Planning

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MS, Walden University, 2016

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Violence is identifiable as a common threat to public and community safety. Violent incidents have had an extensive history within society and are especially concerning when orchestrated against religious institutions. There is existing research concerning massive violent incidents in sanctuaries and churches; however, there is limited research on the perceptions of religious leaders on the need for safety planning to prepare for and combat these incidents. This phenomenological study was completed to explore the perceptions of eight faith-based leaders on the need for safety contingency planning for sanctuaries and churches. The research questions posed for this study were designed to investigate and explore the thoughts, consciousness, and perceptions of religious leaders concerning the need for safety contingency planning. The further intent of this study was to explore what religious leaders identify as a threat of harm within the churches, and whether religious or security motivators lead their perceptions. Data analysis of the interviews was conducted using an inductive approach. The results of this study disclosed that faith leaders share notable worry about the safety in their churches; however, the concern for most of the participants were subdued until provoked by discussion on the topic. The results of this study may assist in providing key elements for safety contingency planning for positive social change aimed to achieve effortless comprehension of the intended audiences based on the unique makeup of religious institutions.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my beautiful daughter, Mariah L. Merriweather. Thank you for always being the inspiration that drives me, and my biggest cheerleader. The notion that you are always watching inspires me to be the best example of leadership for you. Know that your kind heart, determination, charismatic spirit, and beautiful soul are invaluable. You make me proud with every new accomplishment in your life ... I am so glad God made you for me and me for you. I could not ask for a better legacy to leave this world, I love you.

Additionally, this work is dedicated to my mother, Ressie Merriweather, who I lost during the journey to complete my dissertation. I have faith that although you have gone on to finally rest that I have made you proud. Until we meet again, Mommy, I love you.

Acknowledgments

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Finally, I would like to acknowledge my little "good boy" Maxwell Bartholomew Merriweather (Rat Terrier). Although this may appear to be out of the norm, I needed to thank my little boy for his encouragement and companionship throughout the development, research, analysis, and writing of this dissertation. Thank you for always being there to remind me of the little breaks needed to maintain a healthy mental state during this process; your little spirit will always make me so happy. I love you, "Bop."

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Chapter 1 Introduction to the Study

The Office of Victims of Crimes (OVC, 2016) defines *mass violence* as a deliberate violent act that results in physical, psychological, and emotional injuries to multiple victims. Commonly perpetrated by human assailants, mass violence is committed with a distinct intent to cause harm and casualties to a large group of people (OVC, 2016). Religious organizations are listed among the locations impacted by mass violence (Lebron, 2019). The identification of churches in the list of locations targeted for mass violence, which dates back over 20 years, gives way to the importance of identifying preparation and contingency planning for the church as a possible tool to combat this growing issue (Clemmer, 2019).

Violent occurrences within religious institutions have increased in recent years (Peterson & Densley, 2019). According to data collected by the Violence Project Database (2019), the increase in frequency of massive violent incidents in places of worship, resulting in injuries and casualties has been notable since the mid-2000s. Commonly, most shocking and devastating violent occurrences in churches receive high media attention; however, many violent incidents occur weekly without widespread media coverage (Johnson, 2019). Recent violent attacks on sanctuaries resulting in multiple injuries and fatalities have had an impact on nearly every denomination of faith (Stelloh, 2017).

The extensive history of mass violence within society has made this distinguishable as a universal social issue of safety (Kamaluddin et al., 2018). Security

officials describe faith-based institutions as soft targets because of their lack of security during worship and their welcoming nature to all (Loria, 2019). Research concerning violent occurrences in churches revealed a 31% increase in violence in churches from 2012 to 2015 (Chinn, 2015). Additional examples of increasing violent attacks on houses of worship include the 2018 Tree of Life massive violent incident in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Levenson & Sanchez, 2018). A single gunman perpetrated the 2018 attack on the Tree of Life, resulting in 11 casualties, and six were injured during morning service (Levenson & Sanchez, 2018). Incidents such as this have given way to some faith leaders' realization that the increase of threats and violent conflicts with the propensity to result in mass casualties has prompted the need to explore contingency planning for religious institutions (Shephard, 2019).

Problem Statement

Sanctuaries are among numerous locations that have experienced an increase in random acts of violence in recent years (Violence Project Database, 2019). According to data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI, n.d.) National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) reflecting on violent incidents occurring in and around sanctuaries from 2000 through 2016, 1,652 significant violent incidents occurred in places of worship over this 17-year period. Mass violence has been a longstanding heightened concern in society (Declercq & Audenaert, 2011). Historically, there have been violent occurrences in sanctuaries that confirm these locations as targets of violence that often result in casualties (Alice Training Institute, 2013–2019). However, it has only

been in recent years that these destructive acts within churches have raised significant concern in communities for public security and safety (Laman, 2019; Legg, 2008). Training modules and instructors specific to religious institutional safety planning have noted that church leaders have developed a sense of complacency concerning safety contingency planning (Laman, 2019; Legg, 2008).

The common goal of public safety is described as the assurance of personal safety for citizens and property (USLegal, 1997–2019). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2020), injuries caused by acts of violence rate as one of the top 15 causes of death in the United States. Researchers have established that most violent incidents are predictable and preventable (Office of Disease Prevention & Health Promotion [ODPHD], 2020). Although there has been extensive research on mass violence, there is limited information on how the need for contingency planning concerning mass violence incidents is perceived by faith-based leaders (Laman, 2019; Legg, 2008). Through the current study, I sought to contribute in filling a gap in the literature concerning the perception of faith leaders and the need for contingency planning for faith institutions.

Background

Historically, research concerning mass violence has been focused on seeking the cause of such events to address prevention (Capellan & Jiao, 2019). Researchers have vastly applied concentration concerning mass violence causation on identifying common behavioral characteristics among known assailants (Liquorie & Ward, 2021). Research

thus far has revealed that there are indeed similarities in the cases of perpetrators of mass violence, yet often when examined thoroughly, the individual's motivation for violent behavior remains a mystery (Liquorie & Ward, 2021). Limited predictability based on identifying common behavioral threads has prompted the examination of additional possible solutions, which include identifying potential causes that initiate such behavior (Liquorie & Ward, 2021). With the primary focus of identifying the cause, safety contingency planning in anticipation of combating such events takes second place in possibilities of solution (Chinn, 2015).

According to church security expert Carl Chinn (2015), there have been 617 identifiable deadly force incidents in and surrounding sanctuaries since 1999. According to the statistical data gathered, 483 of these incidents resulted in casualties due to various violent actions within sanctuaries (Chinn, 2018). Chinn (2018) also contended that although the number of casualties is exceptionally high, security continues to remain a low priority in many faith-based institutions. Although some places of worship do not make security a priority, recent news reports have identified companies specifically designed to provide training on safety/security contingency planning on every level concerning an event of mass violence within places of worship (Bleiberg, 2019). Because of recent newsworthy violent incidents occurring in sanctuaries, church security experts have placed great efforts in security training and education as a means of precaution (Bleiberg, 2019).

Traditionally, faith leaders have served as shepherds for church congregations (Hefner, 2016). Biblical references define *shepherds* as not only leaders, but also protectors of their flocks (Gray, n.d.). When functioning in the role of protectors, common faith leaders associate the protective role with addressing spiritual enemies (Hefner, 2016). Recent violent occurrences have inspired some faith leaders to adapt additional applications to incorporate an innovative leadership context, including physical and spiritual protection of their congregations (Hefner, 2016). Community demographics, geopolitical dissension, and location dynamics all play an integral part concerning perceptions of the need for safety contingency planning for churches (Bleiberg, 2019).

Most religious institutions serve their communities in multiple capacities; this was evident by the establishment of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act and the 2001 White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, in which government funds were made available to assist faith-based organizations in providing human services. Additional services offered include daycare, social services, education, and community outreach, all of which may influence the overall perception of religious leaders' need for contingency planning in these institutions.

Contingency safety plans specific to religious institutions have experienced a noticeable change since 2017 (Rainer, 2018). This readjustment was highlighted by the widely reported church shooting in Sutherland Springs, Texas at the First Baptist Church, which resulted in 26 casualties (Rainer, 2018). Although this incident prompted some

churches to implement security plans for the first time while others with plans in place added additional measures, many churches remained resistant to establishing a security plan (Rainer, 2018). Church congregation members have expressed that security teams and tools that would assist with a security plan may be extreme and impractical, desiring to rely on their faith for protection (1st Safety Training, n.d.).

According to research conducted by Pethő-Kiss (2020), religious sites offer vast opportunities to inflict fear, injuries, and ultimately casualties on unsuspecting members of the communities. Historically, violent attacks on churches received extensive media coverage, and such attention is often one of the main objectives of perpetrators of these attacks (Pethő-Kiss, 2020). Some research has revealed that preventive measures such as safety planning were only implemented after the religious site had experienced a violent attack or had received a warning of a possible attack (Pethő-Kiss, 2020). In most cases, churches have responded in a reactive manner concerning violent attacks, with a short-term influence concerning safety contingency planning (Pethő-Kiss, 2020). According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (U.S. DHS, 2018), short-term solutions were intended to manage the current crisis and were not an attempt to implement new security measures.

Church security experts have identified areas of concern related to institutions of worship, to include the diversity of individuals with a variety of issues and agendas that can pose a security threat in sanctuaries (1st Safety Training, n.d.). The certitude that often police and first responders are not the first on the scene during a violent incident is

identified as one of the leading concerns for church security experts (Burke et al., 2014). Church security experts commonly cite this variety as a rationale for establishing a security plan (Burke et al., 2014). The areas of concern related to church security risk have a distinctive variation depending on the size, the type, and even the diverse makeup of the congregation (Scheitle & Halligan, 2018).

According to church security expert Tim Miller, violent occurrences within sanctuaries can be prompted by many situations (Holton, 2017). Violence in sanctuaries can include domestic disputes, robberies, and a variety of personal conflicts (Hefner, 2016). The realization that violence in houses of worship can have many different motivators has prompted church security experts to broaden the focus of safety contingency planning (Hefner, 2016). Experts have adopted the consideration of violence perpetrated due to mental illnesses, individuals controlled by intoxicants, individuals with concealed weapons, and domestic terrorism (Hefner, 2016). The consciousness that there are multiple threat risks faced by churches has motivated security experts to expand on effective measures of safety planning concerning institutions of worship (Scheitle & Halligan, 2018).

Purpose

The purpose of the current phenomenological inquiry was to explore how faith-based leaders perceive the need for contingency planning concerning violent incidents within places of worship. I sought to explore faith-based leaders' perceptions of the need for contingency planning and whether their views of safety planning are driven by

religious or security inclinations. The four leading principles that guide churches' operations are worship, congregating, serving, and outreach (Ryan, 2019). Sanctuaries designed for the purpose of worship have a distinct concentration of services centered on people, specifically parishioners, community members, and clergy (Saint-Surin, 2017). The examination of individual points of view as intended in this study can provide an understanding of consciousness concerning the need for emergency planning for faith-based leaders. This understanding may, in-turn, further identify key training components to achieve maximum comprehension of the intended audiences specially designed for worship institutions.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the perceptions of religious leaders of active assailant safety contingency planning within their faith-based institutions?

RQ2: How do religious leaders' perceptions concerning policies and planning of active assailant safety contingency planning differ depending on their church's size?

RQ3: What do religious leaders perceive and consider as a potential harm or threat within their churches?

Theoretical Foundation

This study's theoretical framework was derived from R. W. Rogers's (1975) *protection motivation theory* (PMT). This theory reflects the philosophy that an

individual's motivation for protection is grounded on the perception of an incident's severity, the probability of an occurrence of a threatening incident, and self-efficacy (Rogers, 1975). Rogers' (1975) theory is grounded on both the coping and threat appraisal of an individual. PMT originated to understand specific coping methods for fear experiences to include cognizance of individual fear (Rogers, 1975). The application of PMT has diversified over the years, as expected by Rogers (Westcott et al., 2017). PMT theory began as a method to describe reactions of self-protection concerning threat perceptions of individual health (Westcott et al., 2017). The evolution of PMT includes the application of *fear appeals,* which are defined as the application of convincing communication to stimulate fear to divert behavior based on potential harm (Westcott *et al.*, 2017).

PMT suggests that the process of threat appraisal provides for the gauging of both the vulnerability and severity of a threatening situation (Plotnikoff & Trinh, 2010). Van Bavel (2019) pointed out that threat appraisal may lead to dysfunctional actions to include denial or even avoidance. Contingency safety planning is commonly motivated by possible threats concerning specific locations or events (Coombs, 2014). Security, as it relates to contingency safety planning, is grounded on four components: crisis response, emergency response, operational recovery, and operational resumption (Fischer, Halibozek, & Walters, 2019).

The current study applied the process of threat appraisal concerning the perception of faith-based leaders' perceptions of the need for contingency safety planning

for institutions of worship. Concepts explored for this study included how threat assessment is individually processed for faith-based leaders concerning their congregations and places of worship. Additionally, the concept of whether religious or security consciousness guides religious leaders' perceptions of threat assessment. This approach provided an empirical outlook on these leaders' perceptions of contingency safety planning for institutions of worship.

Nature of the Study

The nature of the current study was qualitative; specifically, I adopted an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The current study was aimed to explore and investigate personal perceptions, beliefs, and self-concept. IPA was the most appropriate approach for the present study as it provided the most transparent manner to understand "lived experiences" of faith-based leaders (Creswell, 2013). One of the primary objectives of the current study was to gather perceptions of faith leaders who were concentrated on the need for contingency safety planning within their churches; IPA is designed to illuminate research participants' perceptions through their own personal lenses (Creswell, 2013). This approach derived individual experiences and how these experiences influenced participants' thought process and actions (Hennick, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020).

Perceptions of religious leaders were explored to understand how they constructed, interpreted, and determined the need for contingency planning within the churches (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The application of an IPA approach provided a participant-oriented investigative method suitable for this type of research (Creswell,

2013). Data collection for the present study was completed by way of a combination of two qualitative collection methods: structured interviews and questionnaires (Hennick et al., 2020). The aim for the current study was the exploration of leadership techniques. Additionally, I sought to explore how specific leadership tactics shape religious leaders' perceptions of contingency safety planning for churches and sanctuaries.

The data analysis process for the current study was a combination of winnowing data and the use of QDA Miner, a computer software program (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The complexity and content surrounding the current research encouraged the combination of both winnowing and the use of a computer software program (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The anticipation of collecting a substantial amount of data drove the analyzing process of winnowing; the focusing on useful data and the dismissal of access to unusable data provided a clustering of data into a more manageable number of themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Significance

The current research was distinctive because it provided an understanding of how faith-based leaders perceive the need for contingency planning concerning violent incidents within churches.

Significance to Practice

The provisions of the research results may provide assistance with insight and training for security and public safety officials who have a specific concentration on

designs for institutions of worship. Wellman and Lombardi (2012) found that there has been gradual growth in the field of merging religion and security. The stagnation of growth concerning studies in this field has been influenced by the established separation between church and state (Donihue, 2014). The history of the United States' separation of religion and state extends back to the First Amendment of the Constitution, where it was established that Congress would not implement any laws concerning any religious establishment or protection of the free practice of religion.

The apparent slow growth of research in the field of combined religious and security measures identifies a gap in literature that the current study was aimed to address (Wellman & Lombardi, 2012). There have been significant efforts to dissolve the separation between religion and state, as seen in 2009 when the Obama administration formally recognized faith-based organizations on a national level (Brown, 2015). Because of this landmark event, there have been certain states and local governments within the United States that have since included faith-based institutions in emergency safety planning (Brown, 2015).

One of the gradual developments surrounding contingency safety planning for faith institutions was the 2013 Praise and Preparedness initiative formed by the Georgia Emergency Agency (GEMA) with the aim of providing resources for sanctuaries that have experienced mass emergencies (Brown, 2015). Praise and Preparedness serves as a resource to churches providing support to prepare the sanctuary's structure (building) for emergencies during services and for training in preparation of recovery and disaster

response (Brown, 2015). Praise and Preparedness was designed and focused on natural disasters and emergencies, making this plan a blueprint for a pathway to security contingency plans designed for faith-based institutions (Brown, 2015).

The current study offers insight on the under researched area of faith-based leaders' perceptions, knowledge, and interpretation of contingency planning for violent events within places of worship. Primarily, this study may provide insight that affords a unique perspective for non-law-enforcement citizens. Through the study, I also aimed to determine whether geographic location determines particular components that will be distinctive to the audience's conceptions of planning.

Significance to Theory

Contingency safety planning has been long established as unique to each location; it is not suited to a one size fits all approach (Stein, 2019). There are innumerable institutions that serve communities and are open to the public, each of which constitutes a possible target for violence and crimes (CDC, 2020). According to the CDC (2020), site-specific security planning provides opportunities for suitable operational procedures and behavioral expectations, depending on the institution. The consideration of site-specific security planning is built on the foundation of leadership involvement as a key entity (CDC, 2020). The aim of the current study was to explore thoughts about, perceptions of, and the rationale for safety contingency planning among faith leaders. The acknowledgement of leaders as key entities for contingency safety planning makes the

current study appropriate for contributing knowledge and resources to site-specific contingency planning designed for faith institutions.

Significance to Social Change

Targeted mass violent incidents in the United States have prompted the Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) to conduct data collection and research to identify information that is key to enhancing efforts of prevention (Alathari, Driscoll, Blair, Drysdale, Carlock, & McGarry, 2018). Research has revealed that violent attacks' motivations, locations, and modes of operation vary, forcing the development and implementation of preventive measures (Alathari et al., 2018). Through the current study, I aimed to explore the perceptions, thoughts, and concepts of faith leaders on the need for contingency safety planning specific to sanctuaries. The information gained from the current study may add to prevention efforts against violent attacks in faith institutions. The present study focused on the exploration of site-specific contingency safety planning and leadership inclusion as key components in gaining knowledge concerning safety measures and procedures specific for churches.

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Definitions

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Faith-based leader: An individual acknowledged by religious institutions as having authority in religious organizations (Spina, 2016).

Religious institutions: Congregations who have structure, operations, and goals that are cultured by a religious perspective (Thaut, 2009).

Mass violence: A violent act that is intentional and affects many individuals with physical, psychological, and/or emotional injury (U.S. Department of Justice et al., 2005).

Safety contingency plan: A plan that is specifically designed to target unsafe and typically unexpected incidents, commonly applied for risks that are likely to result in a catastrophic outcome (Fischer et al., 2019).

Assumptions

Assumptions relevant for research purposes can be defined as information assumed to be true without definitive proof, simply described as common knowledge (Simon, 2011). The current study was conducted on two primary assumptions: The selected population of faith leaders would provide truthful answers concerning research questions, and faith leaders have genuine concern for the safety of their congregation. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), *participants' meaning* serves as one of the leading components in the characteristics of qualitative research studies. Genuine and honest answers were essential to the validity of the current research results. The assumption that faith leaders will respond honestly is reasonable when approached on the basis that behavior and character as an amalgamation are common among faith leaders (Reave, 2015).

The realization that faith leaders do have reasons for concerns for the safety of their congregation is apparent with the prevention of loss of life and legal liabilities that impact the church because of a violent incident (Church Law Center of California, 2019). Churches and sanctuaries can face lawsuits imposed by victims or family members of

victims killed or injured in a violent incident, with the legal basis of whether the violent incident was foreseeable (Church Law Center of California, 2019). It is a common assumption that faith leaders serve not only as leaders, but as protectors as well to their congregations (Hallock, 2017). Faith leaders relate to the way of the shepherds and how they tend to their flocks; this is achieved by not only leading them, but also providing protection that includes both spiritual and physical protection (Hallock, 2017).

Scope and Delimitations

The current study focused on the perceptions, thoughts, and understanding of the need for active assailant contingency planning for religious institutions by faith-based leaders. I aimed to explore concerns, ideas, and insight, to include identifying common themes of perceptions among faith leaders. The participants of the current study consisted of faith leaders of various denominations. Additionally, respondents were selected across four states within the United States: Texas, New Jersey, Maryland, and West Virginia. This study did not cover the contrast of faith leader techniques based on personal experiences or depending on geographic location.

Limitations

Potential limitations and challenges included possible research-sampling-related issues. Religious leaders are commonly revered as respected individuals in the communities they serve (Ferrari, 2012). The concept of religious leaders being esteemed and the desire to be perceived as a respected figure within their communities drives their motivation to always present in a most favorable manner. One of the specific possible

challenges concerning sampling may be experiencing the "observer effect" (King, 2017).

Simply defined as the modification of natural behavior with the knowledge of being

observed (King, 2017), the observer effect may pose a concern when studying religious

leaders' perceptions.

Svensberg et al. (2021) asserts that when individuals are made aware of what they

are being observed for, they may adapt, whether consciously or subconsciously, to what

is expected of their behavior. In the case of faith leaders, the expectations of solid

leadership and sound decisions concerning their congregations are apparent for all,

considering the nature of the righteousness that is expected of these leaders. Acting in the

capacity of the key research tool, it was incumbent on me to ensure that the interview

questions posed to the participants were not leading to ensure that their answers were not

altered because of possible concerns of how they might appear.

Patton (2014) asserts that the observer effect is not without controversy. The

controversy surrounding the observer effect is rooted in doubts that it even exists to

include whether there are effects behind it (Patton, 2014). Although identifiable as

controversial, the observer effect can threaten the internal reliability and validity of any

study (Svensberg et al., 2021). The observer effect was considered as a possible challenge

or limitation for the current research to preserve the validity of the study.

Another possible challenge that was identified for the current study involved

possible observer bias that was grounded on my cognitive biases as the researcher

(Amrom, 2021). Often, there are preconceptions of what is expected from religious

leaders; these assumptions are guided by societal traditions (Rainer, 2018). One common

cognitive bias technique in qualitative research data collection is the *framing effect*

(Thomas & Miller, 2011). The framing effect occurs when the researcher or interviewer

presents questions during interviewing in a framing manner that leads with the

presentation of options that leads to answers in a positive or negative semiotics that is

guided by the researcher (Guo, Trueblood, & Diederich, 2017).

The framing effect materializes when a rational statement is made pertaining to a

similar issue; however, it leads individuals to different personal conclusions based on

their personal biases (Gu, Liu, & Cui, 2019). Tabesh et al. (2019) further contends that

the framing effect occurs when discrepant solutions are made on issues that are identical

based on the way the issues have been presented.

The most effective actions that are applied to prevent any cognitive bias include

the researcher's constant self-awareness of possible cognitive bias. Additional steps that

were applied included the presenting of interview questions and information needed to

the participants concerning this study in an unbiased manner. This gave the participants a

closer evaluation of information and options, in turn diminishing framing effects during

the process of decision-making.

Summary

Mass violence has proven to be one of the leading concerns for public safety in

the United States. Mass violence has no comprehensive definition; however, mass

violence is defined as an act of victimization that ultimately leads to injuries or casualties

(National Mass Violence and Victimization Research Center, 2019). Huff-Corzine and Corzine (2020) contends that there are various forms of mass violence, but there are limitations to the results of an incident, to include death, injuries, and psychological trauma. Violent actions have no boundaries and have been identified crossing the threshold of religious organizations and sanctuaries. Churches have been identified as potential "soft targets" for violent acts; with this realization, safety is an important concept (Loria, 2019).

Chapter 1 provided a foundation for the current study, including the background of mass violence incidents in churches and sanctuaries amongst other important components. Chapter 2 will cover a review of current literature concerning mass violence incidents in sanctuaries, safety contingency planning for sanctuaries, and leadership techniques of faith-based leaders. Chapter 2 will include the examination of faith leaders' roles and their perceptions of safety planning concerning sanctuaries. Chapter 2 will also include the expansion of the theoretical framework and provide related literature on faith leaders, leadership techniques, and safety contingency planning.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Mass violence incidents in or around churches have an extensive history and are identifiable as a public safety concern (Peterson & Densely, 2019). The objective of the current study was to explore how faith leaders perceive the need for contingency safety plans concerning violent incidents within churches. Chapter 2 includes a literature review of all relevant research and reflects a comprehensive description of the research design and methodology applied to the study. The in-depth expansion of information on the qualitative IPA approach applied to the current study will build on the expansion of details provided in Chapter 1.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search for the current study was narrowed to peer-reviewed articles with publications within the last 7 years. With the use of the Walden University virtual library, a literature search of articles and findings relating to contingency planning for mass violence incidents within houses of worship was completed with the application of keywords that included *mass murder*, *active assailant*, *church shootings*, *contingency*, *crisis*, *aggression*, *causalities*, *communication*, *injuries*, *preparedness*, *potential threat*, and *safety planning*. The databases that were searched included Thoreau, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Google Scholar, PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycCRITIQUES, PsycEXTRA, and PsycINFO. The results of the literature search were categorized according to those studies relevant to targeted areas of the current study. More

specifically, the review of literature for the current study has been divided into sections to include contingency plan preparedness, crisis communication, preventive/action training, and self-efficacy of safety-action procedures.

Theoretical Foundation

The current study was designed to provide an empirical outlook on faith leaders' perceptions of the need for contingency safety plans within sanctuaries and churches. The current study focused on the need for contingency/crisis planning designed for violent incidents as perceived by faith leaders as it relates to institutions of worship. The applied theory for the current study was derived from Rogers's (1975) *protection motivation theory* (PMT). Historically, PMT was intended to provide simplicity concerning the process of fear appeals and to narrate the motivation of an individual's self-protective reactions concerning possible negative health issues (Westcott *et al.*, 2017). Although originally created to be applied to negative health issues, PMT was expected to diversify for future applications (Westcott *et al.*, 2017). Westcott *et al.* (2017) explored the successful application of PMT as it diversified over time to inform and improve public safety structure during natural hazards. PMT is grounded on the suggestion that an individual's self-preservation is rooted in their perception of the probability of a threat, threat severity, vulnerability, and self-efficacy (Rogers, 1975).
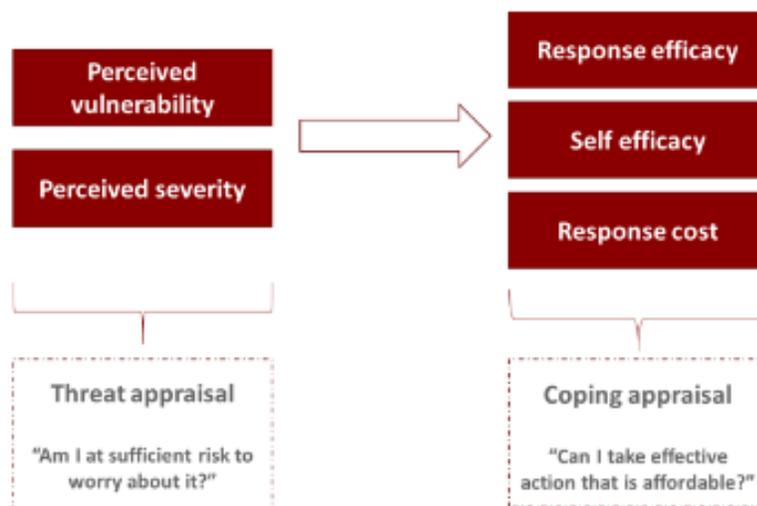
Note. From "A Protection Motivation Theory of Fear Appeals and Attitude Change," by

R. W. Rogers, 1975, *Journal of Psychology*, *91*(1), p. 97

(https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.1975.9915803). Copyright 1975

    As depicted in Figure 1, Rogers's (1975) theory suggests that coping and threat

appraisal are the foundation of protection motivation. Decision-making models have been

developed by researchers with the aim of understanding how individuals process

decisions during exposure to threats (Oakley, Himmelweit, Leinster & Casado, 2020).

PMT serves as one decision-making model used to predict an array of behaviors

preceding and in the face of individual threats (Westcott *et al.*, 2017). The process

applied by PMT aims to record the central cognitive process that guides the decision for

individuals to protect themselves against a perceived threat (Oakly *et al.*, 2020). Oakly et

al. (2020) argue that the PMT appraisal stage presents in two parts, the perceived vulnerability and the perception of the severity of the threat if it occurs.

The threat appraisal process is an individual assessment, or gauging, of the severity of a given incident, while coping appraisal involves efficacy and self-efficacy (Rogers, 1983). Threat appraisal reduced to the simplest terms consists of assessing the exposure of vulnerability and the severity of harm of any threatening incident (Lim, 2019). Threat appraisal has been incorporated within the process of crisis management as a tool to understand potential threats (Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2012a). Jin et al. (2012a) proposes that there are three distinct dimensions of threats: type (internal or external), duration (short or long term), and level (low or high). The three threat dimensions have been functionalized based on previous studies concerning threat perceptions (Jin et al., 2012a). However, other researchers have expanded the identification of additional threat dimensions, to include the temporal distance, also identifiable as the timing that a threat is recognized until the threat reaches the crisis stage (Kim, 2017).

Coping appraisal, as defined by Prentice-Dunn, Mcmath, & Cramer (2009), includes the assessment of an individual's regarded self-efficacy for applying appropriate actions in a threatening situation. Prentice-Dunn et al. (2009) further defines the coping appraisal process as an individual's perceived effectiveness of recommended actions applicable to a threatening incident. PMT served as an appropriate theory as it related to the current study, based on the consideration that safety contingency planning is motivated by threat possibilities (Posey, Roberts & Lowry, 2015).

Threat Assessment

Meloy, Hoffmann, Deisinger, and Hart (2021) contend that not all threats are the same; however, all threats are required to be assessed and met with a rapid response of appropriate actions. The acknowledgment that threats present in various magnitudes of seriousness warrants that each threat should be met with appropriate actions that depend on the gravity of the given incident (Miller, 2014). According to Meloy et al. (2021), each institution must establish and manage a threat assessment procedure that is unique to their operations, to include the proper training of all staff members. The establishment and training of effective procedures will assist in making judgment calls on the credibility of a possible threat and whether the threat can be carried out (Meloy et al., 2021).

Often, threats cannot be foreseen at face value; Cornell (2020) points out that threats are often spontaneous incidents that do not have obvious warning signs that are recognizable prior to the occurrence. Post incident witnesses' accounts often have recognition that there were subtle signs that could be perceived as a warning of threat (Miller, 2014). An infamous church shooting was perpetrated by Terry Ratzmann in March 2005 (Kosmicki, 2020). Ratzmann was an active member of the Living Church of God in Brookfield, Wisconsin; he was known for sharing produce grown in his garden with parishioners of his church (Kosmicki, 2020). On the evening of March 12, 2005, Ratzmann walked into the Brookfield Sheraton and with a handgun opened fire on the congregation, leaving eight fatalities, including his own suicide (Kosmicki, 2020). The March 2005 Living Church of God incident serves as an example of an unforeseen threat.

Witnesses described Ratzmann as a man who suffered from bouts of depression, but no one would have ever expected him to be a violent man (Kosmicki, 2020).

Newsome (2013) examined the differences between a hazard and a threat, establishing that both are the same but present in two different states. Newsome built his argument on the idea that the hazard is the source of the threat contained. However, in the hazard state, this is harmless; once the hazard reaches the threat state, it is considered harmful. Safety contingency plans include the consideration of potential hazards that have the capability of becoming a clear and present threat (Madigan, 2017). Newsome defines a hazard as a contained or inoperative threat. He points out that a hazard is the source of a threatening event and is harmless until it evolves into the negative event, no longer identified as a hazard, now identifiable as a threat (Newsome, 2013). Hazards are not all obvious or perceived as hazards, but the judgment of what is defined as a hazard depends on the individual (Connors, 2015). In the current study, I aimed to explore the perceptions of religious leaders on the need for contingency planning, including but not limited to their personal identification of hazards prior to activation to a threatening state.

Contingency Plan Preparedness

Contingency plans serve a primary purpose to meet the need for action concerning emergencies and safety within normal operations of an institution (Fischer et al., 2019). Research has confirmed that the effectiveness of contingency plans is based on a distinctive design that meets the needs of specific operational procedures for each

institution (Fischer et al., 2019). Historically, contingency planning served as a key component within risk management strategies for corporations (Drennan, McConnell, & Stark, 2014). Legg (2008) points out that churches, just like corporations, face risks that call for the need for contingency safety strategies and planning. Although there are notable risks that churches face, some faith leaders experience uncertainty on what actions to take due to increasing possibilities of lawsuits (Sande, 2005). Injuries caused by violence can occur in just about any setting; when these incidents occur in a public community location; this often leads to litigation (Hallock, 2017). Stanley (2020) points out that in recent years, churches and ministries have become susceptible to legal liabilities, no longer enjoying the protection of legal immunity. Religious institutions are now required to take into serious consideration their legal and safety conduct (Stanley, 2020). The clear liability that churches face in the event of personal injury encourages consideration for contingency safety planning.

The identification that contingency planning is derived from risk management strategies compels an in-depth consideration for the application of these strategies for safety planning (Project Management Institute, 2017). Risk elements depend on the magnitude of the situation (Kerzner, 2018). According to Kerzner (2018), the risk assumption varies depending on the incident and should not be treated as "one size fits all." Risks must be considered with a multifaceted outlook; keeping in mind that poor planning will lead to unfavorable outcomes should a violent incident occur (Ding, Ma, Dong, & Wang, 2021).

Contingency plans are designed to meet specific organizational policies; however, the effectiveness of each plan is grounded on the common elements of types of hazards, assumptions, risk/vulnerability assessment, crisis management, emergency response, and post event assessment (Fischer, Halibozek, & Walters, 2019). Fischer et al. (2019) asserts that there are no organizational safety plans that are functional without comprehensible policies that are well defined. Establishment and implementation of safety planning are the responsibility of management or leaders within the organization. It is notable that one of the first steps in contingency safety planning is to conduct risk assessments to identify potential danger (Fischer et al., 2019).

Rausand (2013) broadly describes risk assessment as the identification and investigation of possible future incidents that are hazardous to individuals and/or environments while making a determination of the impact of said hazard. Manuele (2016) contends that the process of effective risk assessment does rely not just on the anticipation of hazardous events, but on the construction of strategies used to mitigate these events as well. Nicola and McCallister (2006) describe the function of risk assessment as the quantification of variables that create risk and indicated that it is directly correlated to the probability and effect of the risk. History has confirmed that there is no assessment that is all-inclusive for risks; proper applied assessment for risks depends on variables and surrounding circumstances (Nicola & McCallister, 2006).

Preparedness Actions

Herrera (2013) argues that the measurement of safety is plagued with complexity. The convolution that surrounds the measurement of safety has a direct impact on safety preparedness actions (Herrera, 2013). Preparedness actions are led by the perceived risks identifiable for the targeted institution or space being considered (Alathari et al., 2018). The complexity does not cease at the measurement of safety; McNeill and Ronan (2017) describes preparedness actions as having a complex impact on contextual and personal elements for individuals. Considering the individual impact of complexity concerning preparedness actions, resources, relevant knowledge, and motivation is essential for preparedness action planning concerning safety (McNeil & Ronan, 2017).

The attempt to get a better understanding of preparedness actions begins with further knowledge of preparedness (Rogers, 2013). Samimian-Darash and Rotem (2018) defines preparedness as evidence-based preventive measures in the face of potential threats. Historically, preparedness concerning emergencies rested solely on first responders and public safety officials; however, the rapid frequency of emergency incidents has forced the need to expand beyond historic commonality (Rogers, 2013). According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2017), individuals within the community are essential in the process of emergency preparedness; this is grounded on the realization that citizens within the community are the first victims and responders in the event of community and public emergencies. The WHO (2017) further contends that the effectiveness of emergency preparedness must include the process of an "all hazard

approach" with a concentration of "hazard specific" that is based on the assessment of risk depending on the given incident.

The Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC, 2015) defines "preparedness" as any procedure, initiative, or strategy that is implemented prior to a violent or emergency incident to increase the efficiency of response action and recovery. IASC (2015) argues that preparedness for potential emergency incidents is an ongoing process that is grounded on essential elements: risk monitoring, qualitative risk analysis, minimal preparedness actions (MPA), and advance preparedness actions (APA). Risk monitoring is defined as a combination of identification and examination of possible future incidents that may result in injury or harm (Manuele, 2016). According to Manuele (2016), risk monitoring serves as a fundamental part of a comprehensive risk management plan. IASC (2015) states that organizational monitoring for potential risks serves as only one part of the overall goal of contingency plan preparedness. Monitoring must be combined with policies that govern actions to meet potential adverse events (IASC, 2015).

Coombs (2014) points out that many organizations have contingency safety procedures in place that include two identifiable stages: prevention and preparation. Coombs (2014) further provides a distinction between a crisis and a risk, contending that risks have the potential to cause harm and develop into active critical incidents. The identifiable prevention stage of contingency safety procedures serves as the mitigation point of any harm that a critical incident may cause (Coombs, 2014). The preparedness process for contingency safety plans has powerful ties to the prevention process for

critical incidents (Coombs, 2014). According to Lankford (2018), there are warning signs that precede all critical incidents. The warnings that manifest prior to each critical incident provide organizations with the opportunity to initiate prevention procedures (Coombs, 2014).

Orlaniran and Williams' (2001) crisis management anticipatory model serves as an effective model that centers on detecting and minimizing risks. Risk management leaders continuously seek indicators of risks, to apply actions to prevent these risks from materializing into potential crises (Maldonado & Vera, 2014). Although organizations undertake steps to identify risk indicators, risks can be difficult to identify. Coombs (2014) contends that some organizations have individuals who do not wish to have risks known to protect the reputation of the organization and to hide risks that may have legal consequences. The pre-crisis stage of prevention is often one of the most difficult processes (Maldonado & Vera, 2014). According to Coombs (2014), risk prevention can manifest in one of three stages, which include reduction of the threat, risk elimination, and reduction of likelihood of risk manifestation. The complications surrounding risk prevention can be associated with the knowledge that some risks are unpredictable and happen naturally (Maldonado & Vera, 2014). Examples of these types of risks are natural disasters; however, the application of mitigation proves to be the most effective for unpredictable risks (Coombs, 2014).

Emergency management serves as a primary step in contingency preparedness actions (Madigan, 2017). Alexander (2002) argues that emergency management

procedures materialize in phases that are grounded on preparedness, response, mitigation, and recovery.

FIGURE 2
PHASES OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

Note. From *Introduction to Emergency Management*, by National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program, 2009 (https://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/EarthQuake/NEH0101220.htm).

Universally emergency management is the leading purpose of preparing in advance for unforeseen emergency incidents with the intent of an appropriate response and recovery (Alexander, 2002). The intent of a universal purpose falls short in the instance of emergency preparedness actions (Hovden, 2012). According to Hovden (2012), the comprehension of preparedness actions for emergencies depends on the perception, and the organization in question.

Crisis Communication

Coombs (2014) argues that crisis communication is one of the leading

components of emergency planning management. The emergency planning management

process effectiveness is dependent on the efficacy of crisis communication (Wood, 2015).

Documentation of crisis communication and emergency safety planning has been

recorded from a variety of personal perceptions, forcing the documentation to be

developed fragmented (Coombs, 2014). The reality of fragmentation concerning

directions of crisis communication which in-turn has caused confusion (Coombs, 2014),

emphasizes the importance of distinct crisis communication driven by the operational

needs of the institution (Chinn, 2015).

Situational Crisis Communication offers insight on the effectiveness of

adequately matched response strategies to individual levels of crisis incidents (Coombs,

2020). Churches, sanctuaries and other institutions of worship operate on individual

schedules, with unique applied procedures (Berrett, Richard, Raleigh & Nawar, 2012),

with this in mind situational crisis communication serves as an essential tool for churches

concerning contingency safety planning (Coombs, 2020). Coombs (2020) provided

scientific evidence through situational crisis communication that pre-actions and post

actions taken for emergency response by an organization depends on the magnitude of

the emergency crisis.

Collins, Neville, Hynes, and Madden (2016) contend that the initial step of

credibility for crisis communication is the cognizance of proper organization and

dispatching of emergency messages. The foundation of credibility concerning crisis communication rests on adequately addressing specific stages of the crisis and the severity of these stages as they progress (Collins et al., 2016). Ulmer, Sellnow, and Seeger (2017), argue that in recent years the demand for a clear understanding of crisis communication is apparent by the knowledge that there is no organization or community that is immune from experiencing a crisis. Ulmer et al. (2017) points out that research has developed a classification system concerning crisis communication classification that divides types of crisis incidents into categories of intentional and unintentional. The current study will focus on the intentional crisis category. The general intentional categories of crisis are identified as hostile takeovers, ineffective risk management, sabotage, poor employee relationships, workplace violence, unethical leadership, and terrorism (Ulmer et al., 2017). The current study narrows the concentration of crisis to acts of violence in similarity to the category of workplace violence.

Sellnow and Seeger (2021) contend that crisis incidents can do widespread harm and can force immediate changes to any institution, organization, social, political, and economic environment. With the knowledge of rapid changes caused by a crisis, it is essential to understand the type and significance of said crisis (Sellnow & Seeger, 2021). Sellnow and Seeger (2021) further contend that understanding any crisis includes clarity of the role of communication that provides for all stages of a crisis. Crisis communication performs as one of the leading components of public safety measures (Weinhold, 2020). Commonly crisis communication plans serve as operational steps post crisis to ensure the public, media and communities are well informed (Sellnow & Seeger, 2021).

The current study aims to focus on prepared communication planning that is initiated during the process of an actual crisis. Crisis communication is a system that is implemented to provide notification of dangerous situations, which aims to reduce risk exposures for individuals (Ulmer et al., 2017). According to Ryan Strait (2018), the Director of Public Safety at Civic Plus, the responsibility of public safety officials is to protect the community before, during and after a detrimental incident. The sharing of systematic instructions on what actions to take during an emergency/crisis incident is the process of crisis communication (Strait, 2018). Strait (2018) further contends that it is the responsibility of leaders to utilize all available means to communicate instructions and information during the incident of an emergency.

Coombs (2014) makes the point that networks of communication are vital to identify and collect risk-related information in the prevention stage for emergency planning. Risk-related information can be identified in a variety of procedures within any organization (Coombs, 2020). The current study will focus on safety planning, behavior, complaints, and threats as identifiable sources of risk-related information. Coombs (2014), describes the communication networks as a "crisis-sensing network", he further describes this process as relationship building with internal and external stakeholders to successfully identify all possible risks.

Prevention/Action Training

According to Urquhart (2014), an emergency can be described as an unusual incident that requires immediate action that supersedes common practices. The prompt

measures required to meet emergencies are applied to mitigate harm to individuals and property (Urquhart, 2014). In recent years safety measures as a systematic process has become a leading topic amongst scholars and politicians (Troisi & Alfano, 2019). Qureshi (2017) points out that the common outlook of safety performances is defined as facets of a system with damage prevention capability for both property and human life. Safety performances serve as one of the leading components of contingency planning action training (Burke et al., 2014). Sanchez, Young and Baker (2018), contends that action-training plans that include scenario-based and instructional simulations improves confidence and agility of individuals to navigate in unpredictable emergency incidents.

Pinheiro, Gouveia, Jesus, Santos, and Baptista (2019) contend that there are three notable routine issues encountered with emergency response training. These issues include the individual retention of steps of an emergency plan over time until an actual emergency materializes the requirement to generalize conditions of the training that may differentiate from an actual emergency, and the necessity to develop effective techniques of teamwork under stressful conditions that cannot be simulated in the training process (Pinheiro et al., 2019). Traditionally, training efforts have been focused on training individuals in situations that have been identified as most likely to occur, however Pinheiro et al. (2019) has pointed out the nature of any given emergency is unpredictable and unique. It is difficult to generalize emergency training; in turn, this necessitates that training procedures should be focused on the most common emergencies that may occur (Roud, 2021).

Emergency training is typically applicable for groups of individuals within a specific location, which is orchestrated by management or leadership entities (Fast, Weaver, Miller, & Ferrin, 2016). Roud (2021) identifies that one of the leading challenges that affects groups is the development of team skills of emergency response actions. Although it is maintained that effective teamwork and response to emergencies must be coordinated and unified, most emergency training programs place focus on enhancement of individual skills and knowledge rather than building a team response (Fast et al., 2016).

There is a distinct difference between teamwork and task work (McEwan, Ruissen, Eys, Zumbo, & Beauchamp, 2017). Task work is defined as actions that are centered on a group completing a specific task or list of tasks (Fisher, 2014). Fisher (2014) points out that teamwork focuses on the interchanging of team members that is separate from the tasks with core aspects that are identifiable as situational awareness, assertiveness, coordination, interpersonal, decision making and communication skills. Coordination and structure are constituted with the designation of responsibilities to team members. The performance of the team is determined by the displayed skills of the team, this is especially essential in highly stressed situations (Fisher, 2014). According to McEwan et al. (2017), cross training assists team members with clarifying positions and duties, with one of the essential goals being the development of capability inter-substitutability for all team members.

Research in emergency planning contends that training must be led by principles, which take into consideration the distinctiveness of the trainees and environmental factors (Roud, 2021). Fast et al. (2016), asserts that principles such as active learning to include problem-solving approaches has an exceptional impact on long-term retention of emergency training procedures. The consideration of long-term retention gives way to training procedures conducted in the form of a lecture that fortifies the trainee as a passive participant, rather than actively receiving new skills and knowledge (Roud, 2021). Contemporary training principles centered around long-term retention of procedural steps focus on maintaining that the recipients are in the roles of an active learner (Fast et al., 2016).

Landry et al. (2018) points out that volatile incidents commonly involve loud noises, screaming and other startling components that often causes individuals to "freeze", rather than effectively react. The common individual response to a situation that is unfamiliar is anxiety, distress, and uncertainty (Landry et al., 2018). Experts have determined that through prevention training and education organizations can better manage emergency incidents and minimize fear (Doherty, 2016). In recent years, safety planning and training centered around incidents of mass violence to include active shooter incidents (Clark, 2019). This has prompted the development of instructional training procedures as a primary method of mitigation and preventive measures (Clark, 2019). Instructive approaches to safety planning and training include the concept of RUN, HIDE, and FIGHT (Sanchez, Young, & Baker, 2018; Smith, 2018; Victor, 2017).

Additional similar instructional approaches include concepts of Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate (ALICE) (Clark, 2019).

The RUN, HIDE, and FIGHT concept instructs individuals to retreat as a first resort, and to fight if retreat is not an option (Sanchez, Young, & Baker, 2018; Smith, 2018; Victor, 2017). The ALICE concept takes a vastly different approach, although the first priority for both concepts is the primary duty for personal safety (Clark, 2019). Where the concepts differ would be the secondary duty of the safety of anyone in the immediate area of location, followed by adequate reaction time and finally the duty to notify authorities (Clark, 2019). Although there are numerous instructional safety emergency training concepts, universally the primary purpose is to educate and train individuals (Clark, 2019). Further intent is to reduce anxiety, fear and to increase situational awareness of possible risks and/or threats (Victor, 2017).

Preventative safety training has proven to be effective with scenario-based simulations integration into the program (Victor, 2017). Sanchez et al. (2018), contends that scenario-based training simulations should include vital information to include, emergency contact numbers, escape routes, exits and how to recognize when the simulation ends. Sanchez et al. (2018), asserts that it is important to have a post simulation debriefing, with the intent to provide participants the opportunity to provide feedback and elaborate on their personal experiences. According to Landry et al. (2018), scenario-based simulations provide individuals with muscle memory and active experience designed to react appropriately in emergencies. Wexler and Flamm (2017),

assert that scenario-based simulations prepare individuals for chaos and stress experienced during emergency incidents, while providing situational awareness.

Kemp (2018), points out that acts of mass violence have become more common in recent years, noting that these acts are no longer perpetrated with firearms exclusively, but now include multiple choices of weapons, all having devastating results. Kemp (2018) further contends that addressing situational awareness can expand consciousness and decrease fatalities concerning violent incidents. Graafland, Schraagen, Boermeester, Bemelman, and Schijven (2015) define situational awareness as an individual's conscious reflection of a specific situation. Green et al. (2017), contends that the leading concept of situational awareness is the distinction between environment and the individual. The importance of this distinction concept rests on the importance of environmental events that are happening around the individual and the actions taken by said individual (Green et al., 2017).

The concept of situational awareness is important to improve awareness of active threats (Kemp, 2018). Kemp (2018) proclaims that post interviews of witnesses to mass violent incidents commonly describe behavior they may have observed that is considered "odd" or "just not right" displayed by the assailant. Kemp (2018) further contends that not all-odd behavior results in a mass catastrophe; however, this behavior does justify a reason to investigate. The "observe, orientate, decide, act" (OODA) loop, is considered a suitable pairing of training in combination with the situational awareness concept (Kemp, 2018). The OODA loop was developed during the decade of 1950 with the intent of

analyzing combat reaction times of pilots (Kemp, 2018). The OODA loop serves as a

process that outlines human reactions to an environmental stimulus (Kemp, 2018). The

decision cycle of OODA constitutes the human reaction process that includes observation

of the environment, orientation of a plan or steps to take, deciding on what appropriate

action to take and finally taking action, depicted in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3
A SCHEMATIC OF THE OODA LOOP
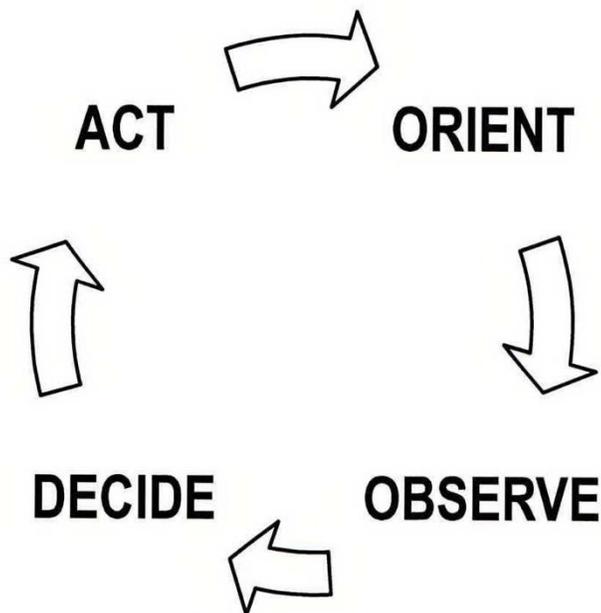
Note. From *Schematic of OODA Loop*, by Kemp, 2018.

According to Wexler & Flamm (2017), scenario-based training centers on

realistic events improve participants' responses to emergency incidents. A vast number of

organizations rely on offering emergency response and safety plans via a video, brochure

or other forms of literature (Ford & Frei, 2016). With the offering of videos, brochures

and literature the sole responsibility of absorbing training information is on the participants to learn at their own leisure (Sattler et al., 2014). Ford & Frei (2016) argues that the method of providing training material for viewing at the individual's leisure limits the possible influence of this training.

There have been numerous debates on the psychological effects of scenario-based safety training drills (Wexler & Flamm, 2017). Amongst these debates, include the belief that realistic scenario-based safety drills may cause psychological trauma (Wexler & Flamm, 2017). The examination of psychological effects is apparent by the impact of active shooter drills conducted in educational settings (Erbacher & Poland, 2019). Christakis (2019) compares the psychological impact of active shooter drills in schools to the 1950 nuclear bomb drills conducted in schools. Christakis (2019) points out that 60 percent of the children impacted by the nuclear bomb drills reported experiencing nightmares because of their participation in these drills. Awada et al. (2021) further examined psychological effects of action safety drills through virtual reality (VR). Awada et al. (2021), proclaims that VR safety training drills could serve as a productive method to prepare individuals for emergencies. Awada et al. (2021), further asserts that the effectiveness of VR drills rests on the invoking of real psychological and emotional responses experienced during actual emergency incidents. The intent of such training is to reproduce an elevated level of stress that mimics reactions to an emergency incident, thus reflecting individual decision making during such incidents (Awada et al., 2021).

Prevention/ action safety training can be described as a multi-optional approach (Barton, 2020). Prevention safety training can be implemented through videos, safety drills, scenario-based drills, and classroom dialogue, (Barton, 2020). There has been a long-standing discussion on what approach is universal and the most effective (Barton, 2020). Most organizations rely on providing safety-training videos to meet the risks management requirement for possible emergency incidents (Barton, 2020). Although the decision of which approach to utilize to complete preventive/action safety training continues to be a leading topic of debate, the debate on whether to have safety training in organizations at all has its own platform of debate (Barton, 2020).

According to Spicer (2018), often organizations and businesses rely on law enforcement agencies as the only feasible response to an active violent incident. Spicer (2018) further contends that although local authorities' roles concerning violent incidents are vital, having a preventive safety plan in place can mitigate or prevent such an incident. According to Tepper (2019), one of the initial steps in safety procedures for facilities is the determination of what areas are at risk for potential violence. Tepper (2019) further contends that often-larger organizations generally prepare for violent emergencies, while smaller organizations commonly take the approach that such an emergency could never happen to them. Prevention/Action training does not stop at the pre-crisis incident; further steps must be set in place.

Kepp (2018), points out that past attempts of safety planning hinges on response rather than training and prevention. Kemp (2018) further contends that until recently

mass killing incidents were conducted by one or two assailants by way of firearms, this in turn has moved public safety official's prevention tactics to meet these types of attacks. The examination of whether a "one size fits all" approach to safety contingency planning is long overdue (Kemp, 2018). This is apparent by the development of the "Run, Hide, and Fight: Surviving an Active Shooter Incident" video, used to train survival tactics for an active shooter incident (City of Houston, 2012). Kemp (2018) contends that the term "active shooter" indicates that there is only a single assailant discharging a firearm with the intent of causing maximum harm and fatalities. However, recent events have proven that mass killing incidents are orchestrated by multiple assailants and with a variety of weapons (Kemp, 2018).

Recent incidents of mass violence have been committed with edged weapons, vehicles, firearms, and explosives (Kemp, 2018). With the evolutionary change of weapons used to carry out mass attacks, this has prompted some experts to think that a systematic one size fits all instructional training course may be too linear (Kemp, 2018). Kemp (2018) points out the example of the instructional training of "Run, Hide, Fight", could not possibly apply to an attack carried out with a vehicle or explosives. Depending on the individual, situation, or circumstances, one or more of the steps of run, hide, fight may not be an option (Kemp, 2018).

Self-Efficacy

Marceron and Rohrbeck (2019), describes *self-efficacy* as an individual's appraisal process of their ability to respond to a threat. According to Marceron and

Rohrbeck (2019), self-perception of a competent response to a threat produces a functional reaction to the threat. Self-efficacy was originally developed as a small part of the Social Learning Theory, which has since evolved to become the Social Cognitive Theory (Lopez-Garrido, 2020). Social Cognitive Theory rests on the basis that individual behavior and motivation are determined by personal, behavioral, cognitive, and environmental factors (Urich, 2017). Self-efficacy serves as one of four goal realizations that are correlated within this theory, each of which has a direct effect on personal drive and goal accomplishments (Lopez-Garrido, 2020).

Self-efficacy development is evolving; self-efficacy can alter and grow depending on the individual's life experiences (Lee & Choi, 2019). Heightened self-efficacy development in adolescents has proven to be beneficial for overall growth (Lee & Choi, 2019). Research has found vicarious experiences to be exceptionally beneficial in higher self-efficacy development in adolescents (Shepherd, 2019). According to Schwarzer (2014) self-efficacy influences individual self-regulation to bring about improved performance and accomplishments. Gross (2014) defines self-regulation as the intricate process in which individuals control their actions, thoughts, and emotions. Strong self-efficacy leads to an individual's belief of being in control of not only their actions, thoughts, and emotions, but also their environment as well (Gross, 2014).

Although commonly related to the individual threat appraisal process, self-efficacy can also be defined as an individual's perception regarding their competency to perform certain tasks (Yahaya, Innocent, & Tomi, 2020). According to Lunenburg

(2011), self-efficacy has three facets that include *magnitude, strength,* and *generality*. Lunenburg (2011) further explained that the level of difficulty to complete a specific task defines the magnitude, the belief concerning whether the magnitude is strong or fragile defines strength, and the generalization of expectation of any given situation. Numerous other researchers throughout the years have cited Lunenburg's (2011) research concerning self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) contends that self-efficacy consists of four predominant sources that includes past performance, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional cues, depicted in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4
SOURCES OF SELF-EFFICACY
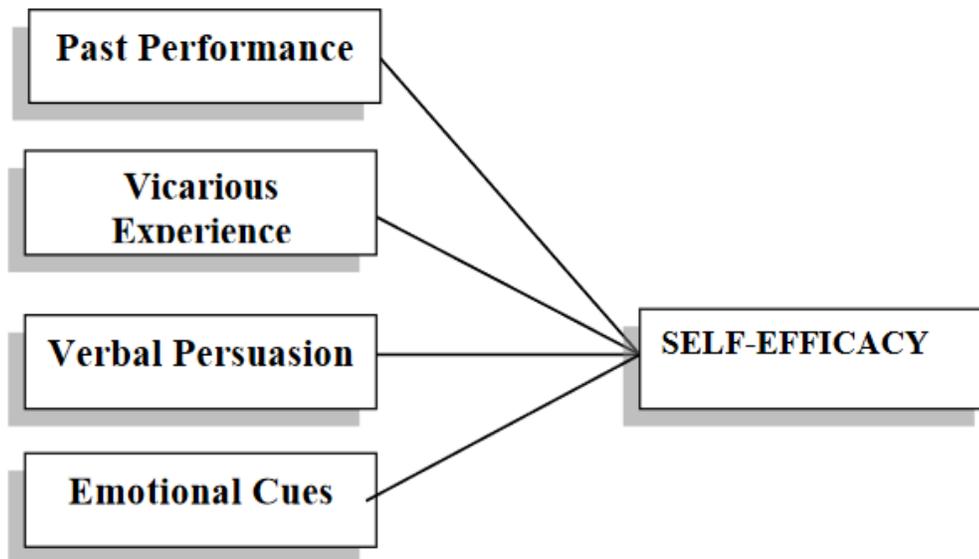
Note. From *Source of Self-Efficacy*, by Lunenburg, 2011.

Bandura (1997) proclaims that the most significant source of self-efficacy is identifiable in past performance. His ideas were based on the reality that if an individual has flourished in previous similar tasks, this encourages high self-efficacy and confidence to complete future tasks (Bandura, 1997). Vicarious experience as explained by Lunenburg (2011), is the modeling of others behavior in a similar situation. According to Lunenburg (2011), observation of individuals perceived as like oneself can be persuasive. Training videos have proven to have profound influence on self-perceptions, because effective actions are accomplished in the videos and persuade viewers that the actions completed by themselves (Lunenburg, 2011).

Verbal persuasion is accomplished during training procedures, it is during the dissemination of directions of actions within training procedures that individuals can receive verbal persuasion to complete the actions required (Beauchamp, 2016). According to Smith, Abeyta, Hughes, and Jones (2015) expectation of failure has a profound psychological effect on individuals, and as a result negative physical symptoms are experienced to include headaches, heart palpitations and sweaty palms to name a few.

Personal development is profoundly affected by any factors that aid in determining choice behavior, to include the level of influence that self-perception has on an individual's willingness to use effort and the length of endurance applied when faced with a difficult situation (Smith et al., 2015). Research has confirmed that one of the most effective ways of heightening self-efficacy is the mastery of experiences (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Beauchamp (2016) argued that one of the most productive ways to

heighten self-efficacy is the mastery of experiences. The provision of training provides individuals the opportunity to gain mastery skills (Beauchamp, 2016). Stressful situations or incidents can cause an emotional arousal, which influences an individual's self-efficacy in coping with said situation (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Violent incidents have been proven to manifest stress within individuals (Liu & Kia-Keating, 2018).

Existing research has confirmed that there are different variables that can effect an individual's self-efficacy during a stressful incident (Liu & Kia-Keating, 2018). Although past performance, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional cues have been identified as primary influential factors of one's self-efficacy (Lunenburg, 2011), there are additional external elements such as physical sensations and affective states (Smith et al., 2015). Physical sensations include the heart racing, tension headaches, and shortness of breath to name a few (Bandura, 2006; Smith et al., 2015). Affective states have a direct connection to physical sensations; if an individual believes that the negative physical sensations are associated with negative performance, this can in turn influence individual self-efficacy (Bandura, 2006; Smith et al., 2015).

According to Luszczynska and Schwarzer (2015), almost everyone has experienced any of the named influencing factors on self-efficacy in real world settings. Wirtz and Rohrbeck (2017), point out that a consistent important facet of an individual's intent to prepare for emergencies is self-efficacy and response efficacy. Self-efficacy has an association to emergency preparedness (Grothmann & Reusswig, 2006; Johnson et al.,

2017). Wirtz and Rohrbeck (2017), explain response efficacy as self-belief that a specific type of behavior conducted in each situation will produce a suitable outcome.

Summary and Conclusions

The literature review has revealed there are many components that constitute safety contingency plans. The review has further revealed that there are specific details of contingency plans that apply depending on the location and the individuals who occupy the location (Rainer, 2018). The examination of contingency planning includes the appraisal of preparedness actions, crisis communication, preventive training, and self-efficacy. The compiled facet of contingency plans is grounded on the identification and assessment of possible threats (Meloy et al., 2021). According to Deng (2015), the evaluation of threats is of extreme importance in any situation concerning safety planning. The effective assessment and management of potential threats is an ongoing concern for not only public safety officials, but also those in private and public organizations as well (Mitchell & Palk, 2016).

The research conducted on safety contingency planning for institutions of worship has only recently increased and expanded (Rainer, 2018). With the recent growth of exploration concerning contingency planning for sanctuaries, it has become apparent that there is no common perception among religious officials on the need for contingency planning (Rainer, 2018). Manyonganise (2020) maintained the moderate development for exploration in the field of integration of security and religion has a significant influence concerning sanctuary contingency planning for violent incidents. The current

section detailed steps of contingency safety planning, this has provided the current study

a strong basis to build on in providing insight of safety contingency planning and how it

is incorporated with institutions of worship.

Chapter 3

Research Method

An interpretive phenomenological qualitative approach was used for the current study. The purpose of the current study was to explore the perceptions of faith-based leaders on the need for contingency planning concerning violent incidents that may occur within their churches. Additionally, the current research explored whether faith-based leaders' perceptions on safety planning for churches are guided by religious or security inclinations. IPA is devoted to the exploration of personal experience, to include how individuals discern their personal perceptions (Tomkins, 2017).

Institutions of worship are identifiable among the numerous locations that have endured random acts of violence (Violence Project Database, 2019). Research has revealed that between the years 1998 and 2019, there were 482 violent attacks on Islamic temples, 30 attacks on synagogues, 70 attacks on Christian churches, and seven attacks on Hindu temples (Pethő-Kiss, 2020). Motivation for violence surrounding churches varies depending on location and the makeup of the congregation (Pethő-Kiss, 2020). Although often motivation is unforeseen, it is apparent that harm from these violent actions can be devastating. The knowledge that churches are among the vast locations that are not exempt from experiencing violent acts serves as a top motivator to consider safety contingency planning for churches (Scheitle & Halligan, 2018). Faith and religion encourage a welcoming attitude regarding strangers; this lowers suspicion of unknown persons, leaving the church vulnerable to attacks (Spicka, 2018).

This section will provide a description of the research methodology and design of the current study, including the rationale for the methodology and design selection. The current chapter will also describe my role as the researcher, selection of the research population, instruments that were utilized to collect data, data analysis procedures, and trustworthiness issues.

Research Design and Rationale

The objective of the current study was to answer the following research questions:

RQ1:   What are the perceptions of religious leaders of active assailant safety contingency planning within their faith-based institutions?

RQ2:   How do religious leaders' perceptions concerning policies and planning of active assailant safety contingency planning differ depending on their church's size?

RQ3:   What do religious leaders perceive and consider as a potential harm or threat within their churches?

A qualitative IPA approach was applied to answer the research questions for the current study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The data were gathered by way of unstructured interviews, which provided the pathway for flexibility and spontaneity during the interviewing process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The rationale for the selection of IPA was grounded on its distinctive amalgamation of interpretative, psychological, and idiographic components, which provides a pathway to intuitive interpretation that is

directly connected to the participants' perceptions (Gill, 2014). A quantitative approach was not appropriate for the current study, as the objective of this study was to explore the perceptions of faith-based leaders on the need for contingency planning in sanctuaries. The aim of the current research was to gain a profound understanding of faith-based leaders' perceptions on this matter, rather than just an external description of a sizable sample of a population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). With the current study being exploratory in nature, a qualitative approach proved to be the most suitable research approach. The research goal was not to quantify or to generalize the results, therefore excluding a quantitative approach as an appropriate method.

The application of a single method of data collection for the current study ruled out the use of a case study method for research design (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544). Through the current research, I did not seek to develop a theory for explanation (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013), thus making a grounded approach inappropriate. The central concept of the current study was the exploration and investigation of faith-based leaders' perceptions on the need for safety contingency planning for their sanctuaries. The current study focused on faith-based leaders within the states of Maryland, West Virginia, and New Jersey. The rationale for the states selected was based on ensuring reliability. Relevant quota sampling ensured that there was a variety of participants who shared the common characteristic of faith-based leaders (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher within qualitative research rests on the foundation of impartiality and objectivity; this practice is paramount to explore and analyze the experiences and perception of participants (Creswell, 2009, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002; Stake, 2005). The inherited researcher role for the current study was identifiable as a multifaceted role; the duties included monitoring and reducing bias, developing competence, and collecting and analyzing data (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). One of the primary aspects of the current study was faith or religious beliefs. As an individual of faith and religious beliefs, I was conscious of any biases that might be experienced, whether conscious or unconscious. This included monitoring the self-expectation of faith leaders to be accommodating without boundaries. This process was performed as a form of self-analysis based around the development of self-awareness of natural roles in research (Skukauskaite, 2021).

Luttrell (2019) asserts that qualitative researchers must navigate multiple layers of self-awareness, to include conscious, unconscious, and even semiconscious. Often, researchers are conscious on some levels and unintentionally unconscious in other areas of the research process; with this in mind, reflexivity is applied to examine the role of the researcher (Luttrell, 2019). Dodson (2019) contends that all qualitative research is contextual, and it is the researcher's responsibility to highlight the elements of the research space so that the intended audience understands the context. Mitchell et al. (2018) points out the extensive history of the application of reflexivity, noting that its

practice stretches back to over a century ago. The practice and application of reflexivity have been identified as a leading tool to ensure quality, rigor and trustworthiness of work (Teh & Lek, 2018).

Reflexivity was incorporated as a significant part of the researcher role in the current study. The process of reflexivity was completed with the memo notes during the research process, providing an opportunity for me to reflect on personal experiences that might configure my analysis of the data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, I was vigilant to provide a contextual relationship description between participants in this study and myself to include differences and similarities so that readers would have a thorough understanding (Dodson, 2019).

Ethical challenges are common for researchers in all stages of a study (Sanjari et al., 2014). These challenges include confidentiality, anonymity, the researcher's and participant's potential influence on each other, and informed consent (Sanjari et al., 2014). One of the central ethical concerns when human participants are involved is consent (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). Obtaining consent provides permission for researchers' limited actions as spelled out to the participants in the informed consent agreement (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). The moral foundation of consent is primarily focused on self-governing to include the support and protection of self-governing during the data collection process (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). Further ethical issues are the degree of disclosure required to participants. Qualitative research methods and designs

are to a certain extent an emerging process, making it difficult to provide firm details on where the data will take the research (Sim & Waterfield, 2019).

The qualitative approach has common methods resulting in the production of textual contents, which requires that the researcher act in the role of a data-gathering instrument (Borgerud & Borglund, 2020; Fink, 2000). The current research study involved a phenomenological qualitative approach, which required the conversion of collected data to lived experiences (Speziale & Carpenter, 2011; Borgerud & Borglund, 2020). The primary intent was to provide an all-inclusive elucidation of faith-based leaders' experiences and perceptions concerning contingency safety planning.

Methodology

To explore perceptions on the need for active assailant contingency planning of faith-based leaders, my research sites included religious institutions and churches located in the states of Maryland, West Virginia, and New Jersey. The original plan for research sites included the state of Texas; however, despite continued attempts to recruit participants in this area, I was unsuccessful in recruiting any participants. The primary data collection tool that was utilized for the current research was unstructured interviewing (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The current study was guided by an interpretative phenomenological approach, which dictated that unstructured interviews were the most appropriate data collection tool (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Participant Selection Logic

Once approval was granted from the Walden University Institutional Review Board, recruitment began. The participant selection standards for the current study centered on faith-based leaders. The selection expanded to four states within the United States, with the logic of creating a diverse sample population. Diversity within the sample population ensured the intended collection of a purposeful sample as desired for the current qualitative study (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Care was taken to ensure that the selection of the most appropriate participants was completed. The application of criterion-based sampling took the lead to ensure that participants would provide credible data to the study (Creswell, 2009).

My selection included a mix of male and female faith-based leaders. The leadership roles included clergymen of a variety of denominations who were at different levels of hierarchy within the churches, mosques, and synagogues. The selection included pastors, elders, and deacons; this inclusion ensured that a variety of levels of leadership was explored. Identification of appropriate participants was determined with initial contact of self-reporting of religious leaders. The following criteria were used to determine the participants' eligibility: (a) hold a position of leadership within the church and (b) had held a position of leadership in the church for a minimum of 2 years.

The sample size for the current study consisted of eight participants with the goal of reaching saturation of the data. Fugard and Potts (2015) assert that the objective of a study is driven by the sample size. Boundaries for the current study were established

through the sample size and recruitment methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The current study was aimed to explore a "modest claim" with the intent of achieving saturation at a faster pace in comparison to a larger sample size with the intention of describing a general process (Fugard & Potts, 2015). Potential participants were located through religious institutional listings within the selected states. Additional methods of locating religious institutions included snowballing, social media, and web-based services, such as Church Finder (Foyer Media LLC, 2020).

Instrumentation

Once appropriate religious institutions were identified in the selected areas, the initial contact for participation for the current study was completed with a combination of emails and telephone calls as a preliminary manner of introduction. Subsequently, an invitation letter for participation in research was distributed to the selected religious institution leaders (Appendix A). The invitation letter laid the foundation of informed consent for all participants. Care was taken to ensure that each participant completed a written informed consent form prior to data collection (Appendix B).

Interview protocol procedures were followed to ensure that the instrumental tools remain aligned with the current study. According to Miskovic and Lyutykh (2017), research is the leading principle that guides the interview questions that are posed in a qualitative study. Simply stated, knowing what research literature says about the individuals selected to study is essential (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Miskovic & Lyutykh, 2017). Turner and Hagstrom-Schmidt (2022) point out that the benefits of interviews

include the provision of insight on an individual's viewpoint and experiences on a topic. The applied manner of interviewing consisted of a combination of informal conversational interviewing and standardized open-ended interviewing (Turner & Hagstrom-Schmidt, 2022).

An informal conversational interview consists of interview questions that are generated spontaneously in a natural conversation (Gall, Borg & Gall, 2003). Standardized open-ended interviewing consists of structuring concerning the wording of the interview questions; however, the questions are presented to the participant in wording that produces an open-ended response (Gall et al., 2003). The application of both styles of interviewing was aimed to ensure that participants provided as much detailed information as possible (Creswell, 2013).

Chenail (2011) asserts the importance of preinterview practices that researchers can apply to address and avoid any biases. These practices include selecting a setting with minimal distractions, addressing confidentiality, detailing the length and format of the interview, providing an opportunity prior to the interview for the participant to ask questions, and not relying on memory by taking notes (McNamara, 2010). In the current study, I followed the preinterview practices to ensure that any biases were addressed and to provide the participants with a sense of confidence that their responses were exceptionally important to the study.

Creswell (2013) argues that it is the responsibility of the researcher to construct questions so that participants maintain focus on their responses. Researchers must also

develop follow-up questions that are designed to obtain accurate responses from participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). During the interview process, participants tend to get off topic; the application of reconstruction of questions was used to reduce misunderstanding and keep the participant focused on the topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A script was developed to begin each interview. This ensured that all participants received all pertinent information concerning details and diminished any concerns of confidentiality that participants might have had. An audio recorder was also incorporated as a tool in the current research. With the intent of assuring that the participants had my complete attention to their responses, an audio recorder was utilized to allow me to take brief notes while maintaining eye contact and engaging verbally.

The process of in-depth qualitative interviewing allows researchers to explore opinions, experiences, and perspectives of a selected population (Mirick & Wladkowski, 2019). Interviewing served as one of the leading data collection instruments for the current study. The interview process included open-ended questions, allowing the participants to provide additional information without restraints. The current study used a combination of both responsive and in-depth interviewing (Alsaawi, 2014). The application of responsive interviewing for the current study allowed flexibility and the pathway to alter questions depending on the information obtained during the interview process (Alsaawi, 2014).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

With consideration of the current health crisis of COVID-19, data collection included video chat (Google, Skype, and FaceTime) interviewing. Video chat interviewing took the lead for the current study, leaving telephone contacts as a backup to the interviewing process. The research questions for the current study drove the focus of exploring faith-based leaders' perceptions on safety contingency planning for churches. I recruited eight faith-based leaders throughout Maryland, West Virginia, and New Jersey with the intent of collecting perceptions and experiences that were diverse. Participants were selected through web-based religious institution listings within the selected states and snowball sampling. The participation invitation letter (Appendix A) was emailed to all participants as a second step in the recruitment process. Once the indication of acceptance to the participation of invitation was received, the notice of informed consent was forwarded to all selected participants.

The recruitment methods remained aligned with the interpretive phenomenological analysis intended for the current study. This alignment included the invitation and affording participants the opportunity to offer first-person and detailed accounts of their personal experience and perceptions (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

The informed consent form afforded the opportunity for participants to provide a desired manner of contact (telephone, via chat, email, etc.). I then schedule interviews with the selected participants. Additionally, the consent forms provided in-depth information concerning the purpose of the study, the intent to use audio recordings as one

method of collecting notes. Interviews were conducted over a timeframe of four (4) months. Interview transcripts were used during the data collection process to ensure that the verbiage from the interview was feasible to an initial analysis (Husband, 2020).

Prior to beginning interviews, I assessed the selected participants' cultural dimensions, in an effort to foresee any barriers (Nimmon, Stenfors-Hayes, 2016). This process proved effective, because of the difference in geographical areas where participants were located each participant revealed to have different expectations of the interview (McGrath, Palmgren, & Liljedahl, 2019). During the interview process, I remained conscious of my role as the co-facilitator in the creation of data for the current study (McGrath et al., 2019). The conscious awareness was applied with the realization that I the researcher served as the primary data collection tool and caution was taken to ensure my role did not influence the participant's responses (McGrath et al., 2019). During the interview, process care was taken to ensure that I applied active listening, with the notion of using bouts of silence as a motivation for participants to provide rich responses (Giger, 2017).

The current study presented no deception of the participants; in fact, the consent form provided all pertinent information disclosing the intent of the study. With the absence of deception, there was no need for a debriefing form to be presented to the participants (McMahon & Winch, 2018). All participants received a follow-up closing letter of thanks and the offer of continued contact should any questions or concerns arise.

Data Analysis Plan

The purpose of the current study was to explore the perceptions of faith-based leaders on the need for active assailants contingency planning for their churches. The interview protocol strategies were aligned to focus on extracting those perceptions (Burkholder et al., 2016). Once the process of interviewing was completed, I began to transcribe the audio recordings of the interviews. According to MacLean, Meyer and Estable (2004), the research transcriber is virtually invisible. However, in most cases transcripts are influenced by the transcriptor's interpretive lenses (Hammersley, 2010; Jaffe, 2007). Although transcripts can be influenced by the transcriber's interpretive lenses, Halcomb and Davidson (2006) argues that the researcher is the best person to transcribe their own interviews, with the personal knowledge of what the participants divulged, this increases the quality of the transcript. The process of transcribing the interviews was ongoing during the data collection process. This ensured that all data remained organized and prepared for coding (Husband, 2020).

The process of inductive coding was applied to the data to form a narrative (Saldaña, 2021). Providing the opportunity for the narrative to materialize from the raw data (Saldaña, 2021). The coding process for the data was completed in two cycles (Saldaña, 2021). Manual coding using Microsoft Word was applied as the first cycle of coding, providing the opportunity to incorporate phases and locutions used directly by the participants (Saldaña, 2021).

Saldaña (2021) argues that qualitative research dictates that conscientious regard is applied to dialect, lived experiences and emergent patterns. The effective manner to meet these requirements is the process of multiple cycles of coding. Process coding was applied as the second cycle of coding, providing the opportunity to diversify the level of details (Clark & Braun, 2016). The application of two cycles of coding led to the application of *thematic analysis*; in which allowed the identification, interpretation, and analysis of emerging themes (Clark & Braun, 2016).

According to Clark and Braun (2016), the process of thematic analysis is completed in 6 (six) distinctive stages. Familiarization of the data serves as the initial stage; this includes reviewing data repeatedly and taking notice of emerging patterns (Clark & Braun, 2016). Stage 2 involves the process of reducing the data, this is achieved through categorizing and labeling, ultimately developing codes (Clark & Braun, 2016). The next stage allows for the combining of codes to develop themes that reflect the data, giving way to a clear picture of how the themes support the data (Clark & Braun, 2016). Ultimately, the process of thematic analysis gives way to analyzing what the developed themes contribute to the comprehension of the data (Clark & Braun, 2016).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Pilot and Beck (2014), contend that rigor or trustworthiness of research is the level of confidence in methods, data, and interpretation applied to certify the quality of a study. Complications commonly arise during qualitative research that compromises the trustworthiness of research results (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). Johnson and Parry

(2015b) argue that reliability and credibility techniques is not a single action during research, that consciousness should be ongoing for reliability and validity throughout the research process. Trustworthiness of data is determined by credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Amankwaa, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Yin and Lee (2012) assert that effective measures to ensure trustworthiness include detailed research protocol, and documentation of methodological procedures that provides details for future researchers to follow. Fitzpatrick (2019) asserts that validity depends on the context and purpose of the research. The determination of validity in research can be measured with the answer to the question of whether valid conclusions and inferences can be made from the results of a study (Fitzpatrick, 2019). The current study consists of detailed record keeping preserving reliability and validity. The absence of validity in research diminishes trust in the results (Fitzpatrick, 2019). Validity is also confirmed upon reaching saturation during the sampling process; saturation achieves the completeness of data collection ensuring that all new information concerning a phenomenon has been received, indicating that a valid conclusion can be made from the data (Creswell & Báez, 2020). The current study has adhered to the aforementioned criteria to ensure trustworthiness of results.

Credibility

Credibility is one of the leading criteria to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). Methodological strategies are commonly used to ensure trustworthiness of qualitative research results (Noble & Smith, 2015). Haven and

Grootel (2019) point out that credibility in research is under debate as a result of researchers not abiding by ethical standards to include fabrication of data and exclusion of outliers without validation. This realization places significant importance on ensuring the credibility of research.

For the current study, the criteria were followed to ensure that all data collected reflected the participants' perception exclusively; this provided a guide to preserve the integrity of credibility. I took care to ensure the collection of rich data intended to obtain the most complete understanding as possible of the participants' perceptions (FitzPatrick, 2019). The steps applied to achieve this included engagement in the interviews for as long as possibly needed to ensure the building of a rapport and trust with the participants (Creswell & Báez,2020).

Credibility for the current study was achieved through a conscientious account of the data analysis and an accurate explanation of the source of the data collected (Daniel, 2019). Additionally, persistence observation of the data during the development of codes, concepts, and categories was applied (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Reading and rereading the data was applied with the method of analyzing and theorizing the concepts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The strategy was incorporated to make certain that no personal bias was reflected in data collection or research findings. The leading practices of avoiding biases was the acknowledgment of biases in sampling and continued analytic reflections of techniques that ensured certain adequate depth is achieved, analysis, and data collection relevance (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Transferability

The success or failure of transferability rests on the knowledge of who the intended audience is (Goss, 2017). Knowing the audience serves as the first step for successful transferability. Additional steps include the provision of thorough and complete description of participants and the research process; this ensures that the audience can assess the research findings' transferability by their own judgment (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The audience for the current study included church leaders, church security experts, and local law enforcement personnel.

Transferability is the ability to apply research findings to additional situations, also referred to as external validity (Byrne, 2001; Merriam, 2009; Streubert-Speziale, 2007; Findley et al., 2021). According to Cresswell and Clark (2017), the sampling selection of phenomenon specific knowledgeable individuals or groups is the foundation of purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling was applied for the current study as one of the leading criteria for transferability. According to Creswell and Báez (2020).there are multiple types of purposeful sampling, however n matter the type all sampling must be of participants knowledgeable of the intended research topic. The selection of knowledge rich participants served as an assurance of data richness (Cresswell & Clark, 2017).

Dependability

Dependability for qualitative research is simply defined as reliability of research results, which provides the ability to be repeated (Kornbluh, 2015). Although dependability aims to achieve replication of research findings of completed studies, this

does not guarantee the same results will be duplicated (Kornbluh, 2015). According to

Korstjens and Moser (2018), the creation of an audit trail is the most effective strategy to

ensure dependability. The process of completing notes and records was maintained

during the data collection process and the management of data of the current study.

Nassaji (2020) points out that qualitative research involves the systematic process

of identifying a phenomenon, collecting, evaluating, analyzing, and interpreting relative

data to explain findings. Reliability in quantitative research methods serves as the

alternative of dependability in qualitative research methods (Nassaji, 2020).

Dependability guides researchers to ensure that research findings will bring other

researchers to similar conclusions and interpretations (Hadi & Closs, 2016).

Dependability was accomplished through the recording of notes, during data collections

and cross checking of all transcripts and notes to ensure the accurate description of results

(Creswell, 2013).

Confirmability

Data auditing was applied to the current study to ensure personal objectivity and

conformability. According to Johnson, Adkins and Chauvin (2020) many qualitative

research methods run data collection and analysis concurrently. The current study

followed this process. Common practices were applied to achieve the appropriateness of

rigor required to ensure trustworthiness; this included an audit trail (Johnson et. al, 2020).

During the data audit application of techniques that ensured a clear illustration of how the

study findings were determined to include direct quotes and detailed descriptions of data

findings (Stenfors, Kajamaa & Bennett, 2020). The steps that were taken to achieve confirmability included recording of raw data, data reduction and analysis of results that was included in data auditing for the current study (McInnes, Peters, Bonney & Halcomb, 2017). Researcher's cognitive biases can have a potential interference in the conformability of research findings (Liedtka, 2015).

Continuous self-awareness of possible cognitive biases was applied to ensure objectivity and the application of data collection methods presented in a unbiased method being sure to avoid the *"framing effect"* (Steiger & Kühberger 2018). The framing effect can manifest in qualitative interviewing data collection because of how the researcher presents the questions to participants. For example, the way information is framed to an individual can influence governing skills and behavior (Kühnen, Silva, & Hahn, 2022). Framing of information is commonly presented as positive or negative (Chong & Druckman, 2007). During interviews for the current study, the questions were carefully examined and presented to ensure the conveying in a neutral manner avoiding the possibility of framing.

Ethical Procedures

According to Sivasubramaniam et al. (2021), ethics supersedes all other considerations that would include the impact, transformation, communities, or any living being. This in whole includes research methods, with the consideration that research findings indeed have an influence on social change, transformation, and evolutionary changes (Desmond, 2021). Research overseers develop ethical requirements for

researchers to ensure integrity and transparency as a combatant against allegations of research misconduct (Flite and Harman, 2013). Studies have revealed that often ethics and morals are used correspondingly to define each other (Sivasubramaniam et al., 2021). Although often referred to as related there are differences, ethics is connected to an external origin that governs actions, such as a code of conduct (Kuyare et al., 2014). While morals are directly linked to an individual's own concepts, regarding right and wrong conduct (Sivasubramaniam et al., 2021).

The current study consists of human participants, this requires that volunteers be sufficiently informed on what the research is, what it seeks to discover, and any potential harm because of participation (Sivasubramaniam et al., 2021). According to Licari (2018), an informed consent sheet must be presented to participants, to include the writing in layperson's terms to ensure complete understanding. Additionally, participants should be afforded the opportunity to ask all questions they may have related to the research study.

According to Xu et al. (2020) information conveyed to potential participants should be fitted to the abilities and interests of everyone. This is especially important when presenting informed consent to potential study participants. Xu et al. (2020) further argues that informed consent is more effective when accompanied by a verbal rapport, asserting that there is concern with participants reading the document in its entirety. It has been also noted that participants' preferences of communication dictate the effectiveness of comprehension of informed consent (Xu et al. 2020). Gilles and Entwistle (2012)

assert that researchers must be cautious with conveying informed consent to participants, keeping in mind that too much information can be overwhelming and possibly interfere with decision making. The current study provided information of informed consent in the simplest terms designed to avoid confusion and coercion.

Ethical procedures applied for the current study included a detailed informed consent agreement in which extensive details of the intent of the study were disclosed to include any possible risks to participants (Biros, 2018). The provision of upfront details of the intended purpose of the current research that include possible risk provided any participants who may have mental or emotional discomfort related to the current research topic the opportunity to withdraw prior to participation. The application of coding and de-identified data was used to ensure the anonymity of research participants (Audette, Hammond, & Rochester, 2020). The consideration that faith-based leaders are commonly esteemed as respected leaders in the community serves as the foundation of taking care to protect their anonymity, keeping their perceptions and views confidential (Ferrari & Pastorelli, 2016).

Summary

This interpretive phenomenological qualitative study explored how faith-based leaders perceive the need for safety contingency planning within their churches. The focus of the current study is idiographic, with the intent to provide personal insight of faith-based leaders on this phenomenon (Gill, 2014). All participants have a minimum of two (2) years of leadership roles within the church. Geographic selection criteria for the

current study were narrowed to four states within the United States. Although there were

initially four states, intended recruitment proved unsuccessful in the state of Texas. Once

approval was received from Walden University IRB recruitments began. Chapter 4 will

include the discussion of the study's results.

Chapter 4 Results

The purpose of this research study was to explore how faith-based leaders perceive the need for safety contingency planning concerning violent incidents within their places of worship. Through this research, I sought to explore faith-based leaders' perceptions of the need for contingency planning and whether religious or security inclinations drive their views of safety planning. The research questions that guided this study were the following: What are the perceptions of religious leaders of active assailant safety contingency planning within their faith-based institutions? How do religious leaders' perceptions concerning policies and planning of active assailant safety contingency planning differ depending on their church's size? What do religious leaders perceive and consider as a potential harm or threat within their churches?

The data required for this study were collected via semistructured interviews. The current chapter provides details of the research setting, data collection, data analysis, and demographics of this study. Chapter 4 displays separation and labeling in specific sections that provide straightforward information and answers to the guiding research questions for this study.

Research Setting

The study participants were faith leaders who held a position of leadership within the church. Participants had held a position of leadership within the church for 2 or more years and were over the age of 18 years. The original aim for the current study included the recruitment of faith leaders from the states of New Jersey, West Virginia, Maryland,

and Texas. Recruitment efforts were consistent and ongoing for each of the selected states, which lasted 115 days for each state simultaneously; however, despite all efforts, I was unable to obtain a participant in the state of Texas. Recruitment was challenging, onerous, and not what was anticipated for this specific population of leaders. Recruitment efforts were met with displays of annoyance and inconvenience from potential participants. A significant number of faith leaders who initially agreed to participate ultimately pulled out without explanation. Consideration was then given to the specific time of the year, as recruitment efforts began in April around the Easter holiday, one of the busiest times for religious institutions. However, even after the Easter holiday, recruitment challenges continued.

Recruitment steps included cold calling of churches using contact information obtained through web-based listing of churches in the targeted areas, posting of advertising for participation on social media forums (Facebook), and network connections to associates in the targeted area for referrals of possible interested participants. Additional recruitment methods included snowball sampling in combination with telephone calls, video calls and emails.

Once I received approval from Walden's Institutional Review Board (03-21-22-0235526), an initial list of possible participant churches was composed using web-based church listings in each of the targeted states. Once the list was composed, I made calls to the churches to obtain names and emails of those in leadership there. Invitation emails were sent to establish introduction and telephone contact, followed by setting a date and

time for interviews. There were eight interviews conducted during April 2022 through August 2022.

Demographics

Each interview time was allotted at an expected 60-minute maximum; however, none of the interviews required 60 minutes, all reaching completion in less time. Interviews were conducted via telephone and Zoom to adhere to COVID-19 precautions. All participants were informed that their identities and the names of their churches would remain anonymous to protect the integrity of the research. Pseudonyms in the form of numbers were assigned to participants for the process of data collection, sorting, and organizing to ensure confidentiality. The details of the demographics and characteristics of the participants are outlined in Table 1.

TABLE 1
PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHICS AND CHARACTERISTICS

	Geographical location	Leadership position
Participants		
P1	Maryland	Church Elder
P2	New Jersey	Evangelist
P3	Maryland	Chaplain/Evangelist
P4	New Jersey	Senior Pastor

P5	Maryland	Senior Pastor
P6	West Virginia	Senior Pastor
P7	Maryland	Senior Pastor
P8	Maryland	Senior Pastor

Data Collection

Kakilla (2021) asserts that semi-structured interviews serve as a vital tool in conducting qualitative research. Data collection included semi-structured interviews via telephone and Zoom video calling. The process of semi structured interviewing was a crucial tool to gain knowledge of the participants' thoughts, perceptions, interactions and experiences (Kakilla, 2021). The application of semi-structured interviewing provided a format for me to gather the facts on the topic of safety planning from faith leaders in the most natural form (Deterding & Waters, 2018). This process was repeated with each of the eight participants. Each participant's consent was obtained via a response to the email invitation to participate with the phrase "I consent."

According to McGrath et al. (2019), qualitative interviewing is preferable when seeking a participant's instinctive perception of a phenomenon. In the case of the current study, the target was not to generalize the understanding of a substantial number of people (McGrath et al., 2019). All participants were asked the same structured introductory questions to establish a baseline for their position, role, professional and

personal experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The introductory questions were the following:

- What is your leadership position in the church?

- How long have you held this position?

- Briefly, describe for me your role in the church?

- What other professional position have you held beyond the church?

The introductory questions also provided an opportunity to establish a rapport with the participants. Adjustments to the interview questions were allowed with the consideration that not all participants would interpret the question in the same manner (McGrath et al., 2019). The application of follow-up questions provided clarity on whether the participant interpreted the question in the manner it was meant to be understood (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Once a baseline had been established, semi-structured interviewing was applied for the remainder of the interviews. There were additional steps taken to prepare prior to conducting the required interviews for the current study. Consideration was applied to include the scope and focus of the guiding research questions (McGrath et al., 2019). To further facilitate the establishment of an interview guide, I completed background reading concerning faith leaders that cross-referenced security measures.

I took additional initiatives to build rapport with all participants in an effort to ensure their comfort and trust during the process. This was accomplished by sending each

of them detailed information on what to expect during the interview process. Additional efforts to build rapport with participants included the approach of a curious and open attitude, giving them a clear picture of why I was interested in their viewpoint (Bell, 2014).

McGrath et al. (2019) points out that in some cases, interview questions can trigger emotional responses from participants that may be unexpected. Varpio and McCarthy (2018) assert that interviewers may need to take action to protect participants during negative emotional triggers that participants cannot control. This can be done by interrupting and guiding to a topic that is important to the participant (McGrath et al., 2019). During the data collection process, there was self-preparation in anticipation of this issue possibly arising.

According to McMullin (2021), audio recordings assist researchers in not relying merely on recollection and handwritten notes. All interviews were audio recorded using a Panasonic handheld audio recorder; handwritten notes were also taken to ensure accuracy of the data. The interviews were conducted from my home office space; I did not inquire on the specific location of the participant during the interviews. The assignment of numbers as a pseudonym was applied for each participant prior to each interview.

The audio recording of the interviews was transcribed verbatim using Microsoft Word online software. Additional steps used to transcribe interviews included manually listening to the audio recordings and editing where necessary, correcting any errors found in the transcribing process. Although each participant was asked if it would be okay to be

contacted for clarity if needed during the transcribing process, this was not needed, as all recordings were audibly clear. The process of formatting unique identifiers that separated questions and answers was applied during transcription to acquire an easy transfer of the data to Delve software for the coding process.

Data Analysis

As described in Chapter 3, data analysis was conducted using an inductive approach. Neuman (2003) asserts that an inductive approach is geared towards generalizations and ideas through observation of details. The data analysis process was considered and thought through prior to the interview process of the current study (McGrath et al., 2019). The inductive approach proved to be the most appropriate method of analysis focused on the identification of the theme development from the data. I read over the transcribed interviews several times to ensure that I immersed myself in the data with the target of identifying relevant meaning (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The use of inductive thematic analysis was applied to analyze the data collected for this study. Codes for the current study were developed during the processing of the data (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022). I took care to be mindful of the common challenges during the process of inductive analysis of the data; this included being mindful of the purpose of the study and keeping myself open to be reoriented by things I did not expect to find in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Bingham and Witkowsky (2022) point out that an inductive approach in comparison to a deductive approach is more intricate, because inductive analysis goes

beyond sorting the data and requires the researcher to allow the data to speak to them. The inductive process was applied to the data during the second and third cycle of coding for the current study. With the completion of categorizing the data in the previous cycles of coding, the application of inductive analyzing was completed by data categories. According to Clarke and Braun (2016), thematic analysis is compatible with a phenomenological approach, as this approach focuses on an individual's logic and experiences.

My next steps were the generating of codes with the process of linking phrases to selected portions of the data, with the objective of answering the study's research questions (Clarke & Braun, 2016). Each interview was transcribed on a separate Microsoft Word document, with the application of initial coding to begin (Saldaña, 2021). Initial coding provided me the opportunity to identify the nature of the contexts and to develop appropriate codes. Initial coding was followed by process coding; process coding provided me the opportunity to code data that were not verbalized but still proved to be integral to comprehending the narrative (Saldaña, 2021).

Data coding was completed with multiple rounds of coding conducted in two different manners. The first round of coding was conducted manually with the Microsoft Word online program. I chose to conduct the first round manually so that I would gain familiarity with the data. My first round of manual coding included thorough reading of the transcribed interviews, the assignment of codes to relevant excerpts, and the extracting of these codes to an additional spreadsheet for further analysis. The extraction

of codes was completed by using the Microsoft "comment" tool. I conducted two additional rounds of manual coding to ensure that there was nothing overlooked; this was followed by further coding using the Delve software. I applied the method of double coding; this was appropriate with the investigation of possible relationships and overlapping of codes (Saldaña, 2021).

The process of double coding of the raw data yielded the identification of the following themes: (a) lack of security planning, (b) security measures, (c) perceived threat or harm, (d) armed security, (e) new thoughts of security, and (d) security based on church size. The identified themes were then placed in the following categories: (a) security planning, (b) security teams, (c) weapons in the church, (d) potential harm, and (e) no security planning. The data collection for this study in relation to these themes proved to have no discrepancies.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Elo et al. (2014) explained that credibility weighs heavily on the best data collection method to address the study's research questions. The best method of data collection for this study was semi-structured interviewing. The guiding research questions for this study were focused on perceptions and thoughts of faith leaders; the most appropriate manner of data collection to address the research questions was to ask the identified source. The provision of thick descriptive data was applied for the current study. This process was achieved with the description of participants, settings, and events

to bring the details to life for the audience (FitzPatrick, 2019). The repeated review of both the audio and written transcription of the interviews ensured descriptive viability; this included the observation of the audio recordings for the tone and flow of the conversation, which could not be identified in the written transcript (Creswell & Báez, 2020).

I further disciplined myself to ensure an attitude of openness (Patton, 2015). According to Xyländer (2020), openness must be applied to the entire research process to include progression and unforeseen events that may occur. The participant selection process followed strict criteria that included the following: (a) be a faith leader, (b) be at least 18 years of age, (c) hold a leadership position in the church for at least 2 years, and (d) be located in the states of Maryland, New Jersey, Texas, and West Virginia. Interview transcripts were read over multiple times; during the process, I reviewed the audio recordings of the interviews to ensure that the data were not influenced by any biased concepts (Clarke & Braun, 2016). Additional strategies of openness were applied during the review of all data to include a reflection of self-evidence to minimize the possibility of restructuring the interviews (Xyländer, 2020).

Transferability

Goss (2017) asserts that the success or failure of transferability rests on the knowledge of the intended audience. The steps that were outlined for transferability in Chapter 3 were followed without deviation for this study. This included the application of purposeful sampling to ensure data richness (Cresswell & Clark, 2017). Thomas (2022)

asserts that the initial goal of a research study is the identification of the sampling technique for the collection of data. Recruitment methods, data collection, data analysis, and results provided the possibility for external validity (Byrne, 2001; Merriam, 2009; Streubert-Speziale, 2007; Findley et al., 2021).

Dependability

Janis (2022) asserts that any qualitative research rigor and trustworthiness must meet the criteria of dependability, also identifiable as consistency. Kornbluh (2015) argues that dependability of qualitative results is the ability to repeat the study's process. Although dependability places focus on replication of research results, it does not mean that the same results will be identical (Kornbluh, 2015). Hadi and Closs (2016) argue that dependability guides researchers who attempt replication to a similar conclusion or interpretation. Dependability was achieved through the process of data triangulation in the current study (Carter et al., 2014). Data triangulation for the current study was achieved with the categorizing of participants by location, then conducting in-depth interviews. I then triangulated by looking for commonalities amongst the participants' perceptions found in their responses (Noble & Hill, 2019).

Confirmability

I did not deviate from the plan for confirmability as described in chapter 3. Data auditing was applied for the current research to ensure that all conclusions were developed solely from the participants' responses. Data auditing included the review of the audio interviews, manual transcriptions, followed by software transcriptions, and the

review of handwritten notes from the interviews. I also left the option of being able to follow up with each participant should there be a need for clarity, this step was not needed.

Study Results

The eight faith leaders who participated in this study described their perceptions, thoughts and concerns on the need for safety contingency planning for their churches. The participants as seen in Table 1 were located and served as faith leaders throughout the states of New Jersey, Maryland, and West Virginia. Each participant had served at least a minimum of two years in leadership and was over the age of 18. The research questions that guided this study were:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of religious leaders of active assailant safety contingency planning within their faith-based institutions?

RQ2: How do religious leaders' perceptions concerning policies and planning of active assailant safety contingency planning differ depending on their church's size?

RQ3: What do religious leaders perceive and consider as a potential harm or threat within their churches?

This section discusses the themes that emerged which contribute to answering the research questions. The identified themes included the thoughts that with current events that church safety plans are exceptionally important, new thoughts of security measures

in the church were provoked by the participation in this study, and that the community surrounding the church makes a difference for security concerns.

Lack of Security Planning

Although most of the participants had some sort of security plan in place, it was common amongst all participants that there was no planning in place for directing the actions and responsibilities of the parishioners in an event of a violent attack. The subcategory of no security planning was developed from this portion of the data. The lack of security planning on this spectrum was confirmed with Participant 6 statement of "we haven't really talked in detail about if a crime was being committed to what the congregation would do." Participant 3 conveyed, "As for a plan for the congregation, we never even gave that a thought, never even talked about it." In addition, Participant 4 stated "no, we do not have a security plan or policy in place." Some participants' churches did indeed have a security plan in place with little structure to this plan. Participant 9 spoke of other churches he had visited stating, "Do you guys have any security in place; and I was kind of surprised that they did not." At least one of the participants believed that protection against any harm would be provided with faith in God alone. Participant 2 shared "I'm trusting in God to fix any dangerous situation." Other participants who incorporated the protection of faith with an existing security plan shared this belief. Participant 9 expressed "As people of faith, and particularly gospel faith, we understand that our security begins with our relationship with the Lord and having a security team does make a difference." The theme of lack of security planning

was developed from the interview questions (a) Does your church currently have a security team? If so, how many people are assigned to the team? (b) Does your church currently have a security policy or plan? If so, please provide details of the policy or plan?

Security Measures

Participants were asked whether their churches had a current security plan or team in place. The theme that emerged from this line of interview questions were the perceptions and thoughts on security measures. The subcategory of security planning was developed from this portion of the data. Participant 5 revealed, "Although we do not have a current security plan in place, I think it's a good idea to have one with everything that's happening today." Participant 4 stated, "I am 100% for having a security safety plan because you never know when something will take place that requires you to have some protocols that are in place." Participant 3 conveyed "we don't think it's going to happen to us and that's one reason I started presenting this (security planning) because I think well, what do we do in case of an emergency?" The theme of security measures was developed from the interview questions: (a) Does your church currently have a security team? If so, how many people are assigned to the team? (b) Does your church currently have a security policy or plan? If so, please provide details of the policy or plan? The common theme of the need for security measures in the church amongst the participants was apparent. All participants wholeheartedly agreed that security measures are an integral need within the churches.

Perceived Threat or Harm

Although all participants revealed that they have substantial perceived threat or harm that could arise within their sanctuaries, there were some differences and other similarities in their individual perceptions. The subcategory of potential harm was developed from this portion of the data. Participants 1 and 9 shared the same perception of the threat of child abduction or molestation in the church. Participant 1 stated, "I would say probably you know the taking of a child or you know, the trying to molest the child it would be the biggest threat within a church." While participant 9 stated "but what's on the radar of a lot of us in the industry is child molesters within our churches; and I lumped that together with security." Other commonalities identified among the participants responses to threat or harm was the possibility of robbery or theft. Participant 2 states, "somebody will probably come in and try to take our collection." Participant 6 states, "so this is something we should be aware of that we might be a target for a robbery or something like that, you know, and what will we do?" Participant 4 shared "due to the challenges of our community, any and everything is a suspect for a threat." The theme for perceived threat or harm was developed from the interview questions: (a) what do you consider a potential threat to your church? (b) Has your church ever experienced a violent incident? If so, please briefly describe that incident?

Armed Security

Participants were asked about their thoughts on armed security within the sanctuaries. The theme that emerged from this line of the interview questions were the

perceptions and thoughts on armed security and weapons in the church. The subcategory of weapons in the church was developed from this portion of the data. All participants agreed that weapons in the church are acceptable and, in some instances, essential to the security of the church. Participant 1 states "we do have two off-duty officers that are members, that's a big help because we know they both carry even in the church they both carry so that is a definite help." Participant 3 states, "I actually told the congregation if you are able to carry, make sure you bring it to church." Participant 4 states, "We had armed security prior to the pandemic and so I am for armed security for the safety of our property." Participant 8 "I do not oppose it as long as they're trained." The theme for armed security was developed from the interview question (a) what are your thoughts on armed security within the church?

New Thoughts on Security

During each interview process, every participant expressed new thoughts that were provoked by the invitation to participate in the current study. The theme that emerged from this was the new thoughts of security for their churches. The subcategories of security planning and security teams were developed from this portion of the data. Participant 3 states, "I'm kind of glad you came and talked to me about this very thing, it has encouraged ideas. I'm looking for ideas that I can share with the congregation." Participant 2 states, "well this has reminded me to have something to talk to the congregation about, because like I say periodically, the world is changing. Maybe we ought to sit down and talk about the modern times of this world and this factor of purity."

Participant 5 shared "I think it would be a good idea if we could get someone to maybe come and do some kind of a workshop or a talk in this regard to church security." Participant 6 expressed "I'm not opposed to talking to the congregation about safety now." The theme for new thoughts on security was developed from the interview questions (a) how often would you say that you experience feelings of concern related to the security of your church? Please describe what concerns you have? (b) Does your church currently have a security team? If so, how many people are assigned to the team? and (c) Does your church currently have a security policy or plan?

Security Based on Church Size

The final theme was security based on the size of the church. The subcategories of security planning were developed from this portion of the data. This theme is highlighted by the following direct phrases from the transcription: participant 1 shared "as a larger church you may have the means, therefore you can afford to do those things, where smaller churches know that there's no way they could afford to have a police officer there for three hours every week." Participant 6 states, "I don't want to make it seem like because you're a small church, you don't need security, u but you may have to expand your security because of a larger building, more congregants and also you have to have more people there who would to be on the alert." Participant 9 conveyed "And so I do believe it is a situation in which all churches should be asking themselves those questions and then implementing something that is probably unique to them but generally applicable across the church spectrum, and that is security, safety, and small or large

there really is a need." The theme for security based on church size was developed from the interview question (a) what is the current number of members in your congregation? (b) What would you say the average number of new members your church receives in a year?

Summary

The themes that emerged from the raw data collected for the current study provided answers to the research questions that guided this study. This section will provide details on specific themes that are aligned with specific research questions.

RQ1: What are the perceptions of religious leaders of active assailant safety contingency planning within their faith-based institutions?

All the themes that emerged contributed to providing an answer to RQ1. Each of the eight participants provided their personal insight, thoughts, and perceptions on the safety contingency planning for their churches. There were similarities in thoughts and perceptions amongst the eight participants, but there were also notable differences. For example, participant 2 shared "no, we do not have a security policy or plan in place." While another participant was not even sure if there was a security plan in place, participant 1 shared "that's a good question I would have to get back to you on that, let me grab a piece of paper and I will find out that answer tomorrow when I go to church." All participants found that there is a need for a security plan for the church. There was a common curiosity among the participants on what experts could offer their sanctuaries in

terms of security plans and knowledge of proper procedures to follow for their congregations.

Participants spoke about the types of crimes that their sanctuaries had experienced; none had experienced a violent incident. Incidents of theft and vandalism were commonly reported amongst the participants. Participant 1 describe an incident "We had somebody that came in while church was ending, so you had people kind of going everywhere, and an individual came in and was able to steal the pastor's wife's purse that she had left in the pastor study." Participant 6 shared "Yes, so they broke in through the back door and broke into the sound booth and took some sound equipment." Participant 9 conveyed, "We've had other vandalism type issues here and there over the years."

RQ2: How do religious leaders' perceptions concerning policies and planning of active assailant safety contingency planning differ depending on their church's size?

The theme that assisted with answering RQ2 is security based on church size. A commonality became apparent among the participants that security measures and planning is dependent upon the size and the resources of the church in question. Participant 6 provided thoughts of "but you may have to expand your security because with a larger building, more congregants and also you have to have more people there who would be on the alert." Participant 6 further shared "I don't want to make it seem like because you're small, you don't need it (security)." Participant 9 stated "I do believe it is a situation in which all churches should be asking themselves those questions, and

then implementing something that is probably unique to them but generally applicable across the church spectrum, and that is security, safety, whether small or large there really is a need." Participant 9 further stated, "Yeah, security is absolutely unique to each site." Participant 5 shared a similar perception "Yeah, I think so (plans depend on the size and location of the church)." The commonality that was apparent and supported by the applied theme was that each participant agreed in some terms that security policies and planning for the churches is indeed unique to each site and depends on the size of the church and congregation.

      RQ3:   What do religious leaders perceive and consider as a potential harm or threat within their churches?

The theme that assisted in answering RQ3 is perceived threat or harm. All participants expressed specific perceived threats that proved to be distinctive to themselves. Although most participants' perception of threats was unique to them, similitude was evident by each possessing a perception of threats. Participant 4 disclosed, "I think the biggest risk is those that deal with mental challenges." Participant 3 expressed "People who don't know the Lord." Participant 1 states, "I would say obviously you know somebody coming in to do harm either in or to try to take a child you know that's one of our biggest things." Participant 2 shared "So, somebody will probably come in and try to take our collection (potential threats)." Participant 8 shared "active shooter." Participant 9 disclosed "but was on the radar of a lot of us in industry and that is child molesters within our churches, I lumped that together with security." Each participant

shared thoughts of perceived threats with a twenty-five percent 2/8 ratio of participants sharing the same perceived threat concerning the harming of children.

The current chapter provided information and findings focused on the purpose of the study, to explore the perceptions of faith leaders on the need for active assailant safety planning for their churches. According to Peterson (2019) qualitative researchers, journey into areas that are unexplored to give a voice to participants, while making contentions based on findings. The current chapter provided an outlet for me to describe the venture taken to obtain the research findings for this study. This chapter further provided the description of data collection, data management, and data analysis, while additionally providing insight on research settings and participant's demographics. Chapter 5 will provide understanding on the interpretation of the results discussed in the current chapter.

Chapter 5 Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter provides discussion of the limitations, interpretation, future recommendations, and implications for positive social change of the study's findings. The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was an exploration of faith-based leaders' perceptions on the need for safety contingency planning concerning violent incidents within their churches. Through this study, I further sought to explore whether religion drove faith leaders' perceptions on the need for safety planning or security inclinations. The exploration of individual views of faith leaders provided a clear illustration of their consciousness concerning the need for emergency planning within the churches. The examination of faith leaders' perceptions concerning safety planning provides a segway to key training methods and components designed specifically for maximum comprehension for the intended audiences of churches.

Interpretation of Findings

The identified themes that emerged from data collected for the current study collectively alluded to faith leaders' common belief that there is a need for safety contingency planning within their churches. Although there was a common belief in the need for safety planning, there were some differences in thoughts about implementation of policies and procedures. Some participants disclosed that there were no current security plans in place in their church, while others indicated that there were plans in place but that they lacked the key component of any actions that the congregation should follow in the event of a violent incident.

The research findings detailed that all participants expressed concern for the safety of their churches and the parishioners who attend; however, most of these faith leaders made it apparent that their perceptions rested on the side of reactive measures rather than proactive measures concerning safety planning. Yoder (2020) points out that because of the high number of individuals affected by violence, the last century could be described as the most brutal in human history. The realization of higher impacts of violence in recent years, in relation to the attitudes of reactive measures concerning safety planning, could be described as startling.

Lack of Security Planning

As it directly emerged from the data, the theme of lack of security planning was found to be common amongst all participants in one form or another. This further confirmed the majority of participants' reactive outlook on safety planning in the church. Although there was an apparent shared interrelationship with all participants related to concern for safety in their sanctuaries, none of the participants had ever thought of the implementation of directions to the parishioners in the instance of a violent incident. Some participants had no plan in place at all. The theme reflected that among some of the participants, security planning was not a top priority and often overlooked in the common operations of the church.

Fischer et al. (2019) asserts that although there is a consciousness of the importance of safety contingency plans, most organizations have nothing in place beyond

a written plan. There are minimal meetings to practice drills, discuss plans, or even allow

room for evolution of most plans that are in place (Capellan & Jiao, 2019).

According to Sanchez, Young and Baker (2018), security action-training plans,

which include instructional simulations that are scenario-based, improve individuals'

ability to react in emergencies. Mazuru (2019) points out that procedures of safety

planning with the concept of maintaining a state of normality during a dangerous incident

must be operable, permanently prepared and pivotal. The theme described as "lack of

security planning" materialized from the semi-structured interview question responses

from participants. One participant disclosed, "I'm trusting in God to fix the situation; I

know what's in my heart and we are covered." This participant revealed no other security

planning in place, just faith in the protection from God.

Some participants revealed that their church organization, which included all

elders and board members, had not made security planning a prioritized topic of concern.

Common responses to the semi-structured question "Does your church currently have a

security policy or plan?" were "No, (security team)," "Not currently (security team in

place)," and "Never even gave that thought, never even talked about it." As revealed by

the emerging theme, the lack of security planning reflected complacency among the

participants and their leadership responsibilities concerning safety planning for violent

incidents within the church.

Roughton, Crutchfield, and Waite (2019) point out the complexity of what safety

planning can mean, depending on the individual outlook; this is due to the multiple

aspects required for safety measures. Organizational leaders continuously make decisions

that are believed to be the best for their organizations; the current research findings of

high levels of complacency revealed the lack of knowledge amongst the majority of these

leaders. Fischer et al. (2019) argues that no security safety plan is complete without well-

defined policies that are clear to the entire organization. Mallory (2020) points out that no

matter what emergency is experienced, impact reduction can be achieved when risks are

assessed and contingency planning is in place prior to the incident. Most of the study

participants' responses indicated that they were not clear on the core purpose of safety

contingency planning.

Although some of the participants expressed minimal concern in relation to

church security plans or security teams, all expressed concerns regarding criminal activity

in or around their churches. For example, multiple participants expressed concerns on

security related to theft, robbery, burglary, and vandalism. Participant 6 stated, "Well,

we've had our break-ins." Participant 1 shared, "Our big incident came in 2019, we had

an individual break into our church and actually stole every piece of our audio equipment

which was somewhere in the neighborhood of $25,000." Participant 9 noted, "We've had

other vandalism type issues here and there over the years."

All participants reported that they had not experienced any violent incidents

within their churches, with Participant 9 stating, "I do not recollect that we have

encountered anything that I would consider visibly violent." With the participants never

having experienced any violent incidents within their churches, the data reflected

attitudes of complacency concerning planning for violent incidents amongst the participants.

Arstad and Aven (2017) argue that several industries have listed that the causes of crucial accidents are the result of complacency because of insufficiency of vigilance. Arstad and Aven (2017) further assert that one of the most significant dangers in safety planning is leadership complacency, with this causing obstruction of sight, which in turn causes neglect to vulnerabilities. According to Berg (2013), poor communication skills and insufficient leadership styles can lead to leadership complacency. Fischer et al. (2019) points out that organizational leaders implement safety contingency plans to ensure that their institution will be able to mitigate and overcome adverse events. Research and theories have revealed that a team's dynamics are influenced by leadership (Marlow et al., 2018). It is this contributed knowledge that highlights the importance of the effects of leaders' competency in safety planning for the sanctuaries that they oversee.

Security Measures

Although all the participants expressed some level of complacency concerning safety contingency planning, all participants revealed coherent thoughts and ideas concerning potential safety measures in their sanctuaries. One participant shared the intent of adding surveillance cameras in the parking lot and sanctuary. Another participant shared that the church's ushers patrol the parking lot as a safety measure. Participant 3 shared, "I did a PowerPoint on preparing the people with what if we have an

episode in the church, what we would do if somebody walked into this congregation and just started shooting people?" This participant stated that the PowerPoint was presented to the leadership team within the church. The data reflected that all participants possessed a desire for mitigation and preparedness concerning the safety in and around their churches. Mitigation practices and policies are put in place to reduce costs and injuries on the front end, with appropriate safeguards in place to meet any possible risks (Mallory, 2020). The security measure theme provided answers to this study's exploration of whether religion drove faith leaders' views on security planning or security inclinations.

According to Hodgson (2014), religion can have a positive or negative impact on the consideration of and reaction to security risks. It is important to understand that security measures and planning are never a one-dimensional process (Mawajdeh, 2020). Most of the participants weighed both religion and security as driving predilections; however, some participants revealed that religion and faith took the lead on their security views.

All participants shared other safety measures that were all unique to their perception of calculated possible risks and exposures of their church. They mentioned considerations of hiring police officers during service, encouragement of parishioners who are licensed to carry a gun to bring it with them to church, and the mindset that should someone enter the church and begin shooting, this person would not stop until they are stopped. One participant was adamant that the only way that a violent incident would halt was if someone in the church did something to stop it. This made it apparent

that the first response would be within the church while waiting for the authorities to arrive. This mindset demonstrated the identification of possible hazards that may arise in the church. Connors (2015) argues that not all hazards are obvious, that the consciousness of possible hazards is measured by the individual's judgment.

Perceived Threat or Harm

The perception of threats or harm was common among all participants; however, the type of threat or harm was unique to the geographic location of the church. Participants whose churches were in rural areas reported perceived threats of child molesters or abductions of children within the church as among their primary perceptions of a threat. One participant located in a rural area reported, "I would say obviously you know somebody coming in to do harm either in or to try to take a child you know that's one of our biggest things." Another located in a rural area shared, "but what's on the radar of a lot of us in this industry (religious) and that is child molesters within our churches; and I lumped that together with security." This perceived threat was rated as an extreme concern among the participants located in rural areas. The extremeness of this concern was apparent with one participant's response of

> "In the message in which I'm preaching, you need to understand we have armed security; and if you intend to hurt one of our children or to molest one of our children and they find you within that activity; we are making sure number one that that child is separated from you and number two that you are shot on the spot."

Although these participants revealed a higher regard to the concern of child molestation as a perceived threat in their churches, none of them reported an actual incident of this nature taking place. Their concerns of this threat perception were expressed passionately. The response of "what's on the radar of a lot of us in this industry (religious) and that is child molesters within our churches" confirms the circumstantial assumption that these leaders had familiarized themselves with reports and findings concerning child sexual victimization within churches (Denney, 2021). I took care during these interviews where intense emotions were expressed to devise a plan to properly handle these emotions should the participant appear incapable of controlling them (Varpio & McCarthy, 2018).

Participants whose churches were in urban areas reported perceived threats of possible robberies or break-ins. One participant located in an urban area shared, "So, this is something we should be aware of, that we might be a target for a robbery or something like that, you know, and what will we do?" Another participant located in an urban area stated, "Somebody will probably come in and try to take our collection." Scheitle (2018) asserts that burglary is one of the top property crimes committed against religious institutions; this is due to the audio/visual equipment that may be on the premises. Some participants in both urban and rural areas revealed perceived threats centered on the church's location. Participants also expressed perceived threats of individuals entering the church suffering from mental disturbances. At least one of the participants conveyed a perceived threat as someone who does not know God.

Although all participants indicated some form of perceived threat or harm concerning the church, there were participants who, when asked, "How often do you experience feelings of concern about safety in your church," stated never. One participant stated, "and we do have some concerns, but we really don't think about that." Other participants vocalized the concern for safety each time the congregation meets. Participants' responses of having no feelings of concern about safety in their churches were conveyed at the beginning of each interview.

This emerging theme supports that these participants gave little thought to perceived threats or harm until thoughts were provoked in discussions of safety and security. This further provided answers to the study's inquiry concerning perceptions of faith leaders' personal identification of hazards prior to activation to a threatening state. Lowe et al. (2015) points out that research indicates that exposure to violence or knowledge of exposure to violence suffered by an individual who is known or who may be a loved one has a significant influence on the mental and emotional state of an individual. The data reflect that most participants had never given any real thought to the possibility of a real violent incident occurring in their churches.

Armed Security

All participants collectively found weapons within the church for the purpose of security to be acceptable. Some participants had already taken the steps to have armed security within their churches. These participants had security team members who were licensed to conceal and carry a gun. Some other participants relied on off-duty police

officers who were members of the church and carried their weapons in the sanctuary.

Some participants had already considered personally carrying a gun during services, one

conveying at least possessing a gun for the church's office. The common thoughts among

the participants were that proper training and those who are familiar with gun operations

and safety must accompany the introduction of weapons in the church. Participants were

explicit that the only need for weapons in the church is as a method of defense against

possible violent incidents. Participants located in rural areas asserted that most of their

congregation was familiar with firearms from early childhood. This is because of the

culture of hunting in their areas beginning in childhood.

The thoughts and perceptions shared by participants on weapons within the

church is a deep thought of preparedness actions concerning violent incidents that may

arise. Rogers (2013) asserts that although historically emergencies have rested solely on

first responders, the frequency of emergency incidents has forced actions beyond historic

norms. This knowledge was perceptible among participants, with them commonly noting

that the response time of authorities was indeed a concern.

New Thoughts on Security

All participants in one form or another commonly shared new thoughts on

security. Some participants had no security plan or team in place, while some had an

operational team and plan in place; however, all had new security thoughts provoked

when introduced to this study. Participants who had no plan in place expressed that the

interview questions and discussion of the current study has inspired thoughts on possible

security measures never considered before. All participants disclosed that because of participating in this study, they would have in-depth conversations with their congregation and leadership team.

Those participants who had a security team and plan in place still lacked a comprehensive security plan. The common element lacked by all participants' perception of safety planning was the absence of directions to the congregation on what to do in the event of an emergency or violent incident. Some participants considered what they would consider unconventional emergency incidents, such as hostage taking, arson, or bombs in the church. All participants asserted the intent to invoke conversation and planned to produce a comprehensive plan for security that includes directions to parishioners. The idea is to present planning in the same manner as a fire drill would be carried out. Participants expressed eagerness to implement new security ideas within their churches.

Participants shared that they had observed through news reports other churches' endurance of violent incidents. Additionally, stating that these occurrences had indeed created fear and uneasiness for them, yet they still had not taken the initial steps of expanding and in some of their cases initiating a security plan for their churches. Merritt et al. (2019) argues that researchers have found that complacency is either a slow response to a negative incident or a failure to even detect the negative incident. Complacency was identified commonly among the participants in this study. The act of complacency has been described as an action of doing the same thing repeatedly with the expectation of identical results (Bongiovanni & Newton, 2019). This line of thinking is

supported by the notion that if nothing has gone wrong then there is no reason to change policies or behavior. Participants in the current study reported that they have never encountered a violent incident within their churches, with them having never experienced these incidents, thoughts, and ideas of expansion or in some cases initiating a safety contingency plan for violent incidents has eluded these faith leaders.

Security Based on Church Size

All participants in the current study agreed that security planning is not a one size fits all operation. With the mindset that each location is unique and requires planning to fit the uniqueness. Faith leaders vocalized that security measures depend on the size, location, and congregational make-up of the church. Participants expressed that the larger the church the larger the security team should be, stating that with more congregants there would be more people to observe and protect. The consideration of how frequently the congregation meets was incorporated in their thoughts and perceptions concerning security planning. Participants also considered the age group of the congregation as a factor in considering specific security planning unique to a church. Faith leaders in the current study shared their belief that all faith leaders are concerned about their congregations' welfare.

Faith leaders in the current study disclosed the belief that security planning is also affected by building structure. Some participants shared that the consideration of neighboring churches plays an integral part in security planning that is site specific. Participants contemplated how they would respond to a neighboring church in need

concerning a violent incident, to include the triage treatment of possible injured persons and assisting in containing the incident. The current theme collectively reflects that all participants in the current study acknowledge that the effectiveness of security planning is site specific and church size plays a large part.

Limitations of the Study

The current study was an exploration of how faith leaders perceive the need for contingency planning concerning violent incidents within their churches. It also included the exploration of whether their views of safety planning are driven by religious or security predisposition. The constraints faced in this study were apparent during the process of recruitment. The research sample consists of faith leaders, the assumption of an implied duty of concern and well-being for their congregation is apparent. However, I found extreme difficulty during recruitment. Various attempts of contact were made to a substantial number of faith leaders within the selected areas. These attempts were met with frustration, avoidance and in some cases unbefitting responses. Some faith leaders had agreed to the interviews and simply avoided contact when it was time to be interviewed.

The COVID-19 restrictions and safety precautions dictated that interviews were conducted via telephone or video calls, which in turn compelled my initial contact to be made through these means. Recruitment methods lasted longer than anticipated due to the ineffectiveness of initial contact through telephone and email. This was countered by my

in-person visits to potential participants to make initial contact. Although met with constraints the goal was met to obtain perceptions of faith leaders on safety planning.

Steps were followed to ensure the integrity of this study, this included respecting the data no matter the outcome of the study. The limitation of this study is identified in the limitation of participants. Additional limitations were pinpointed in the knowledge that each individual has a unique perception as to how they see things. The consideration of this limitation was incorporated into the data analysis of the data for this study.

Trustworthiness as described by Korstjens and Moser (2018), is determined by credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. There was vigilance taken to ensure that data collection was geared to provide answers to the study's research questions. The transcripts were solely reviewed and analyzed by me; therefore, triangulation in the study reflects limitations. Transferability was limited for this study; this was evident by the limitation of sampling. Perceptions were explored among limited faith leaders located in three states. The next section will describe recommendations for further research.

Recommendations

The Violence Project Database (2019) contends that churches are among numerous locations that have experienced an increase in random acts of violence in recent years. Church security experts argue that even with the increasing numbers of violent incidents in churches, security continues to remain a low priority in many churches (Chinn, 2018). Faith leaders traditionally serve as protectors or shepherds for

their congregants (Hefner, 2016). Recent violent incidents have encouraged faith leaders to adapt additional applications to incorporate an innovative leadership context, including physical and spiritual protection of their congregations (Hefner, 2016). As the literature reflects in Chapter 2 this study aimed to examine individual points of view of faith leaders to provide an understanding of consciousness among these leaders concerning emergency planning in churches for violent incidents.

The results of this study disclosed that faith leaders share notable worry about the safety in their churches; however, the concern for most of the participants were subdued until provoked by discussion on the topic. As reported by all participants the reality that none of them had ever experienced a violent incident in their church brings forth the question of if violent incidents were experienced in their churches would this impact the gravity of their view on safety planning. The participants whose churches were located in rural areas expressed concern on the threat of child abduction, sexual abuse and molestation within the churches. This concern was expressed passionately although none had reported ever experiencing an incident of this gravity in their sanctuaries. The study reflected that none of the participants reported any incidents of violence or incidents of child molestation. This forces the question of what influences the participants' passionate responses to possible child molestation threats and this level of passion was not reflected in possible threats of violence.

Future study recommendations would include the expansion of the sampling to target and include faith leaders' churches who have experienced violent incidents and

how their experiences have influenced their thoughts on safety planning in their churches

post incident. Participants in this study expressed significant concern on the issue of child

abduction and molestation in churches. These participants prioritized higher concern for

this issue than the possibility of a violent incident. Another future research area

identified by data collection from this study would be a study to examine the safety

planning concerning child abduction and molestation in the churches. Denny (2021)

asserts that research concerning molestation and sex abuse in the church stretches back

for over 50 years; however, this research has been primarily focused on the Roman

Catholic Church. An additional future study recommendation would be to expand

research sampling to include a variety of denominations of churches.

The recruitment process of this study demonstrated challenges with faith leaders

showing little to no concern pertaining to participation. Commonly faith leaders act in the

role of guidance and protector (Hefner, 2016). This is apparent by the responsibilities the

church has related to the provision of community services (Bleiberg, 2019). There is a

fair assumption that faith leaders would be driven to discuss security planning for safety

in their churches. Recommended future research would be the exploration of why faith

leaders are indifferent concerning the discussion of security planning within the church.

Implications

Many of the participants in this study requested a copy of the study's results. This

provided the indication of their desire to further their knowledge on safety contingency

planning for their churches. According to Alathari et al. (2018), research has validated

that violent attack modes of operation, motivation, and location vary compelling the development and implementation of preventive measures. Recent newsworthy reports of violent attacks in or around religious sanctuaries have revealed that many of these incidents are committed by a lone actor (Silke, 2019). The realization that most attacks on churches are committed by a lone actor forces the consideration that many of the perpetrators of these violent incidents may have had a prior connection to the church targeted (Gill, 2015).

The current study's results disclosed that there is an obvious need for further guidance concerning safety contingency planning that is site specific for churches. The results of this study reflect that most of the participants share an overall comfort in the traditional mindset that churches have an expectation of being a haven, not just against physical harm but spiritual as well. It is this ideology that often leads to relaxed attitudes towards safety planning (Capellan & Jiao, 2019).

The results of this study have prompted the consideration of a holistic approach for safety contingency planning for churches. This approach provides in practice a comprehensive application to safety and security that covers all aspects of the church (Mawajdeh, 2020). The implementation of a holistic approach to achieve a safety plan includes the church considering physical security, community awareness, policy development, training, and emergency preparedness (Mawajdeh, 2020). The results reflect that the participants' churches are a social fabric within the communities that they serve, making them a tool of social tension and personal crisis awareness (Silke, 2019).

This is a beneficial first step in identifying possible threats as a result of social tension or a personal crisis experienced by a member of the community that may result in a violent act.

The results of this study will be shared with practitioners who specialize in security planning that is site specific for churches. Site specific security planning provides policies and procedures that make sense to the operation of the site. Additionally, risk assessments must be site specific to determine the most effective actions and recovery concerning adverse incidents (Holton, 2017). Every organization that is frequented by the public has a unique daily operational process. This includes the consideration of differences in building structures and exits. The realization that each organization is unique supports the need for safety contingency planning that is uniquely designed to fit specific sites. The results of this study also underline the importance of individual input and perceptions that should be shared in the process of developing safety contingency planning. Effective safety planning must define responsibilities and roles of all that an adverse incident could impact, and their input should be welcomed and considered as well (Hefner, 2016).

Security practitioners could use findings from this study to: (a) design safety plans and teams that are unique to churches (b) provide safety training and information on threat assessments specific to churches. Connection with your targeted audience is crucial for persuasion (Earl, 2019). The most effective method of ensuring that your targeted

audience has received your message is understanding the needs and challenges experienced regarding the topic (Burgers & Brugman, 2022).

Hickman (2014) points out that the action of communication is constantly evolving over time, but even with all the changes the importance of knowing and understanding your audience is constant. Security planning experts would benefit from specific intelligence of how faith leaders perceive the need for safety contingency planning for churches, with specific understanding of this population's perceptions; site specific planning could be developed with emphasis on their specific needs, concerns and challenges concerning church safety.

Additional positive social change that the current study's results would be useful for is the continued building on a foundation of research concerning safety contingency planning within churches. The current study's results have transitioned to additional research questions regarding church safety planning. These additional research questions, although still surrounding the safety planning and harm reduction of adverse incidents in the church, include the possible look at leadership complacency and child molestation concerns by leaders within the churches. Researchers could use the current study's results to continue to build on the already existing research concerning security planning for churches.

Conclusions

Safety contingency planning is identifiable as complex (Holton, 2017). The complexity of safety contingency planning is even more intricate when applied to a

specific location. Churches are diverse with a manifold of individuals who have a variation of agendas and issues. The complexity of a safety planning site specific to the church is undeniable. The hierarchy of leadership within the church has proven to be the logical first step in discussion of safety contingency planning. However, the results of the current study have revealed that safety planning should not stop at the line of the leadership. The participants of the current study revealed that should a violent incident arise during church services the congregation has absolutely no directions on how to respond, react or even evacuate. Churches serve the community weekly and welcome all members of the community, with this in mind it is reasonable that weekly gatherings are expected. Continuous newsworthy violent incidents that have occurred in churches throughout the country have brought about the implementation of discussion of preventive actions to minimize casualties and injuries (Bleiberg, 2019).

Churches are considered sanctuaries to have many cultures, religious denominations, and overall community members. The church is often viewed as a one stop resource for many in the community. The church provides various services to include spiritual worship, counseling services, youth programs, daycare, food pantries and all-around community outreach. Ultimately, individuals who attend churches seek to find comfort and refuge through their faith from the challenges of everyday encounters. This mindset often gives way to a feeling of relaxation and safety in the walls of the sanctuary. The findings from this study can serve as a part of a foundation to build knowledge and training strategies designed for churches.

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Appendix A: Participation Invite Letter

Greetings,

Thank you for taking the time to read this invitation. My name is Tanzania Merriweather, and I am a student at Walden University School of Psychology. I am currently conducting research to complete my PhD in Forensic Psychology.

The purpose of my research is to explore the perceptions of faith-based leaders on the need for safety contingency plans for sanctuaries and churches. There have been various instances of violent attacks in churches throughout the years, to include massive violent attacks, as well as single victim attacks. Your responses and views on this topic will be valuable to this study. I would like to take this time to inform you that your participation is voluntary. If you choose to accept my invitation to participate in this study, I will email you a consent to participate form. I will be following up with you after receipt of this invite, giving you time to consider this invitation. I would like to take this time to thank you in advance for your consideration to participate.

Sincerely,

Tanzania Merriweather PhD Candidate

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Please consider this a formal invitation to participate in a research study about the

thoughts and perceptions of faith-based leaders on the need for safety contingency plans

for their churches and sanctuaries. The current form serves as the "informed consent";

this is to ensure your understanding of the study prior to agreement to participate.

Participation is voluntary. There is no penalty if you decide not to participate or withdraw

from the study.

- The current study seeks to find 6 to 12 participants who are:

- 18 years or older

- Faith-based leaders to include pastors, bishops, priests, and

deacons

- Has held a position of leadership within the church for a minimum

of 2 years

A researcher named Tanzania Merriweather, who is currently a doctoral student at

Walden University, is conducting this study.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research study is to explore how faith-based leaders perceive the need

for contingency planning concerning violent incidents within places of worship.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in a one-on-one audio-recorded interview (1 hour). A review of the written transcripts of your interview for any corrections or clarifications (30 minutes). A follow-up discussion with researchers to provide feedback (30 minutes).

Participant Confidentiality

In order to maintain confidentiality, your name be used in any publication or presentation that uses the information and data collected about you or with the research findings from this study. The researcher will use pseudonyms to identify participants rather than your name. Your identifiable information will only be shared if required by law or you give written permission.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Research should only be done with those who freely volunteer. So everyone involved will respect your decision to join or not.

If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Disclaimer

The risk of participating is minimal. Specific minimal risk would consist of sharing personal information, which is faced in daily life. The current safeguards of participant

confidentiality are designed to meet these concerns and provide protection for all volunteers of this study.

Compensation for Participation

As compensation for participation in the current study, the researcher will provide a $10 Amazon gift card to the first 8 volunteers who complete the interview.

Privacy

The researcher is required to protect your privacy. Your identity will be protected. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. If the researcher were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, the dataset would contain no identifiers so this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent. Data will be kept secure by a password protected computer. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

Please feel free to contact your researcher for any questions or concerns, Tanzania Merriweather. If you would like to speak privately about your rights as a participant or any negative parts of the study, you can call Walden University's Research Participant Advocate.

Please retain a copy of your informed consent for your records, if at any time you require another copy please make a request to your researcher at the above contact information.

Walden University's approval number for this study is IRB will enter approval number here. It expires on IRB will enter expiration date.

If you feel you understand the study and wish to volunteer, please indicate your consent by replying to this email with the words "I consent".

Printed Name of Participant   _____

Date of Consent   _____

Participant's Signature   _____

Researcher's Signature   _____

Appendix: Interview Protocol

Date_____   Beginning Time _____   Ending Time _____

Pseudonym _____

To facilitate accurate transcripts and note taking, this interview will be audio recorded

today. If you do not wish to be recorded, please inform me prior to us beginning. This is a

voluntary interview and you may choose to withdraw at any time without obligation.

I would like to take this time to thank you for your participation in this study. The intent

of this study is to explore how faith-based leaders perceive the need for contingency

planning concerning violent incidents within places of worship. The interview is expected

to last 1 hour, however if you require additional time to answer the questions there will

be time allotted to extend. During the interview process, I will be asking questions

pertaining to your position of leadership within the church, life practices, personal

beliefs, and your process of decision-making skills.

Background:

What is your leadership position in the church?

How long have you held this position?

Briefly, describe for me your role in the church?

What other positions have you held beyond the church?

What is the current number of members in your congregation?

Lived Experience:

Describe for me the typical worship program service?

Has your church ever experienced a violent incident? If so, please briefly describe that incident?

Does your church currently have a security team? If so, how many people are assigned to the team?

Does your church currently have a security policy or plan? If so, please provide details of the policy or plan?

What are your thoughts on armed security within the church?

What do you consider a potential threat to your church?

How often would you say that you experience feelings of concern related to the security of your church? Please describe what concerns you have?

What would you say the average number of new members your church receives in a year?

Is there a screening process for new members? If so, please describe the process?

Before we conclude this interview, is there anything else you would like to share?

Conclusion:

I would like to take this time to thank you for participating in the interview the information you have provided is vital for this study. Once all interviews has been completed, the data will be transcribed and analyzed during a five-week period. I ask if it is okay to follow-up with you during this time if needed for clarity on your response. Please be advised that your responses and identity will be anonymous and once the results have been compiled, you may request the results of this research. Do you have any questions for me regarding our interview today or the analysis process? Thank you again for your participation.